

The Golden
CHINGGIS
History of
KHAN
The Mongols



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CHAPTER ONE

The origins of the Mongol clans and the birth of Temujin.

WHEN CHINGGIS KHAN WAS BORN, HIS DESTINY HAD ALREADY BEEN ORDAINED BY HEAVEN above. He was descended from Borte Chino, whose name means Wolf, and Qo'ai Maral, whose name means Beautiful Doe. They had crossed the lake together and settled by the Onon river at Burqan-qaldun — the Place of the Cliff. There, their son Batachi Khan was born.

And the son of Batachi Khan was Tamacha; and the son of Tamacha was Qorichar-mergen (which means Wise Hunter); and the son of Qorichar-mergen was A'ujam-boro'ul; and the son of A'ujam-boro'ul was Sali-qacha'u; and the son of Sali-qacha'u was Yeke-nidun; and the son of Yeke-nidun the Wide-eyed was Sem-sochi; and the son of Sem-sochi was Qarchu.

Qarchu's son, Borjigidai-mergen, married Mongqoljin, the fairest of the Mongols, while Borjigidai's son, Toroqoljin the Rich, had a wife called Boroqchin-qo'a, a young servant called Boroldai-suyalbi, two fine geldings — the Great One and the Grey One — and two strapping sons — Duwa-soqor and Dobun-mergen.

Duwa-soqor had only one eye, in the middle of his forehead, but he could see as far as three days' journey* with it.

One day, with his younger brother, Duwa-soqor climbed the rocky precipice of Burqan-qaldun, and looking down from its height he saw a mass of people moving slowly downstream, along the winding Tunggelik river.

'They have struck camp,' he said, 'and they're coming this way. There's a black-covered waggon, with a most beautiful girl sitting up on the front seat. If she doesn't already belong to anyone, you shall have her, brother. Let's go and ask.' And he sent young Dobun-mergen to take a closer look.

* One 'journey' was about ten miles, the distance that could be covered by a whole camp in one day.

When Dobun-mergen approached he found that she was indeed truly beautiful, and of good reputation. Her name, Alan-qo'a, was well-known in the region, and she had not yet been promised to any man.

Her mother, Barqujin-qo'a, was the daughter of Barqudai-mergen, Lord of the Kol Barqujin valley. She had been married to the Lord of the Qori-tumed, Qorilartai-mergen, and had given birth to Alan-qo'a down by the Clean river.

But Qorilartai quarrelled with his people when they banned the hunting of sable, squirrel and other wild animals in the land of the Qori-tumed; and he and his clan decided to move on to the Burqan-qaldun — a land rich in wild creatures and gazelles. There, by the Sacred mountain, they made contact with the gods and spirit lords of the place, and it was as they were approaching Uriangqai that Dobun-mergen met them and begged Alan-qo'a's hand in marriage. She went on to bear him two sons, Bugunutei and Belgunutei.

Meanwhile his elder brother Duwa-soqor also had sons — four of them — but he died soon afterwards, and his sons despised their uncle Dobun-mergen and refused to take him into the family. Instead they moved away and established four separate clans which became known as the Four Peoples.

One day Dobun-mergen went hunting on Toqochaq peak, and there in the forest he met a man of the Urianqad who had killed a three-year-old deer, and was roasting its ribs and bowels.

'My friend,' said Dobun-mergen, 'give me some meat from your roasting-spit.'

'With pleasure,' said the hunter. And, keeping only the lungs, head and skin of the beast (in which the spirit was), he gave the rest of the meat to Dobun-mergen.

Dobun-mergen loaded up the deer on his horse and went on his way. And on the road he met a poor man leading a little boy by the hand.

'Who are you?' asked Dobun-mergen, and the man answered: 'I'm from the Ma'aliq Bayya'ud. I'm starving to death. I'd give this son of mine for a hunk of that beast's flesh.'

With that, Dobun-mergen tore the hind leg off the deer and gave it to him. Then he took the boy home with him as his servant.

Not long afterwards Dobun-mergen died; but Alan-qo'a bore three more sons despite the loss of her husband. Their names were Buqu-qadagi, Buqatu-salji and Bodonchar-mungqaq, which means Bodonchar the fool.

Then Belgunutei and Bugunutei began to whisper about their mother behind her back. 'This mother of ours', they said, 'has borne three sons without a husband. What's more, she has not been passed on to our father's brothers or cousins. The only man in the house is from the Ma'aliq Bayya'ud: those three boys must be his.'

But Alan-q'oa sensed what they were saying about her. One spring day she boiled some mutton and sat all five boys down in a row. Then she gave them each an arrow, saying: 'Break it!'

They all broke the arrows easily and tossed them aside. Then she took five arrows and bound them together. She gave the arrows to each boy in turn, saying: 'Break them!' But however hard they tried, the clutch of arrows would not break.

Then Alan-qo'a said to Belgunutei and Bugunutei: 'My sons, I know you have had your suspicions. I know you've been talking behind my back, saying: "Where did these three boys come from, whose sons are they?" Well, it's natural you should ask.

'Every night a shining yellow man slipped into the tent through the light of the smoke hole and the gap at the top of the door. He caressed my belly and his light seemed to sink into me. When he went out it was as though he slunk like a yellow dog between the light of sun and moon.

Why do you whisper such nonsense?

Why can you not understand?

My sons are the children of Heaven
born to be lords of the land.

With the ranks of the black-haired, the hatless,
these boys you try to compare,

why do you not recognise them —
my sons, who are lords of the air?’

Then Alan-qo’a went on to instruct her five sons with the following words: ‘You boys were all born of my flesh. If you stand alone you can easily be broken, just as those five arrowshafts were broken. But if you stand together, like this bundle of shafts, no one can ever overcome you.’

Not long afterwards their mother was no more, and after her death the brothers divided up the property and the livestock between them. Belgunutei, Bugunutei, Buqu-qatagi and Buqatu-salji all took a share, but they decided that Bodonchar-mungqaq was too stupid and dull to merit anything, so they left him out of the reckoning.

When he found he was no longer regarded as one of the family, Bodonchar thought: ‘What am I doing here? Why have I stayed so long?’ And he rode away on an off-white, draggle-tailed, sure-footed nag with sores on its black-striped back. ‘If I’m to die, let me die,’ he said. ‘If I’m to live, let me live.’ And he went down to the Onon river where he built himself a grass yurt on the island of Baljun.

There he settled, and one day he saw a young female hawk as it caught and ate a black pheasant. So he captured the hawk, using the tail hairs of his off-white, draggle-tailed, sore-backed, black-striped nag as a snare, and he tamed and reared it.

When he was hungry he sought out the wild beasts that the wolves had cornered at the base of the cliffs, and shot them, sharing the meat with his hawk. Or sometimes he picked up the wolves’ leftovers and ate them. Thus he fed himself and his hawk as the year passed.

Spring came, and with it the arrival of the duck. Bodonchar starved his hawk, and then set it at them. He hung his catch of ducks and geese on the trees until

from every withered branch
arose a stench,
an odour dark and rank
from every shrivelled trunk. .

Meanwhile a group of travellers had moved camp from the sunless side of Mount Duyiren, down to the Tunggelik stream. After flying his hawk, Bodonchar used to visit them, drinking kumiss* with them during the day, and going back to his own yurt to sleep.

Some of the men wanted Bodonchar's hawk, but he did not give it to them. They didn't seem interested in his tribe or his family, and he, for his part, asked them no questions. Yet he kept coming and going.

One day Bodonchar's elder brother, Buqu-qatagi, thinking that he had gone downstream along the Onon river, came to look for him. He found the camp and asked the people there whether they had come across a man with a curious-looking horse.

They replied: 'There's a man with a horse like that who comes here every day. He has a hawk with him. He drinks our kumiss, and then goes away. We don't know where he spends the night. When the wind is in the north-east, the feathers and down from the geese and ducks killed by his hawk blow tumbling down here like snow. He can't be far away. Why don't you wait for him? It's time he was here.'

Not long after a man rode slowly upstream. It was Bodonchar. When Buqu-qatagi saw him he recognised him instantly, and led him off up the Onon river.

Bodonchar, jogging along behind his elder brother, observed after a while: 'A body needs a head, and a cape needs a collar.' His brother made no answer, so he said the same words again, and still his brother remained silent. They travelled a little further, and Bodonchar repeated his words for a third time.

'What are you getting at?' asked Buqu-qatagi presently. To which Bodonchar replied: 'Those people down by the Tunggelik stream, they have no high or low, good or bad, great or small, head or hoof. Everyone is equal. They are simple people. Why don't we plunder them?'

'Well,' said his elder brother, 'if you're right we should talk to the others when we get back to the yurt and make a plan.'

So on their return the brothers made a plan, and then set out

* Kumiss is fermented mares' milk.

on horseback. Bodonchar himself was sent galloping ahead as a scout, and on the way he took a prisoner — a woman, four or five months pregnant. He asked her who she was.

‘I am of the Jarchi’ut tribe,’ she said. ‘I come from the Greater Uriangqai.’

Then the brothers fell upon the camp, and with their plunder — livestock, property and the people themselves as servants and slaves — they settled down to a new life.

The pregnant woman stayed with Bodonchar and bore a son. They called him Jajiradai, because he was the son of a foreigner, and he, and his son, and his son’s son, became the fathers of the Jadaran clan.

The woman also bore Bodonchar’s son, and because she was a captive they called him Ba’aridai. He, and his son, and his son’s many sons, were the fathers of the Menen-Ba’arin clan.

And from Belgunutei was descended the Belgunut clan; from Bugunutei, the Bugunut clan; from Buqu-qatagi, the Qatagin clan; from Buqatu-salji, the Salji’ut clan; and from Bodonchar, the Borjigin clan.

Bodonchar then had a son by his principal wife, the one who had been promised to him in childhood, and he had another by a concubine who had come to him as part of his wife’s mother’s dowry.* This last was called Jewuredei, and even though he was a concubine’s son and could not inherit from his father, he was, at first, allowed to take part in the ceremony of the Jugeli. Here the skin, head and hooves of an ox, horse or sheep are stretched on a pole as an offering to the family ancestors.

But after Bodonchar’s death, the family noticed that a man from the Greater Uriangqai was constantly to be seen coming and going from Jewuredei’s tent, so they banished him from the Jugeli ceremony and told him to set up his own clan. Thus Jewuredei became the father of the Jeured.

* Three types of dowry were customary during the period covered by the *History* — that which remained under the bride’s jurisdiction (including housemaids, livestock and valuables); that which was given to the groom by the bride’s parents (over which the bride had no rights); and the items of clothing given by the bride to the groom’s parents on first meeting.

Qabichi-ba'atur's* son was called Menen-tuden—the Great Chief—and he in his turn had seven sons—Qachikuluk, Qachin, Qachi'u, Qachula, Qachi'un, Qaraldai and Nachin-ba'atur.

Qachi-kuluk had a son, Qaidu, born to Mother Nomolun, while Qachin's son was given the name Noyagidai, because of his lordly and overbearing temperament. From him the Noyakin clan was descended. Qachi'u's son was called Barulatai because he had a clumsy body and crude table manners—from him the Barulas clan was descended. Qachula's sons had vulgar eating habits too, so they were called Big Barula and Small Barula, and they were the fathers of all the other Barulas clans.

There was no leader among Qaraldai's sons—they stirred the porridge together and formed the Buda'at clan. Qachi'un's son was called Adarkidai: he was thoroughly obstinate in his dealings with his brothers and sisters, and broke away to form the Adargin clan.

So from all these sons were descended the clans of the Uru'ut and the Mangqut; the Tayyichi'ut, Besut, Oronar, Qongqotan and Arulat clans, and the clans of Sonit, Qabturqas and Geniges.

And over them all ruled Qabul Khan, Lord of all the Mongols. And after him, Ambaqai Khan, the son of Senggum-bilqe, who was specially chosen by Qabul Khan even though he had seven sons of his own.

Then Ambaqai Khan promised his daughter in marriage to a Tatar people who lived on the river Urshi'un, between the Bayur and Kolen lakes. And while he was escorting her there, he was captured by the Juyin Tatars—the frontier army of the Jins—and dragged before the Altan Khan of the Kitad.

Using a Besutei man, Balaqachi, as a messenger, he managed to get a message out to Qabul Khan's son Qutula, and to one of his own ten sons. The message was:

'I who am Khan of all, and Lord of all Nations, have been taken prisoner by the Tatars while escorting my own daughter to her wedding. Do not trust as I have trusted. Vow vengeance

* *ba'atur*: hero.

on mine enemies until your fingernails splinter and your ten fingers rot.'

Meanwhile Yisugei-ba'atur was flying hawks down by the Onon river when he ran into Yeke-chiledu of the Merkit, who was taking his new wife home. Craning his neck for a closer look, Yisugei saw a woman whose complexion was of unparalleled beauty. He galloped swiftly back to his yurt and fetched his brothers, and together they returned, intent on capture.

When Chiledu saw them he was afraid. He whacked his dun horse on the rump, and galloped back round the hill to where his wife—the Lady Ho'elun—was waiting in their cart. By then the brothers were close behind him.

'Did you see their faces?' asked Ho'elun urgently. 'They're after your life. There will be girls wherever you go—unmarried ones, sitting up on the front seat of their waggons, married ones hidden away from prying eyes. As long as you're alive you have a chance of finding another woman to love. Perhaps you will call her Ho'elun. Oh, save your life, Chiledu, and as long as you live remember the kiss and the smell of me!'

And so saying she took off her shirt, and thrust it towards him. Even as he bent forward to take it, the three men came round the spur of the hill, and Chiledu clapped his whip to his horse's rump, and fled upstream along the Onon river.

They pursued him over seven hills before they came back to where Ho'elun sat in the waggon. Then Yisugei-ba'atur took the leading rein while his elder brother went ahead and the younger walked beside the shafts. As they went their way, Lady Ho'elun said: 'My husband Chiledu,

in the rough wind
his hair has never blown,
in the wild land
his belly has never hungered . . .

What will become of him?' And as she rocked to and fro her plaits swung in a frenzy against her breasts and her back. 'What will become of me?' she cried aloud, and the Onon

river churned and the forest echoed to the sound of her weeping.

As he walked along beside the shafts the younger brother said:

‘The man you embraced
has crossed many ridges,
the man for whom you cry
has forded many rivers.
However hard you weep
from however far away,
he will not see you,
and should you search for him
you will not find the way.

Calm down,’ he advised.

Then Yisugei took Lady Ho’elun into his yurt and that is the story of her capture.

As Ambaqai Khan had sent messages both to Qada’an and Qutula, the Mongol and Tayyichi’ut clans gathered together in the Qorqonaq forest beside the Onon river. There they made Qutula their khan, and there was much dancing and feasting in celebration. They danced round the Many-Leaved Tree of Qorqonaq for so long that the dust came up to their knees and they wore a trench in the earth almost to their chests.

As soon as he became khan, Qutula rode out against the Tatars to avenge Ambaqai. Thirteen times he fought with Koton-baraqa and Jali-buqa, and thirteen times he was defeated.

In the meantime Yisugei-ba’atur was making raids on Temujin-uge, Qori-buga and other Tatar chieftains, and when he got back he found to his delight that Lady Ho’elun was pregnant. They were camped at Deli’un-boldaq on the Onon river at the time, and that was where Chinggis Khan was born. They gave him the name of his father’s defeated enemy, Temujin, and he was born holding a clot of blood in his hand as big as a knucklebone.

Lady Ho’elun went on to have four sons — Temujin, Qasar,

Qachi'un and Temuge — and a daughter, Temulun. Temujin was nine when his sister was born, and it was then that his father decided to find him a wife from among his mother's relations. Father and son set out together, and between Chekchar and Chiqurgu they met Dei-sechen, the Wise Uncle of the Onggirat tribe.

Dei-sechen greeted them, asking: 'Where are you going?'

Yisugei replied: 'I'm taking this boy of mine to the Olqu-nu'ut clan to see if his mother's brothers can provide him with a wife.'

Then Dei-sechen said: 'That boy has fire in his eyes, and his face burns bright. Listen, Yisugei, I had a dream last night. I dreamed that a white falcon flew down out of the sky clasping the sun and moon in its claws, and landed on my hand. I talked to the others about it: we could look up at the sun and the moon, but we couldn't get near them. Yet a white gerfalcon brought them within my grasp. What did it mean? Yisugei, it was a good dream: it showed your coming and that of your son. What else could it have been but a good omen for our people?'

'From time immemorial the Onggirat have

taken the colour of our sisters' children,
taken the colour of our daughters' faces.

Our clan cannot compete:

we give instead our daughters to the khans,
our fair-faced daughters riding high on waggons
drawn by camels,
sent off at the trot,
until they take their places on a throne.

Our clan cannot compete:

instead we set our fair-faced daughters up,
each daughter on the front seat of a waggon
drawn by a camel,
black or darkly grey . . .
We send her off until at last she sits
upon a throne beside one of your own,

a lady fit for a lord . . .

Of old the Onggirat have been shielded by women:

we have made our daughters queens,
those queens have pleaded for us,
their complexions answered for us,
and we have hidden behind
the faces of our sisters' children.

Our sons are renowned for their camping grounds,
our daughters for the fairness of their faces.

Come to my tent, Yisugei. My daughter is young. You should look at her.'

And Dei-sechen led them, the man and the boy, to his yurt and bade them dismount.

When Yisugei saw Dei-sechen's daughter, he was entranced by the light in her face, the fire in her eyes. She was ten years old — a year older than Temujin — and her name was Borte. She lingered in Yisugei's thoughts all night, and the following day he went to Dei-sechen and asked that he might have her for his son.

Then Dei-sechen said: 'If many men had asked for my daughter's hand, and I had finally given her away, I should have earned the respect of all my kin. If I give her away to the first who asks for her, I shall forfeit that respect. But I don't want a daughter of mine to grow old on her own doorstep, and I want you to have my daughter for your son. Leave him here as my son-in-law and go your way.'

And so they were agreed.

Yisugei-ba'atur said: 'I leave you my son to be your son-in-law. Be warned: he has a terrible fear of dogs.* Keep him away from them.'

And giving Dei-sechen his spare horse as a present, Yisugei said farewell to his son and departed.

At Chekcher in the Yellow steppe country he came across some Tatars who were feasting. By this time he was thirsty,

* In fact there is no further mention of this fear in the *History*. It may be a reference — well founded as it turns out — to Yisugei's enemies (see below).

so he rode up to them, hoping for food and drink. But the Tatars recognised him.

'It is Yisugei-kiyan,' they whispered, remembering how he had robbed and insulted them in the past. So they mixed poison into the food they offered him, and on his way home he was violently sick. By the time he reached his yurt Yisugei was very ill, and after three days it seemed clear that he would die.

In the year 1110 Yisugei said: 'I am going to die. Is anyone near me?'

'I am here,' said Monglik, Charaqa's son.

Yisugei called him close. 'Monglik, my boy,' said he, 'I have children of my own. I left Temujin with his new bride only a few days ago, and it was on my way home that the Tatars took their revenge on me. Now I am dying. I beg you to look after my little ones for me—your brothers, your widowed sister-in-law. And fetch my son home, Monglik. Quickly.'

With that Yisugei died.

CHAPTER TWO

His childhood and youth. His marriage and the kidnapping of his wife, Lady Borte.

MONGLIK DID NOT STAY TO ASK QUESTIONS, BUT WENT IMMEDIATELY TO DEI-SECHEN.

‘My master is missing Temujin,’ he said. ‘His heart aches. I must take his son back to him.’

Dei-sechen answered: ‘If the *quda** is missing his son, he shall have him back. But let him return to me before long.’

So Monglik took Temujin home.

That spring Orbei and Soqatai, the wives of Ambaqai Khan, went up to the land where their ancestors lay buried. As was customary, they dressed as daughters-in-law, and they went without waiting for Lady Ho’elun. When she caught up with them she upbraided them:

‘Do you think you can keep me from my share of the sacrificial meat and drink, our ancestors’ offerings, just because my husband is dead and my children as yet unfledged? I see you eat before me shamelessly. You would have left me asleep and gone without me.’

Then the wives of Ambaqai Khan answered her, saying:

‘Who says that because we called you, we should feed you too?’

If you find food
you eat it.

Who says that because we invited you, we should feed you too?

If food is given to you
you eat it.

* *quda*: a relation by marriage or marriage contract.

Did you think Ambaqai was dead too? Is that why even you, Ho'elun, speak against us? We must find a way of leaving these mothers and children behind,' said they, 'we don't want to take them with us.'

And the next day a group of the Tayyichi'ut tribe, led by Tarqutai and Todo'en-girte, set off down the Onon river, leaving Lady Ho'elun and the other mothers and children behind. When Charaqa, Monglik's father, chided them, Todo'en-girte simply said:

'The deep water has dried up,
the shining stone is worn away.
It is over.'

And as they moved off they taunted the old man, saying: 'Who do you think you are, telling us what to do?' Then they struck him in the back with a spear.

Wounded, Charaqa came back to his yurt, and, as he lay there in dreadful pain, Temujin came to him. Charaqa said: 'All the people your good father gathered together have been tempted away by the Tayyichi'ut. When I chided them, this was my reward.'

Then Temujin wept and left the yurt, and Lady Ho'elun herself set off on horseback, carrying the clan flag, and managed to persuade half the people to return. Even then they wouldn't stay, but soon set off again in search of the Tayyichi'ut brothers. So Lady Ho'elun, the other mothers and their children were left in the camp.

Lady Ho'elun, a woman of wisdom,
brought up her little ones, nurtured her children,
wore her hat tall and tied it up tightly,
hoisted her skirts up, sashing them bravely,
running upstream on the banks of the Onon,
gathering wild pears, fruits of the region,
nourishing the bellies and throats of her children.
Born into pain was the lady, their mother,
reared into fortune her fortunate children.
Taking a pointed stick of the juniper,
digging up roots to nourish her children,

she fed them with onions, fed them with garlic,
saw how the sons of her belly could flourish,
reared them to rule by her noble example.

Thus on a diet of seeds they were nourished
and as wise men and lawgivers they flourished.
Thus on wild leeks and wild garlic were reared
the marvellous sons of a marvellous mother.

Powerful, straight and courageous they grew,
and, stalking together, said: 'We can help too.'
With rods, lines and hooks on the banks of the

Onon

they fished for the crookedest fish in the river,
with needles as fishhooks they took scad and
salmon,
with different nets they scooped up small fishes,
and, helping their mother, they grew and were
grateful.

One day when Temujin was fishing with his brothers, Qasar, Bekter and Belgutei, they caught a bright minnow. Bekter and Belgutei immediately snatched it away, at which Temujin and Qasar went back to the yurt and told their mother, saying: 'A bright minnow took our hook, but Bekter and Belgutei snatched our fish away from us.'

Then their noble mother said: 'You are always quarrelling, the younger ones with the elder. Why? You know the saying:

Apart from our shadows we have no friends,
Apart from our tails we have no meat.*

Who is going to look after us if we don't look after ourselves? You should be thinking about how to avenge yourselves on the Tayyichi'ut people. Instead you squabble like Old Mother Alan's son in the story. You should learn to pull together.'

Temujin and Qasar were not so easily satisfied. They said: 'Only yesterday we shot down a lark with a horn-tipped

* Mongolian sheep store thick deposits of fat on their tails, off which they feed (like a camel off his hump), and which serve as a food source for the Mongolians.

arrow, and they took that away too. How can we be friends when they do things like that?’

Throwing open the door, they went out.

There was Bekter, sitting on top of a small hill, minding the horses — a herd of pale bay geldings. Temujin crept up behind him and Qasar worked his way round to the front, but just as they were taking aim with their bows, Bekter saw them and said:

‘We are still smarting from our defeat at the hands of the Tayyichi’ut, and asking ourselves over and over again who should settle the score. You shouldn’t let someone like me be the dirt in your mouth, the fishbone in your throat. At a time like this,

apart from our shadows we have no friends,
apart from our tails we have no meat.

Don’t treat me like this; don’t put out the fire in my hearth. Don’t leave Belgutei lonely!’

Then, having spoken, he sat cross-legged and waited. Without a word Temujin and Qasar came on, one from behind, the other from in front, and when they were within range they shot Bekter and left his body where it fell.

When they returned to the yurt their noble mother saw what they had done written in their faces:

‘You destroyers,’ she said:

You two came out of my womb by accident:
you, with a black blood clot in your hand,
like a dog gnawing on its afterbirth,
like a panther ravaging among the rocks,
like a lion raging out of control,
like a monster swallowing its prey alive,
like a falcon harrying its own shadow,
like a pike’s indifferent and silent maw,
like a camel chewing the heel of its foal,
like a jackal defending the mouth of its den,
like a tiger hunting for the sake of hunting
or a wild dog attacking without need,
thus you have killed!

Apart from our shadows we have no friends,
apart from our tails, we have no meat.

At such a time! When our hatred should be directed at the Tayyichi'ut, and we are asking ourselves who shall be our champion and how we shall live, you two are revenging yourselves on each other!

And with much citing of old sayings and much quoting of the wisdom of the sages, she berated her sons for their foolish cruelty.

Not long afterwards, Tarqutai-kiriltuq of the Tayyichi'ut clan came to the camp with an armed guard and said:

'The lambs are shedding their fleece,
the sheep are growing up.'

By this he meant that it had not escaped the clan's notice that Temujin and his brothers were now nearly men.

Ho'elun was frightened and took the hint. She and her sons built a stockade in the thickest part of the forest. Even as Belgutei tore down the trees and hauled them into place, Qasar was keeping the enemy at bay by countering their fire, while the three younger children — Qachi'un, Temuge and Temulun — slipped into the safety of a narrow gorge. As the struggle continued the Tayyichi'ut clan shouted out:

'It's Temujin we're interested in. Send him out, and we won't bother the rest of you.'

When they heard this they quickly mounted Temujin on a horse and covered his escape. As he fled through the forest the Tayyichi'ut saw him and set off in hot pursuit. But he plunged into a thicket on the Tergune heights, and, as it was too thick for them to penetrate, they surrounded it and bided their time.

Temujin spent three nights in the thicket before he dared move. On the fourth night he cautiously led his horse towards the opening, but the saddle-straps and breast-straps worked loose, and he found that his saddle had fallen off somewhere behind him.

'The saddle-strap I can understand,' said Temujin to himself, 'but why should the breast-strap have come loose?'

Perhaps it's a sign from Heaven. I'd better go back.'

So he turned round and spent another three nights in the thicket.

Again on the fourth night he moved off cautiously towards the entrance, but this time a white rock, the size of a tent, fell and blocked the opening.

'Could this be a sign from Heaven too?' he asked himself; and, turning back, he spent a further three nights in the thicket.

Finally, after nine nights without food, he said to himself: 'Anything is better than dying here without a name. I will go out.'

The opening was still blocked by the white rock the size of a tent, but he cut through the trees at the side with the knife he carried for making arrows, and pushed his horse through.

As soon as he emerged the Taysichi'ut, who had been standing guard, pounced on him and led him away a prisoner.

After the capture of Temujin, Tarqutai-kiriltuq went to his people and ordered them to let him stay for one night at each of their camps in turn. On Red Circle Day,* which is the sixteenth day of the first month of summer and the day when the pasture begins to grow afresh, the Taysichi'ut sat down to feast until sunset on the banks of the Onon river. They took Temujin with them, but as luck would have it he was put in charge of a feeble young man, and, as the crowd broke up after the feast and the people began to make their way home, Temujin seized his chance. He jerked the rope attached to his wooden halter away from the boy, struck him on the head with it, and ran.

'If I lie down in the forest,' he thought, 'I'll soon be spotted.'

So, taking advantage of the wooden collar, or *cangue*, which had been used to fetter him, he launched himself down the torrential river, using the *cangue* as a pillow to keep his head above water.

In no time at all the feeble guard had raised the alarm.

* 'Red Circle Days' occurred on the sixteenth day of each lunar month, when it was thought that the sun and moon were facing each other. The night preceding a Red Circle Day was known as 'Circle Moon' or 'Full Moon'.

'I've lost the hostage,' he cried in a loud voice. And all the people came back and searched the Onon forest, for the moon was up and it was like day.

It so happened that Sorqan-shira of the Suldus was just passing by and he spotted Temujin lying in the torrent.

'So,' he said to Temujin, 'this is the kind of cleverness that makes men say of you: "There is a fire in his eyes and a light in his face." This is why you have roused the envy of your Tayyichi'ut kinsmen. Well, you just go on lying there. I won't tell.'

And having said this, he went away.

Meanwhile the Tayyichi'ut were saying to each other: 'We'd better go back and search again'; so when he caught up with them, Sorqan-shira said: 'Why don't we go back along exactly the same paths and look for the places we might have missed? Then we'll meet here again.'

They all agreed and set off, going back along exactly the same paths and searching as they went. Once more Sorqan-shira passed the place where Temujin was hiding and said:

'Your kinsmen are approaching: they are sharpening their mouths and their teeth. Lie still and keep your courage up.'

Then, when he heard them saying to each other: 'We'd better go back and search again', Sorqan-shira said: 'You Tayyichi'ut noblemen have lost a man in broad daylight, how can you hope to find him again at night? Why don't we go back down the same paths as before and make sure we haven't missed a single hiding place? If we can't find him this time, we'll call off the search until tomorrow morning. After all, a man in a wooden halter can't get very far!'

They agreed and resumed the search, and as they went their way Sorqan-shira slipped down to where Temujin lay and said: 'We have agreed to have one more look. If we fail to find you, we'll come back tomorrow. Wait until you see us going home, then try to find your mother and younger brothers! If anyone sees you, don't tell them about our meeting.'

And with that he disappeared.

When the Tayyichi'ut had given up the search and gone

away, Temujin thought to himself: 'I was forced to stay overnight in each camp in turn, and yesterday, when I stayed in Sorqan-shira's yurt, I could tell that his two sons were sorry for me. After all, they loosened my *cangue* so that I could sleep more comfortably. Just now Sorqan-shira found me hiding, but he chose not to give me away. Perhaps he will save me.'

So Temujin started off down the Onon river to look for Sorqan-shira's yurt.

It was outside Sorqan-shira's tent that the mares' milk was churned all through the night, so it was not difficult to find the right place. 'I'll hear the churning before I reach the yurt,' Temujin said to himself, and indeed he did. He presented himself to Sorqan-shira, who said: 'Didn't I tell you to go and look for your mother and brothers? Why have you come to me?'

But his two sons, Chimba and Chila'un, spoke up and said: 'When a sparrow wants to hide from a hawk where does it fly? Into a bush. Temujin has done the same. How can you be angry with him?'

They disapproved of their father's words, and, freeing Temujin from his halter, they burned it on the fire. Then they hid him in a cart full of sheeps' wool at the back of the yurt, instructing their younger sister, Qada'an,* to take care of him and not to breathe a word to a living soul.

By the third day the Tayyichi'ut were getting suspicious. 'Perhaps one of us has hidden him,' they said. 'We'd better search all the yurts.'

When they got to Sorqan-shira's yurt they even looked under the bed, and when they got to the cart they began to pull the wool away from the place where Temujin was crouching. They were on the point of uncovering his foot when Sorqan-shira said: 'How could anyone bury themselves in wool in this heat?' and the searchers climbed down and went away.

* Qada'an later became one of Chinggis Khan's wives: she was Queen of the 'Fourth Palace', i.e. the camp he established at Baljuna lake.

After they had gone Sorqan-shira said: 'You nearly had me blowing in the wind like ashes that time. Now off you go and find your mother and your younger brothers.'

He gave Temujin a white-mouthed, tawny mare that was barren, cooked him a fatted lamb, and prepared one small leather bag and another large one, full of kumiss. He did not give him a saddle or tinder pouch, but found him a bow and two arrows.* Then he sent him away.

Temujin set out, and eventually he arrived at the place where his mother and brothers had built the stockade. Then, following tracks in the grass, he went upstream along the Onon river and came to the point where the Kimurqa stream joins it from the west. Pursuing the course of the Kimurqa far upstream, he finally came upon his family, who were living on the Qorchukui hill on the Beder spur, overlooking the stream.

United again, mother and sons found themselves a camp site by the Koko lake on Black Heart mountain.† Called the Blue lake, it opens out of the Senggur river which rises in the Gurelgu mountains on the southern side of Burqan-qaldun. There they stayed, living on marmots and field-mice.

One day thieves stole up to the yurt, and, before anyone could stop them, disappeared, taking eight bay geldings with them. Without a horse between them, the brothers could only look on and wait for the return of Belgutei with their one remaining horse—a bald-tailed chestnut. He had been hunting for marmots and returned in the evening, after sunset, leading the horse which was laden with marmots swinging from the saddle.

His brothers told him about the theft of the geldings.

'I'll go after them!' said Belgutei, but Qasar said: 'Not you, you're not up to it. I'll go!'

* Without a tinder pouch, Temujin would not be tempted to stop for the night and make a fire. He was given only two arrows so that he could protect himself but could not engage in combat; and his horse was mediocre—possibly so that if he was caught there was nothing to connect him with Sorqan-shira.

† After Chinggis Khan's marriage to Borte, this became the 'First Palace'. His main camps all became 'Palaces' on the strength of his marriage alliances.

Then Temujin said: 'None of you shall go. This is my job.'

And he mounted the chestnut and set off, following the light bay geldings by means of their tracks in the grass.

For three days and nights he pursued them, and on the morning of the fourth day he met a strong, handsome youth, who was milking the mares in a large herd of horses. When he asked about the geldings, the young man said: 'Someone drove eight light bay geldings through here this morning, just before sunrise. Come, I'll show you where they went.'

He made Temujin leave the bald-tailed chestnut, giving him a black-backed grey instead. Then, without even going to his yurt, he hid his leather bag and bucket in the grass in the field, mounted a swift dun pony, and said:

'My friend, you have exhausted yourself on your journey. Your sufferings are mine, as are all men's. My father is Naqu the Rich and I am his only son. My name is Bo'orchu.* Come, I will go with you.'

For three days and nights they tracked the light bay geldings until, on the evening of the fourth day, they arrived at a large camp defended by a corral of carts. And there were the light bay geldings, grazing together at the edge of the camp.

'Stay here, my friend,' said Temujin, 'while I separate the geldings out and drive them over here.'

But Bo'orchu said: 'I came as your friend. Do you think I can stand here and watch you?'

So together they dashed in and drove out the light bay geldings.

Immediately the people rose in pursuit and came after them on horseback. One man on a white horse, carrying a pole with a lasso on the end, almost caught up with them, and Bo'orchu cried urgently: 'Give me the bow and arrow, my friend! Let me shoot at him.'

But Temujin called back: 'I'm not having you hurt for my sake. I shall exchange an arrow or two with him myself'; and so saying, he swung round in his saddle and fired. The man

* Bo'orchu later became one of Chinggis Khan's marshals, one of his 'Four Best Geldings' (see Appendix A).

on the white horse reined back, gesturing with his lasso, and his companions caught up with him; but even as they came level the sun set and dusk closed in. Soon their pursuers were out of sight, left behind in the darkness.

Temujin and Bo'orchu travelled all that night and for the next three nights until they reached Bo'orchu's yurt.

'My friend,' said Temujin, 'without you I couldn't have got my horses back. Let's divide them between us. It's only fair.'

But Bo'orchu said: 'You are my friend. When you arrived exhausted in my fields, it was as a friend I sought to help you. I chose to come with you, so how could I possibly seek a reward? My father is well-known and I am his only son. The riches he has are more than enough for me. If I expected a reward for helping you, what sort of help would that be? I don't want anything.'

They rode up to Naqu-bayyan's yurt, where they found the old man snivelling and weeping because he thought he had lost his son. As soon as he saw Bo'orchu, he alternately cried and scolded, until Bo'orchu said: 'Father, what is all this about? My good friend arrives exhausted. I go to help him. Now I am back.' And so saying he galloped off into the open fields to retrieve the leather bag and bucket which he had hidden there.

Then they killed a fat lamb for Temujin, strapped it to his horse, and tied a bag of kumiss to his saddle. As they made these provisions, Naqu-bayyan said: 'You two are young. Look after each other, and don't abandon each other!'

Temujin left, and after travelling for three days and three nights he arrived back at the yurt by the Senggur stream. By this time Ho'elun, Qasar and the rest of the family were beginning to worry, but when they saw him they rejoiced.

In 1178 Temujin and Belgutei set out on an important expedition. They went down the Kerulen river to look at Lady Borte, Dei-sechen's daughter, to whom Temujin had been promised when he was only nine years old. Dei-sechen of the Onggirat lived between two mountains, Chekcher and Chiquurqu, and when he saw the young men his heart rejoiced.

'I knew the Tayyichi'ut were jealous of you,' he said, 'and

I nearly despaired. But here you are at last!' With great ceremony Temujin was married to the Lady Borte, and afterwards Dei-sechen accompanied them as far as Uraq-chol on a bend of the Kerulen river. There he turned back, but his wife, Chotan, went on into the Gurelgu mountains to bring her daughter to Temujin's family.

After Temujin had sent Chotan home, he asked Belgutei to ride to Bo'orchu, saying: 'Let us be companions.' Bo'orchu was delighted, and without saying anything to his father rode back with Belgutei to Temujin's yurt,

on a chestnut horse with a hunched back,
his grey woollen cloak across the saddle.

And that is how Temujin and Bo'orchu became companions.

Soon after, they moved their camp from the Senggur stream to a place called Burgi-ergi, 'Muddy Banks', at the source of the Kerulen river. Borte's mother, Chotan, had given Temujin a dowry in the form of a black sable jacket, and the three brothers, Temujin, Qasar and Belgutei, took it and went off towards the Black forest. In earlier days their father, Yisugei, had befriended Ong Khan,* Lord of the Kereyit clan, and they had sworn eternal brotherhood.

'Anyone who swore eternal brotherhood with my father is like a father to me,' declared Temujin, and, knowing that Ong Khan was living down by the Tu'ula river, the brothers went to find him.

When they arrived, Temujin said: 'In days gone by you and my father swore eternal brotherhood, so you are like a father to me. I've just got married and this is my wife's dowry. I'd like you to have it.' So saying, he held out the black sable jacket.

Then the Ong Khan was greatly touched and said:

'In return for the black sable jacket
I shall bring you the men who forsook you,
in return for the black sable jacket
I shall bring you the clans that are scattered.

* At this stage, To'oril Khan: he was given the title of Ong Khan after the battle with the Tatars (see Chapter Four).

From the depths of my bowels
to the bones of my breast
I give you my thanks.'

Back they went, and while they were camped on the banks of the Burgi an old man of the Uriangqad clan called Jarchi'udai came down from Burqan-qaldun carrying a pair of bellows on his back and leading his son, Jelme. He came to Temujin and said:

'When you were born on the banks of the Onon I gave you swaddling clothes of sable. I also gave you my son Jelme, but kept him in trust for you until he was older. Now put him up on your saddle! Let him guard the door of your tent!' And so saying, he ceremoniously handed Jelme over to Temujin.*

Early one morning, when the light of the dawning day showed yellow, Qo'aqchin, an old woman who was working in Mother Ho'elun's tent, suddenly roused herself.

'Mother, mother,' she cried, 'get up quickly. The whole earth is shaking, and I can hear the pounding of swift horses' hooves! The terrible Tayyichi'ut are coming! Mother, quickly, rouse yourself!'

Lady Ho'elun was on her feet straight away. 'Quickly,' she said, 'wake the children.'

Instantly alert, Temujin and the others leaped to their feet, caught hold of their horses, and mounted. Temujin, Lady Ho'elun, Qasar, Qachi'un, Temuge, Belgutei, Bo'orchu and Jelme all took a horse apiece, and Lady Ho'elun gathered up Temulun and set her in front of her on the saddle. There was one horse over, but this was needed as a spare, so Lady Borte was left without anything to ride.

While it was still early Temujin and his brothers struck camp and rode off in the direction of Burqan. Meanwhile the old woman, Qo'aqchin, hid Lady Borte in a black-covered waggon harnessed to an ox with spots on his back.

They moved off upstream in the dim light of daybreak, following the Tengelik river, and as they went a group of

* Jelme later became one of Chinggis Khan's generals, his 'Four Hounds' (see Appendix A).

soldiers trotted by and turned back to ask them who they were.

The old woman who was leading the ox said: 'I'm Temujin's servant. I came to shear sheep at the great yurt and now I'm going home to my own family.'

'Is Temujin there?' they asked. 'How far away is his yurt?'

'Not far,' said Qo'aqchin, 'but as for whether Temujin is there or not, I don't know. I left before daybreak by the back door.'

At this the soldiers trotted off. Then the old woman whipped up the ox with the spotted back and they set off again at a cracking pace. But alas! the axle of the cart broke.

'Look,' said she, 'the axle is broken. We'd better go into the forest on foot and run!'

But even as she said it the soldiers came back at a trot with Belgutei's mother mounted behind on one of their horses, her legs dangling.

'Come on,' they said, 'show us what you have in your cart!'

'Sheep's wool,' answered Qo'aqchin.

But the officers told their men to dismount and take a proper look, and when they lifted the door of the cart out they found what appeared to be a lady of rank sitting inside. They pulled her out, mounted both her and Qo'aqchin behind them on their horses, and took them away. Following Temujin's tracks in the grass, they went up towards Burqan-qaldun.

Three of the soldiers were of the Merkit family. They must have circled Burqan-qaldun three times but they couldn't find Temujin. They tried to penetrate the area but it was a mass of sinking mud and dense forest, and they were like gluttoned bears—unable to find their way in. They were right behind him, but they couldn't find him.

The names of the Merkit tribesmen were Toqto'a, Dayyir and Qa'atai, and they all came from different branches of the family. They wanted revenge because, all those years ago, Lady Ho'elun had been snatched from Chiledu and stolen away.

Now, frustrated, they said to each other: 'They took Ho'elun. We have taken their women. We have had our

revenge.' And they came down Burqan-qaldun and went home with their prizes.

Meanwhile Temujin was wondering if the three Merkit had gone, or if they were still lying in wait. He sent Belgutei, Bo'orchu and Jelme to find out. The three men followed the Merkit for three days until they were sure they were rid of them.

Then Temujin came down from Burqan-qaldun and beat his breast. 'Mother Qo'aqchin', he cried,

'hears like a weasel,
sees like a stoat.
On the dotted tracks
she saved my skin.

I followed the deer trails,
built yurts of willow,
climbed on the Burqan,
on Burqan-qaldun;
just like an insect,
a louse, I was hunted:
alone I was spared.

I followed the elk trails
on one horse only,
built yurts of twigs
and climbed on the Qaldun,
on Qaldun-burqan,
and like a swallow's
my life was granted.

I was afraid,' he said. 'I shall sacrifice to Burqan-qaldun every morning, and every day I shall pray to the mountain. And this shall be done even by the descendants of my descendants.'

Then, facing the sun, he draped his sash round his neck and hung his hat by its cord from his arm. And beating his chest with his hand and kneeling nine times to the sun, he gave up his offerings and prayers.

CHAPTER THREE

The rescue of Lady Borte.

A sworn brotherhood. Temujin
is chosen by his people
to become tribal khan.

WHEN THEY HAD FINISHED THEIR DISCUSSION the three of them — Temujin, Qasar and Belgutei — went off to visit To'oril, the Ong Khan of the Kereyit, who was at that time living in the Qara forest beside the Tu'ula river. Temujin told him:

'When we were still unfledged, three of the Merkit tribe came and robbed me of my wife and my unborn son. Khan, my father, can you save them for me? That's what I've come to ask you.'

To'oril Khan replied: 'Didn't I tell you last time that you could depend on me? Your father and I were sworn brothers, and when you brought me the sable jacket you asked me to be a father to you. When you put the coat round my shoulders I gave you my answer:

In return for this sable
I will unite your scattered people,
In return for this sable
I will unite those who abandoned you.

And I said:

From the depths of my breast
I give you my thanks,
from the depths of my bowels
I give you my thanks.

Did you not hear my words? Now let me stand by them:

In return for this sable
I shall trample the Merkit;

Lady Borte shall be saved.
In return for this sable
I shall trample the Merkit;
Lady Borte shall be rescued.

Now. Send a message to your younger brother, Jamuqa. He must be somewhere in the Qorqonaq forest. Tell him to take twenty thousand fighting men to form a left flank. Meanwhile, I'll set out from here with twenty thousand fighting men to form the right flank, and we'll meet at a time and place to be decided by him.'

So the three of them, Temujin, Qasar and Belgutei, returned to their yurt from To'oril Khan's camp, and as soon as they arrived Temujin sent the others to Jamuqa, saying: 'Tell my sworn brother that the Merkit came,

That my bed is emptied by them,
that my heart is broken by them.
Are we not one family?
How can we get revenge?
Are we not blood brothers?
How can we get revenge?'

This was the message he sent to Jamuqa, his sworn brother, and he added also the words of To'oril, the khan of Kereyit: '“In former days your father came to my side when I needed him. Remember, Temujin, that I will be your friend in time of trouble. With twenty thousand men I shall protect your right flank in the battle; for twenty thousand more call on your brother, Jamuqa, and let him decide the time and place of meeting.”'

When he heard these words, Jamuqa said: 'Temujin, my sworn brother,

My heart aches
to know your bed is empty;
my liver aches
to know your heart is broken.
Let us in vengeance
rescue our Lady Borte.
Let us in vengeance

ravage the thieving Merkit,
 break up the thieving Merkit
 and bring her back,
 bring back our Lady Borte.

Now,

The slap of saddle-flaps becomes
 the beating of drums
 to Toqto'a the Nervous
 out on the Bu'ura steppe.
 Dayyir-usun the Treacherous sees
 the flexing bow and quiver
 and he flees
 to Talqun island
 in the two great rivers.
 Qa'atai the Disputatious
 notes how the tumbleweed
 takes refuge in the forest,
 and follows its example.
 Now he must be
 already on the Qaraji steppe.

We must cut across the Kilqo river.
 Let the abundant sedges
 bind up our rafts;
 let us go!

Toqto'a the Nervous —
 we shall drop through your smoke-hole,
 and crash through your door frame;
 we shall pillage your women,
 and murder your children,
 and smash down your door frame,
 destroying its sanctity,
 robbing your people
 until they are empty!

And Jamuqa said again: 'Tell my sworn brother Temujin and
 my elder brother To'oril that these are my words:

For my part I have pledged myself
to the spear-tipped banner,
have beaten the drum made of black bull's hide
till it rumbled like thunder.
I have put on my armour,
I have mounted my swift black horse,
I have grasped my steel-tipped spear,
And set my peach-bark arrow to the string.

Now let us ride;
let us strike at the Qa'at-Merkit!

Tell him this:

I have pledged myself to his banner,
and beaten the cow-hide drum
till it rumbled like thunder.
I have strapped on my armour of leather,
and mounted my swift grey horse.
With my hilted sword* in my hand,
I have set my notched arrow to the string.

Now to the death
let us fight with the Uduyit-Merkit.

And tell them this: that when To'oril, my elder brother, rides forth he should make his way to Temujin by the south side of the Burqan-qaldun, travelling up the Onon river to its source. We shall meet there! I will go upstream with ten thousand men to where ten thousand of my brother's people wait. We shall meet at the source of the Onon river, and so farewell.'

Qasar and Belgutei returned to Temujin with Jamuqa's message, and Temujin immediately relayed it to To'oril. Accordingly, To'oril set out along the south side of the Burqan-qaldun with twenty thousand men, and Temujin, anticipating him, retreated upstream along the Tunggelik to give him space. Gradually the three armies, led by To'oril, Temujin, and To'oril's younger brother, Jaqa-gambu, converged, until

* Probably a sword made of two pieces, rather than forged out of one.

at Ayil-qaraqana on the Kimurqa river, they pitched their camp together.

Then, with their armies, the three lords set out for the source of the Onon, where they found Jamuqa waiting for them. He had arrived at the appointed place three days earlier, and, after they had greeted one another, he was quick to confront them:

‘If a meeting has been agreed
neither snow nor rain
should impede you
or make you late.

Did we not agree a place and time? When the Mongols say “yes” are they not bound by an oath?

Those who come late
we cast out from the ranks!’

To’oril answered him, saying: ‘You are right, younger brother, we are three days late at the appointed place and it is your duty to punish and rebuke us.’ And they discussed their various grievances at the meeting.

From Botoqan-bo’orjin, they moved off to the Kilqo river, and, when they arrived, lashed rafts together to take them across to the Bu’ura steppe. At Toqto’a-beki’s yurt they stopped

and smashed their way in
through doorway and smoke-hole;
his wife and his son
they robbed and then murdered;
his sacred doorway
they broke and defiled;
his loyal people
they crippled and looted.

Even as Toqto’a-beki* slept, some fishermen, sable hunters and sentries who had been down by the river ran through the

* *beki*: a high-ranking officer, entitled to ride a white horse and wear white clothing.

night to warn him of the danger. They roused him just in time: with a few of his men, he fled downstream to join Dayyir-usun of the Uwas-Merkit in Barqujin territory.

Then there was panic among the Merkit people. Down the Selengge river they ran at dead of night, closely pursued by our soldiers who robbed and killed anyone they overtook. And among those who followed was Temujin, crying aloud: 'Borte, Borte!'

Then Lady Borte, who was fleeing for her life, heard Temujin's voice and recognised it. She leaped from the still-moving cart and came running to him. Even in the darkness she and her maid could recognise the trappings of Temujin's horse, and together they seized the reins. By the light of the moon he saw her, and, as he jumped from his horse, he took her in his arms.

Then Temujin sent word to To'oril Khan and his blood-brother Jamuqa, saying: 'I've found what I was looking for. Let us forgo the chase for tonight and pitch camp here.' And so, as the Merkit clan had scattered in panic, they decided to pitch camp and rest there. That is how Lady Borte was saved by Temujin from the Merkit people.

Previously the three Merkit chiefs, Toqto'a-beki, Dayyir-usun and Qa'atai-darmala of the Three Hundred Men, had consulted each other, saying:

'It all began when Yisugei-ba'atur kidnapped the Lady Ho'elun from Toqto'a's younger brother. In revenge we circled Burqan-qaldun three times and captured Lady Borte from Temujin. We set Chilger-boko to guard her, and this he did at first. But after a while he abandoned her, saying:

"The black crow,
condemned to a diet of scraps,
aspired to the flesh of goose and crane.
So I, Chilger the Unfortunate,
aspired to the Lady Borte
and brought calamity
on all the Merkit people!
Ignoble Chilger,

bow your black head to receive the blow!
I have only one life to save;
I will creep into a black gorge,
but who will shield me?

The buzzard, that bad bird,
condemned to a diet of rats and mice,
aspired to the flesh of goose and crane.
So I, Chilger, doubly cursed,
became that lady's keeper,
bringing calamity
to all the Merkit people!
Oh Chilger, black, deformed,
bare your skull to the blow!
Your life's not worth sheep-shit,
yet I long to creep
into the darkest hole,
into the blackest gorge.
Your life is not worth sheep-shit.
Who will save me?"

And so saying, he turned and fled.'

Meanwhile Qa'atai-darmala had been captured. They put a wooden yoke on him and sent him off on foot towards Burqan-qaldun. Belgutei, who had heard that his mother was being held in that particular camp, immediately set off to rescue her. He found her yurt, but even as he went in through the right side his mother, dressed in ragged sheepskin, ran out through the left.

'I've been told my sons are khans now,' she said to a man outside, 'while I have been given to a commoner. How can I look them in the face?' And so saying she ran away and slunk into the thick forest. Belgutei searched for her frantically, firing horn-tipped arrows indiscriminately at the Merkit people.

'Bring back my mother,' he shouted.

By now the three hundred Merkit who had circled Burqan-qaldun, together with their children and their children's children, were as though they had never been. They were crushed and dispersed on the wind like ashes. Of the survivors,

those who could be embraced—their women—were taken as concubines, and those who could serve indoors—their children—were taken as slaves.

Temujin gave respectful thanks to both To'oril Khan and Jamuqa:

'To'oril, my father; Jamuqa, my sworn brother: by Heaven and Earth and your friendship are my power and might increased:

Appointed by Mighty Heaven,
invited by Mother Earth,
we have emptied the breasts
of the Merkit, enemy of the people.
Their livers we have torn in half,
their beds we have emptied,
their kinsmen we have destroyed,
their survivors we have spared
and then enslaved.'

'This is the story of the defeat of the Merkit people. It is done. Let us now withdraw,' they said to each other.

Meanwhile, as the Merkit were scattering in a panic, our soldiers found a small boy who had been left behind in the camp. He was only five years old, but there was fire in his eyes. His name was Kuchu, which means the Strong. He was dressed in a suit of suede otter-skins sewn together, with a hat of sable and boots made out of the skin of a doe's forelegs. The soldiers took him straight away to Mother Ho'elun and gave him to her as a battle-prize.

Then Temujin, To'oril Khan and Jamuqa came together and they

razed the tents of the traders
and plundered the tall-plumed women.

After that they withdrew from Talqun island, between the rivers Orqon and Selenge. Temujin and Jamuqa departed together towards the Qorqonaq forest, and To'oril Khan went to the north of Burqan-qaldun, crossing two passes, where he took time off to hunt wild beasts before returning to the Black forest on the Tu'ula river.

Meanwhile Temujin and Jamuqa pitched their camp together in the Qorgonaq forest. They remembered the oath they had sworn when Temujin was only eleven — to be blood brothers forever. On that occasion they had sealed their brotherhood by exchanging knucklebones — Jamuqa's came from a roebuck while Temujin's was bone filled with copper — and afterwards they had played each other on the icebound Onon river, calling each other 'Anda', which means 'Blood Brother'.

Afterwards, when the spring came and they went out to practise with their pinewood bows, Jamuqa gave Temujin a whistling arrowhead which he had made himself by gluing the horns of a two-year-old calf together and boring holes into it to make it sing. In return Temujin had given Jamuqa a horn-tipped arrow with a cypress butt. And once again they had renewed their oath.

Now they swore brotherhood for a third time. In olden days men used to say: 'Those who swear brotherhood share one life. They become joint protectors of that life and never abandon each other.' That was the way in which Jamuqa and Temujin loved each other, and they confessed their love and renewed the bond between them, saying: 'Let us love one another.'

During the war with the Merkit Temujin had looted a golden sash from Toqto'a, which he gave to Jamuqa. He also gave him Toqto'a's horse, a four-year-old fawn stallion with a black mane and tail. Jamuqa also had some plunder — a golden sash and a horse as white as a kid, with a horn on its forehead, which had belonged to Dayyir-usun — and these he gave to Temujin. There, by the Many-Leaved Tree on the south side of the Quldaqar cliff in the Qorqonaq forest, they pledged their love. A day of feasting followed, and then another, and that night they slept together under one quilt.

They stayed together for a year and a half. Then, one day, they decided to strike camp, and on the sixteenth day of the first month of summer — the Day of the Red Circle — they set off.

As the two men walked together in front of the waggons Jamuqa said:

‘Shall we camp beside the mountain,
ideal for our horses and our tents,
or shall our home be by the river,
with comfort for our shepherds and their stomachs?’

Temujin paused, not understanding the drift of Jamuqa’s words. As he stood there in silence the convoy of waggons passed by him and he found himself beside the cart in which his mother, Ho’elun, was sitting.

‘Mother,’ he said, ‘my sworn brother has just said these words to me:

“Shall we camp beside the mountain,
ideal for our horses and our tents,
or shall our home be by the river
with comfort for our shepherds and their stomachs?”

I didn’t understand, so I did not answer him. I thought I’d ask you instead.’

Before Ho’elun could say a word, Lady Borte spoke:

‘They say your sworn brother Jamuqa tires easily. Now it seems that he is tired of us. He has given us due warning: we should not camp with him, but move on. We should travel all night if necessary.’

Temujin took her advice. They rode all night without stopping, and in the middle of their journey they passed through Tayyichi’ut territory. The Tayyichi’ut people, alarmed at their coming, set off by mistake in the direction of Jamuqa’s camp, but they left a small boy behind. His name was Kokochu, which means Seller of Herbal Medicines, and he was taken to Mother Ho’elun who brought him up as her own.

On they journeyed, and at daybreak they met the three Toqura’un brothers who had also been on the road. Gradually a crowd gathered: Qada’an-daldurqan of the Tarqut and his five brothers; Unggur, son of Monggetu-kiyan, and his followers; Qubilai and Qudus and their brothers from the Barulas. There were men from the Jalayir, from the Arulat, from the Besud, from the Urianqad, from the Qongqotan and from the Sukeken. There were men from the Ne’udei, the Olqunu’ud, the Qorolas, the Dorben and the Ikires. And

among them were Qubilai and Sube'etei-ba'atur, who were to become Temujin's generals.

Then Qorchi came, saying: 'Jamuqa and I were born of one woman and shared one womb. I would never have left him but for an omen: I saw an off-white cow which came and circled round Jamuqa. First it butted his waggon, then it butted the man himself, breaking one of its horns on him.

"Give me my horn," pleaded the cow, and repeated the plea again and again, bellowing and pawing the ground so that the air was thick with dust. And as the cow bellowed, so a yellow-white ox lifted up the great joist of the waggon, harnessed itself and set off along the great road. He was coming after you, Temujin. And he too bellowed repeatedly, saying: "Thus it is decreed by Heaven and Earth. Temujin shall be our master. Behold, I am bearing the nation to him."

'I myself saw the heavenly signs and heard the heavenly words. Temujin, when you are master of us all, how will you reward my prophecy?'

Then Temujin said: 'If what you have said is true and I am to be the master of this nation, then I will make you commander of ten thousand men.'

'How should that content me? Let me have more. Let me have the choice of your most beautiful and blameless girls, and let me make thirty of them my wives. And more: whenever I speak, turn your head and listen!'

Then Qunan came, leading the Geniges, and Daritai-otchi-gin after him. Tribe after tribe deserted Jamuqa to pitch their camp with Temujin at Ayil-qaraqana on the Kimurqa stream. And when Temujin felt that the defections were over, he moved his people into the Gurelgu mountains, to the Blue lake at Qara-jurugen.

In the year 1189, Altan, Quchar and Sacha-beki reached an agreement. They went to Temujin and said:

'We will make you khan,
and when you are khan

we shall gallop after all your enemies,
bring you girls and women of good complexion,

bring palace-tents and foreign girls with cheeks
like silk, bring geldings at the trot,
and give them to you.

We shall hunt for wary animals,
and drive towards you creatures of the steppe,
so that they brush against your very belly,
so that they press against your very thighs,
the creatures of the cliff.

In days of battle, should we disobey,
then from our wives and women cut us off,
then from our sacred families cut us off,
and batter our black heads upon the earth.

In days of peace, if we should disobey,
then from our men and servants exile us,
then from our wives and children exile us,
and banish us into the wilderness!

Thus they swore, and they gave Temujin the name of Chinggis Khan and made him their lord.

The first thing Chinggis Khan did was to allow Ogolei-cherbi, Qachi'un-toqura'un, Jetei and Doqolqu-cherbi to carry quivers. Then Onggur, Soyiketu-cherbi and Qada'andaldurqan came to him and said:

'You shall not lack your morning drink,
nor shall you lack your evening drink.'

And they became the chief cooks.

Next Degei said:

'I can make soup
from a two-year wether.
Pied sheep and brown ewes
shall I herd, and I shall fill
your folds and pens with sheep
that you shall sup
morning and evening.
Greedy I am, and useless too:
let me herd sheep for you
and eat their bowels!'

So Degei became a shepherd.

Then Degei's younger brother said:

'I shall take charge of the waggons,
so that their lynchpins shall hold
and their axles stay firm
on the broad highway,

for I shall build the travelling carts.'

Then Dodai-cherbi added: 'I would like to be in charge of the women and servants.'

Then Chinggis Khan appointed his generals. He decreed that Qubilai, Chilgutei and Qarqai-tuqura'un, together with Qasar, should carry swords. Then to Belgutei and Qaraldai-toqura'un he said:

'Keep my geldings to hand
and be my equerries!'

After that he decreed that the three Tayyichi'ut brothers, Qutu, Morichi and Mulqalqu, should herd the horses, while to four others — Arqai-qasar, Taqai, Sukegei and Cha'urqan — he ordered:

'Be my long-range arrows,
Be my short-range arrows!'

*

Then Sube'etei-ba'adur offered his services, saying:

'Like a rat
I yearn to be part of the clan;
like a black crow
I want to scavenge with the clan.
I shall become the felt over your head,
the clan and I shall be the wind-break for your yurt.'

And after he had become khan, Chinggis said to Bo'orchu and Jelme:

'When I had no friends
but my shadow,

* i.e. 'Take charge of my foreign and domestic affairs.'

you became my shadows
and brought me comfort.
You shall live in my mind.'

And he added:

'When I had no fat
but what was in my tail,
you became my tail
and gave me comfort.
You shall live in my heart.

You stood by me then, and now you are greater than the rest. When Heaven and Earth decreed that my power should increase and gave me their protection, you were the men who chose me over Jamuqa. You proved my friends then and have now become my senior and most fortunate friends.' Then he added: 'I shall give each of you a different mission.'

Daqai and Sugegei were immediately sent as emissaries to To'oril, Khan of the Kereyit, saying: 'We have made your son Chinggis Khan.'

To'oril Khan answered and said: 'You have done well. The Mongols cannot live without a leader. Take my advice: never break the bond you have made, never upset the order you have established.' And so saying, he sent them home.