

BÓYÌ 博弈 · WEEK 3

jiè dāo shā rén

借刀杀人

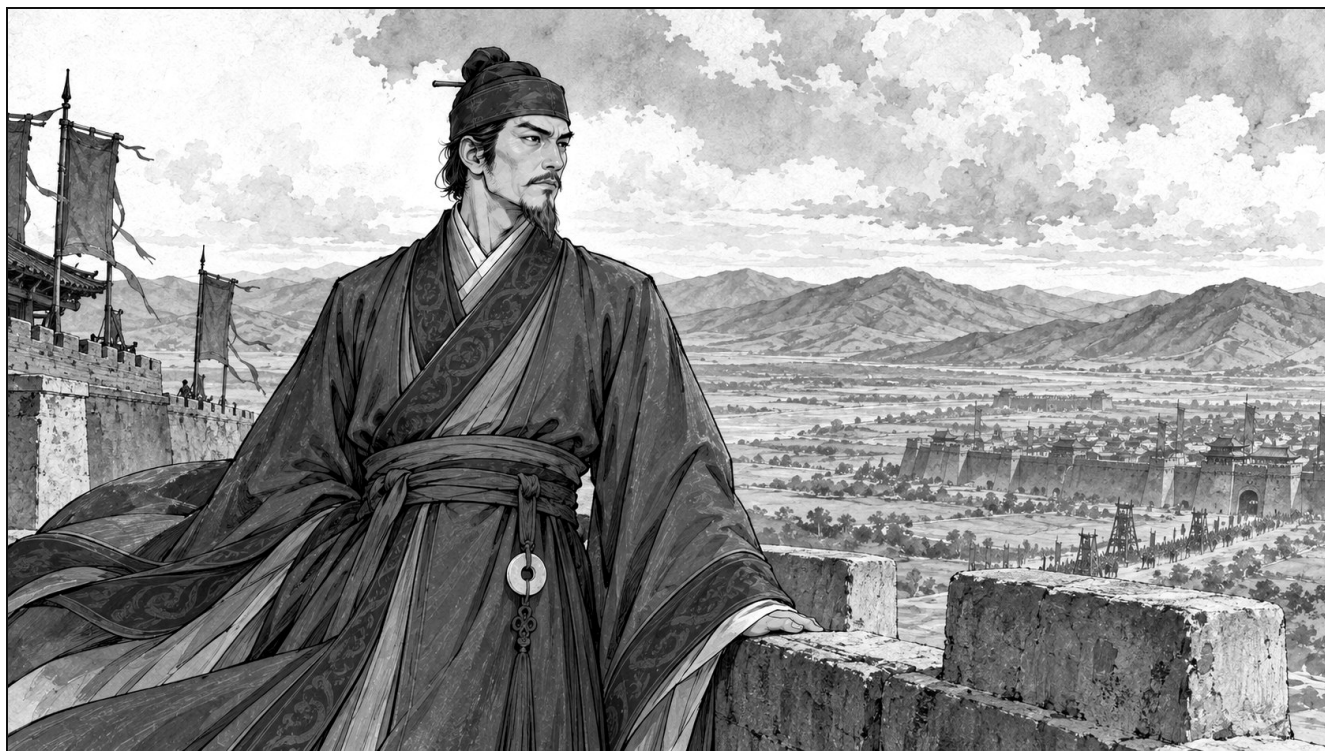
Kill with a borrowed knife.

You don't have to be the one who says it. You only have to know whose hand to borrow — and to make sure the knife never ends up in yours. This week you'll learn to write four characters: 借, 刀, 杀, 人.

Stratagem No. 3 of 36 · one story, one lesson, four characters.

本周学：借刀杀人 · 练字：借、刀、杀、人

THE LIST NOBODY WAS SUPPOSED TO FIND



Zheng Huan Gong looked at Kuai's walls — and asked a different question.

Kuai was a small state next to Zheng. It was small, but it had good people: ministers who could run a state, generals who could hold a wall. As long as they were there, Kuai was not easy to take.

So Zheng Huan Gong did not send soldiers. He sent questions. Who in Kuai is worth something? Write down every name.

Then he wrote something next to those names: official titles. Good farmland. "After it's done, this is yours."

It looked like a deal between friends. He rolled the list up, tied it, and waited for a dark night.

《韩非子·内储说下》

THE KNIFE WAS ALREADY IN KUAI'S HAND



The lord of Kuai read the names himself.

At night, outside Kuai's city gate, his men built a small altar. They killed a chicken and a pig, smeared the blood, swore an oath. Then they buried the list in the ground, like a treaty — and left, quietly.

In the morning, someone in Kuai dug it up. The lord of Kuai read the names: his own best men, promised land by the enemy, buried in secret.

To him, it was not a list. It was a plan. So he did the work for Zheng: he killed them all.

Zheng lost no one. No siege, no battle. Zheng Huan Gong simply moved his army in, and Kuai fell easily. He never killed one of them himself. He didn't need to — the knife was already in Kuai's own hand.

《韩非子·内储说下》

WHY IT WORKED

Step	Who vs who	中文 · pinyin	Result
What Zheng did	He wrote a list of names	名单 míng dān	Titles, land, a promise
What he planted	An altar, an oath, a buried treaty	盟约 méng yuē	It looked official
What Kuai did	Its lord killed his own men	疑心 yí xīn	Zheng never touched them

Zheng Huan Gong borrowed a hand — Kuai's own. 借刀杀人 jiè dāo shā rén

THE ORIGINAL LINES

《三十六计·第三计 借刀杀人》

The Thirty-Six Stratagems, No. 3 — "Kill with a borrowed knife"

1 dí yǐ míng, yǒu wèi dìng
敌已明，友未定，
The enemy is clear. Your ally hasn't chosen a side.

2 yǐn yǒu shā dí, bú zì chū lì
引友杀敌，不自出力，
Let the ally do the striking. Don't spend your own strength.

3 yǐ Sǔn tuī yǎn
以《损》推演。
Work it out from "Decrease."

Three lines, nothing more. 损 (sǔn) is a hexagram in the I Ching — "Decrease": take from what is strong, add to what is soft. It is the book's logic, not a separate story. The long commentary that follows in the old editions is not part of this text.

原文只有这三句。「损」是《易经》的损卦（减损），不是人名、也不是另一本书。后面那段按语（讲郑桓公的那段）是老版本的注释，不进原文框。

PRACTICE · 借 JIÈ · 刀 DĀO

Follow the numbers. Write each stroke in order.

先描一遍分解格，再在田字格里写 5 遍。

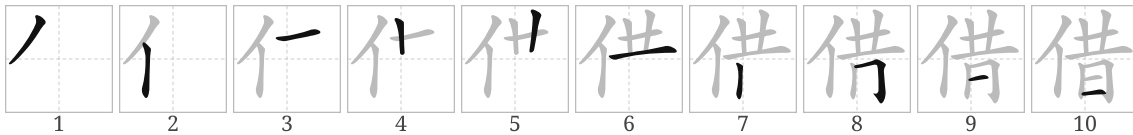


jiè

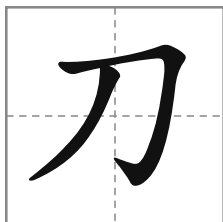
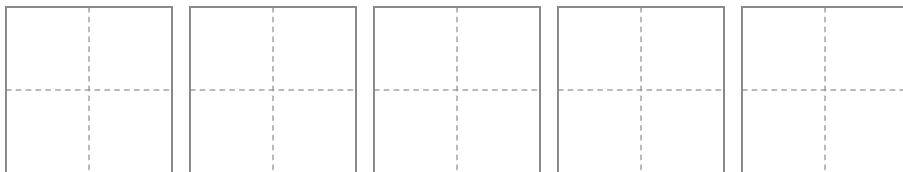
to borrow

10 strokes

STROKE ORDER



YOUR TURN

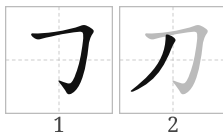


dāo

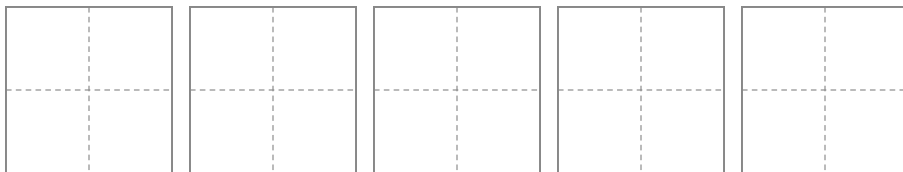
a knife; a blade

2 strokes

STROKE ORDER



YOUR TURN



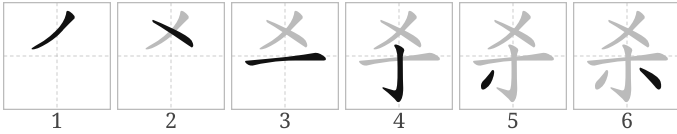
PRACTICE · 杀 SHĀ · 人 RÉN

Same order again. Write slowly, and say the sound out loud.



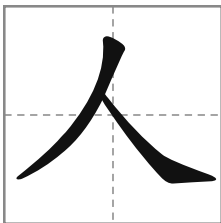
shā
to kill
6 strokes

STROKE ORDER



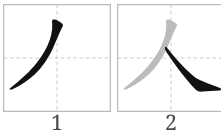
YOUR TURN

--	--	--	--	--



rén
a person; people
2 strokes

STROKE ORDER



YOUR TURN

--	--	--	--	--

PRACTICE · 借刀杀人 JIÈ DĀO SHĀ RÉN

Trace the first row, then write the whole phrase four times. Say it out loud each time.

jiè	dāo	shā	rén
借	刀	杀	人

--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--

借刀杀人 · Kill with a borrowed knife.

THREE MORE WORDS

chū lì

1 出力

to put in effort; to lend a hand.

Zhèng Huángōng méi yǒu chū lì

郑桓公没有出力。

Zheng Huan Gong didn't lift a finger.

The original says 不自出力 — don't spend your own effort. He got the result without doing the work.

wèi dìng

2 未定

not yet decided; undecided.

tā hái méi dìng

他还没定。

He hasn't decided yet.

友未定 — your ally hasn't picked a side. In this story, the knife changed hands before anyone chose.

míng dān

3 名单

a name list.

míng dān mái zài chéng mén wài miàn

名单埋在城门外。

The list was buried outside the city gate.

The whole plot hangs on one list. Write down the names, and the other side does the rest.

SPOT IT · STOP IT 识破 · 防住

A coworker leans in and tells you the manager trashed your project in front of everyone. "You should push back. Today." He sounds like he's on your side. You stand up in the meeting — and now you are the one who fought the manager. He gets a fight he didn't start.

手 · shǒu <i>The hand you borrow</i> kě xìn de rén 可 信 的 人 <i>People you trust</i> shì shí 事 实 <i>Facts you can check</i>	刀 · dāo <i>The knife you might become</i> tā ràng nǐ qù duì 他 让 你 去 怼 <i>He sends you in to fight</i> tā zì jǐ bú dòng 他 自 己 不 动 <i>He stays out of it</i>
---	---

Before you charge in, ask one question: who wins if I charge in? If the answer is not you, don't go. Borrow a hand — never be the knife.

冲上去之前先问一句：我冲上去，谁最受益？答案不是你的话，就别去。借别人的手，别当别人的刀。Chōng shàng qù zhī qián xiān wèn yí jù: wǒ chōng shàng qù, shuí zuì shòu yì? Dá àn bú shì nǐ de huà, jiù bié qù. Jiè bié rén de shǒu, bié dāng bié rén de dāo.

SEVEN DAYS, SEVEN QUESTIONS

Day 1 Who keeps "asking around" on your behalf — and who are they really asking for? 打听 dǎ tīng

Day 2 Last time someone pushed you to confront somebody — what did they get out of it? 受益 shòu yì

Day 3 Which of your own fights were actually somebody else's fight? 借刀 jiè dāo

Day 4 Whose hand could you borrow this week — a person whose words carry more weight than yours? 借 jìe

Day 5 What would you be borrowing — a rule, a fact, or a person? Which one is clean? 干净 gān jìng

Day 6 Where are you the knife right now, without knowing it? 刀 dāo

Day 7 Is there something you want done that you could get done without doing it yourself? Be honest about whether it's fair. 出力 chū lì

WEEK 3 REVIEW



The one-page summary of this week. 本周一图总结。

1. In one sentence: why did Zheng Huan Gong never fight a battle?

2. What does 借刀杀人 mean, in your own words?

3. Which of this week's four characters can you write now without looking: 借, 刀, 杀, or 人?

4. Think of one time you got pushed into a fight. Whose knife were you?

Did anyone hand you a knife this week — and did you notice before you used it?

这周有没有人递给你一把刀？你在用之前看出来了吗？

Zhè zhōu yǒu méi yǒu rén dì gěi nǐ yì bǎ dāo? Nǐ zài yòng zhī qián kàn chū lái le ma?