

## Longevity 160

Chapter 160: All Attributes Surpass 2,000! Ying Zheng's Former Promise! Prelude to Zhao's Destruction!

「A month passed.」

The wintry landscape gradually receded. As the heavy snow melted away, the temperature began to rise. All was stable within the borders of Qin. Outside its borders, however, the chaos in Yingchuan County had not subsided, a fact noticed by spies from the Zhao state.

In the Longtai Palace of Zhao, Great King Zhao Yan proclaimed, full of vigor, "The time has come! The opportunity to expand our territory has arrived! Convey my edict! Grant the Tiger Talisman and order General Pang Xuan to attack Yan at once!"

At his command, a temple official, holding a box containing the Tiger Talisman, walked down into the hall.

An elderly general then stepped forward and respectfully received the artifact. "I, Zhao Cong, accept this seal on behalf of Senior General Pang Xuan."

"Minister Zhao," the Great King began with a smile. "After you reach the frontier, you must tell the venerable General Pang that I eagerly await his return after the annihilation of Yan. When he returns in triumph, I shall personally welcome him at the city gates."

"I will surely convey the Great King's words," Zhao Cong replied loudly.

"A petition for the Great King! This humble servant has a matter to report."

At that moment, Lian Po stepped forward.

Upon seeing him, a flash of disgust crossed Zhao Yan's eyes. However, given Lian Po's significant influence in the court, Zhao Yan concealed it. "Minister Lian, what matter do you wish to report?"

"This old servant believes that our Zhao must not rashly wage war against Yan. Firstly, with the powerful state of Qin to our west, it would be a disaster if they launched a surprise attack while we are engaged with Yan. Secondly, if Zhao were to attack Yan without just cause, we would be shunned by the various countries. Therefore, this old servant implores the Great King to rescind the order," Lian Po petitioned loudly.

At these words, Zhao Yan's brow furrowed, and he glared coldly at Lian Po.

Zhao Yan had been preparing for this campaign against Yan for nearly a year. If he could conquer Yan and expand his territory, he would be hailed as a great ruler of Zhao, and all criticism from the people and the court would vanish. He, Zhao Yan, would become a wise monarch.

Yet now, this Lian Po was trying to ruin his grand plans. The thought filled Zhao Yan with disgust.

"Zhao has already amassed an army of 300,000 at the border, and the venerable General Pang Xuan has taken command personally. All supplies and provisions are ready. And now you tell me we cannot mobilize?" Zhao Yan demanded coldly. "Minister Lian, do you not wish to see Zhao prosper?"

But Lian Po was unafraid, meeting Zhao Yan's gaze directly. "This old servant's heart is for Zhao, and I have no selfish motives. The Great King moved the troops in secret, and this old servant was unaware. Had I known sooner, I would certainly have advised against it. The pact with Qin that the Great King established is completely unreliable. Ying Zheng can tear it up whenever he pleases."

As he finished, Zhao Yan's face grew darker with rage. "Enough! Qin is currently unstable, with continuous chaos in Han Land. Ying Zheng has no mind to attack Zhao! He was the one who desperately sought this pact, begging me not to attack him!"

"From this old servant's perspective, the turmoil in Han Land may very well be a fabrication by Qin..." Lian Po immediately countered. Having commanded armies for many years, he had seen countless strategies and plots; the situation in Han Land was too strange to be a genuine uprising.

"Enough!" Zhao Yan roared. Lian Po's words contradicted him at every turn, leaving the Great King without a way to save face. Mobilizing the army to expand the territory was his ambition, and agreeing to the pact with Qin had also been his decision.

"Lian Po! How dare you!" Guo Kai immediately stepped forward to rebuke him. "Do not think you can veto the Great King's decisions simply because you are a veteran minister who has served three reigns! Our grand army is already mobilized. This is the perfect opportunity for the Great King to expand his territory. How dare you defy him so?" This was an excellent chance to display loyalty, one Guo Kai would not miss.

"Everything this old servant does is for the good of Zhao," Lian Po stated calmly.

His words revealed his true thoughts. His heart was for the state of Zhao, not for Zhao Yan. He was loyal to the state of Zhao, but not to Zhao Yan. This was likely the very reason he was so disfavored by the Great King.

"If it is for the good of Zhao, then keep your mouth shut!" Zhao Yan barked. "Minister Zhao, take the Tiger Talisman at once and order Senior General Pang Xuan to begin the attack!"

"Your servant obeys." Without hesitation, Zhao Cong took the box containing the Tiger Talisman, turned, and left the grand hall.

Watching Zhao Cong's departing figure, a look of anxiety crossed Lian Po's aged face.

Just then, another voice spoke. "Great King," said Zhao Yi, the former Crown Prince and now the head of the Zhao Royal Family, stepping out to support Lian Po. "General Lian Po's words may be harsh, but they hold reason. We must be on guard against Qin, and we cannot underestimate the cunning and deceit of Ying Zheng."

"Brother, you need not worry," Zhao Yan replied coolly. "I have already sent envoys to speak with Lord Xinling of Wei. If Qin dares to move against Zhao, Lord Xinling will lead his troops straight into Han Land. Furthermore, since General Lian Po is so concerned, I will grant you an army of 100,000 to defend against Qin. And if Qin truly does attack, how would you possibly repel them?"

"This old servant is willing to lead the troops and defend the border." With matters having reached this point, Lian Po accepted the command without delay for the sake of Zhao's security.

"Very well," Zhao Yan said. "Since the old general is so willing, I shall accommodate you. But if Qin does invade and the border is breached under your defense, the fault will be yours alone," he added with a clear, threatening implication.

"This old servant understands," Lian Po replied, entirely unfazed.

"Very well. Court is dismissed." Zhao Yan waved his hand, saying no more. He had intended to speak further, full of triumphant spirit, but Lian Po's interruption had left him thoroughly displeased.