

Longevity 200

Chapter 200: Emperor Qin Shi Huang's Great Elation! (2)

"Zhao Feng is truly worthy of being the youngest and most promising war general in our Qin."

"Even I did not anticipate such a resounding victory."

"To think that someone as mighty as Wei Wuji, a veteran general renowned throughout the land, would lose to Zhao Feng."

"After this battle, the entire world will know that Qin has yet another capable general whose fame will spread far and wide."

"This is my fortune, and the Blessing of Qin," Ying Zheng declared with a hearty laugh, clearly exhilarated.

Perhaps Ying Zheng shared Wang Jian's thoughts: with the crisis in Wei City resolved, the campaign to annihilate Zhao would proceed without further complications.

"Your servant congratulates the Great King on acquiring such a capable commander. For Zhao Feng to possess such skill in leading troops at such a young age adds another pillar of strength to Your Majesty's command," Li Si immediately complimented.

"An army is easy to find, but a good general is not."

"But the general that is so hard to find is merely a *brave* one."

"What I have now acquired is not just a brave general, but a true military commander."

At that moment, Ying Zheng's high regard for Zhao Feng was palpable. The Ministers in the Court could clearly hear the weight he placed on the young general's name and see the boundless potential in his future.

"Congratulations, Great King," the civil and military officials of the Court chorused.

"Reporting to the Great King," the messenger spoke again, producing another set of bamboo slips. "In addition to the victory report from Wei City, there is also a military disciplinary report from the Shangjiangjun."

"Discipline?" Ying Zheng was momentarily taken aback, then waved his hand. "Present it."

Zhao Gao once again held up the report.

As Ying Zheng finished reading, the smile vanished from his face, replaced by a livid expression.

"Damned fools!" he snarled, his face filled with anger. "To dare disobey a superior officer's command and abandon the city during a critical enemy siege. This action is unforgivable."

The assembled Ministers in the great hall watched anxiously, unsure of what had transpired.

"The defense of Wei City was entrusted to five Wanjiangs and five acting Wanjiangs."

"Eight of those Wanjiangs strictly followed the orders set by Zhao Feng. They swore an oath to defend Wei City to the death and fought a bloody battle against the elite Wei Wu Troops. It was precisely because these Wanjiangs led their soldiers to fight the Wei Army to the bitter end that Zhao Feng had the opportunity to launch his surprise attack and defeat the enemy."

"But two other Wanjiangs disrespected Zhao Feng's orders. They did not defend the city. Instead, just as Zhao Feng was executing his surprise attack, they led their armies and withdrew from Wei City! This needlessly cost us twenty thousand defending soldiers. If the remaining soldiers hadn't fought to the death, forget about crushing the Wei Army—all of Yingchuan would have fallen, and Qin itself would have been in peril!" Ying Zheng stated coldly.

His palpable fury cast a pall of oppression over the entire Court.

Upon hearing this, Huai Zhuang's heart lurched. How could he have known the situation in Wei City, even knowing that Zhao Feng wasn't present? Obviously, someone must have secretly informed him, and that person could only have been either Chen Tao or Zhao Tuo.

"May I ask the Great King, which two Wanjiangs were so audacious? This crime is unpardonable!" Li Si immediately stepped forward to say.

"Commander Chen Tao and Commander Zhao Tuo," Ying Zheng said icily. "These two disrespected their orders and led their troops away from the city. Their crime is unforgivable."

Ultimately, the very thing Chen Tao and Zhao Tuo had feared most came to pass: news of their desertion had reached the Great King's ears. This sealed their doom. Even if they were spared death, their futures were ruined.

The future King Wu of Nanyue, Zhao Tuo, would never come to be. He would never again have the chance to lead troops for Qin, let alone command an army of hundreds of thousands. Unseen, Zhao Feng's arrival had already altered the course of history.

"Disobeying a superior officer's orders and violating military regulations," Li Si declared.

"Deserting one's post with your troops, abandoning a city to flee—these are grave offenses."

"Your servant implores the Great King to punish them severely."

"However," Li Si added loudly, "before the punishment is meted out, this servant has a perplexing question."

"Speak," Ying Zheng said, his face stern.

Li Si's gaze shifted, landing on Huai Zhuang. "Huai Xiang."

At the sound of his name, Huai Zhuang's heart skipped another beat. But under the collective gaze of the Court and the King of Qin himself, he had no choice but to respond stiffly, "What is it, Tingwei?"

"Huai Xiang, your influence is truly far-reaching," Li Si said, his expression grave, though he was inwardly sneering. "Wei City is a thousand miles from Xianyang, and it was only today that I learned from the victory report of General Zhao Feng's daring river crossing and surprise attack. The entire operation must have been conducted in utmost secrecy. So, how could you have possibly known that General Zhao Feng had left the city?"

Obviously, upon hearing the triumphant news, Li Si had immediately recalled the day Huai Zhuang had attacked Zhao Feng. He would not let such a perfect opportunity to suppress his rival slip by.

"This... this..." Cold sweat began to bead on Huai Zhuang's face. The intense stare from Ying Zheng on the throne above made him feel as if he were sitting on pins and needles.

"What's the matter?" Li Si pressed. "Is it so difficult for Huai Xiang to answer? You were so certain when you impeached General Zhao Feng for abandoning his post. Is it truly so difficult to name your informant?"

At this point, Han Fei also stood up. "I remember the events of that day clearly. From Huai Xiang's demeanor, it was obvious he had received concrete information."

If Li Si's motives were purely to curb the influence of Wang Wan's faction, then Han Fei spoke purely out of a sense of justice for Zhao Feng. Han Fei was talented and proud; few people ever earned his sincere admiration, but Zhao Feng was one of them. Without Zhao Feng's counsel, he might not have lived to see the glorious unification of Huaxia. Without Zhao Feng's warning, Han Fei might already be dead. He considered this an immense debt of gratitude.

Faced with their verbal assault, Huai Zhuang was at a loss for words.

Just then, Wang Wan's gaze shifted, and he promptly stood up. "Reporting to the Great King."

"I have heard about this matter from Huai Xiang. It seems that Zhao Tuo had some minor past dealings with him, and it was Zhao Tuo who secretly passed this information about Zhao Feng along. The only reason Huai Xiang brought this before the Court that day was out of concern for Qin's security and fear that something terrible had happened at Wei City."