

Longevity 204

Chapter 204: Wang Jian's Messenger! Zhao Feng's Anticipation! (Part 2)

But Zhao Yan had no intention of listening. "Silence yourself before this King!"

"The Qin Army? This King has never paid them any mind. Currently, Zhao's main enemy is the Yan state. Our valiant soldiers have driven the Yan troops into successive retreats, and nearly half of Yan's territory has already fallen under Zhao's control. Soon, Yan will be destroyed," Zhao Yan declared coldly, then turned his gaze to Guo Kai.

"Prime Minister," Zhao Yan said.

"Your servant is present," Guo Kai immediately responded.

"I am issuing you a military order to mobilize 100,000 Prefecture Soldiers to reinforce General Lian Po," Zhao Yan commanded gravely.

"Your servant receives the edict," Guo Kai promptly nodded. After agreeing, however, his expression revealed some difficulty. "Great King, if we mobilize 100,000 Prefecture Soldiers, the consumption of grain and supplies will be immense. The autumn harvest is still a long way off. If we continue with the current supply rate, I fear the national treasury and regional granaries cannot sustain the cost."

"See to it, Prime Minister," Zhao Yan said after a moment's thought. "If it comes to it, collect the taxes early. Raise them."

At these words, the faces of many ministers in the court paled. The taxes in Zhao were already high; increasing them further could very well spark a rebellion. But seeing Zhao Yan's decisive demeanor and then looking at Zhao Yi, who had been scolded into silence, all the ministers obediently held their tongues.

Just then, a cry came from outside.

"Report!"

"Urgent news from Quyang!"

A Zhao messenger ran into the Longtai Palace Hall in a panic.

"Quyang?" Zhao Yan frowned. "What is the urgent news?"

"Lower Quyang has fallen! Quyang City is now an isolated outpost!" the messenger cried out desperately.

"What? Lower Quyang has fallen?" Zhao Yan erupted in fury. "Isn't Lian Po an expert at defense? What was he thinking? And to think this King trusted him so much!"

"Great King," Zhao Yi immediately spoke in Lian Po's defense. "General Lian Po only has 100,000 troops, and he is facing an onslaught from a Qin force several times that size. To have held out for several months is already a remarkable feat."

"With Lower Quyang lost, Quyang City is isolated," Zhao Yan snapped, now growing panicked and angry. "Tell me, now that the border has fallen, what is Zhao to do?"

"What is General Lian Po's situation now?" Zhao Yi asked, his voice filled with concern. To him, Lian Po was the very bedrock of the Zhao state. If Lian Po were to die, Zhao would truly be in peril.

"Reporting to the Great King," the messenger said, his face grief-stricken as he took a letter on silk fabric from his robes and held it aloft. "The Senior General had me bring back a letter. It is the old general's final testament."

Zhao Yan, however, showed little emotion and simply waved his hand impatiently. "This King will not read it. Recite it to me directly."

"This... This servant is illiterate," the messenger stammered in fear.

Zhao Yi could no longer restrain himself. He strode forward and took Lian Po's final letter from the messenger's hands. As he opened it and read, his face changed instantly. "The old general... he isn't planning to retreat? He intends to defend Quyang City to the death, to fight the Qin Army to the last man. He means to trade his remaining soldiers for as many Qin lives as possible," Zhao Yi said, his voice trembling.

Hearing this, Zhao Yan's expression brightened somewhat. "The old general is a man of honor. With him defending Quyang City to the death, it will surely buy Zhao more time to mobilize our defenses. Prime Minister, after the court session, you will immediately issue my edict to gather all Prefecture Soldiers to defend Jinyang. General Yan Ju, I will trouble you to oversee the defense of Jinyang personally."

A general immediately stepped forward and bowed. "This subordinate obeys the edict."

At this, Zhao Yi finally lost his composure. "Your Majesty! It has come to this! General Lian Po has even submitted his final testament, yet you intend to persist in this folly and refuse to withdraw our forces from Yan? The old general is sacrificing his life to hold back the Qin Army, all to buy Zhao time to prepare. Only by pulling back the army attacking Yan can our state be saved! How can over a hundred thousand ordinary Prefecture Soldiers possibly withstand the elite Sharp Warriors of Qin?" Zhao Yi demanded, gripping Lian Po's letter tightly, his voice laced with fury.

Hearing Zhao Yi's accusatory tone, Zhao Yan's brow furrowed in anger.

"Zhao Yi, you are insolent!" Guo Kai immediately stepped forward to admonish him, the very image of a loyalist defending his king. "How dare you be so disrespectful to His Majesty? The King is the ruler of Zhao; everything belongs to him. The King's mind is made up, how can you be allowed to speak such nonsense?"

"The King is indeed the ruler of Zhao, but if Zhao truly falls, will he still be a king?" Zhao Yi retorted, then lowered his voice, his tone shifting to a desperate plea for his nation's future. "I, Zhao Yi, beg Your Majesty to swiftly recall the troops from Yan as reinforcements! We cannot squander the last chance that General Lian Po is buying for Zhao with his life!"

Lian Po understood the peril Zhao faced, and reading this final testament, Zhao Yi knew this was their last chance.

"Silence!" Zhao Yan commanded. "The campaign to destroy Yan must not stop. Lian Po can still hold out, and I still have over a hundred thousand Prefecture Soldiers for defense. Even if the Qin Army is strong, they won't breach a city defended by 200,000 men within a year or so. Relay my edict! Order General Pang Xuan to accelerate his attack and tell him not to worry about matters within Zhao."

"Enough," Zhao Yan said coldly. "That is all for today's court session. Dismissed."

With a flick of his sleeve, he turned and stormed out of the Longtai Palace Hall.

Watching Zhao Yan's retreating back, Zhao Yi could hold back no longer. He stood and shouted, "Zhao Yan, you will regret this! Zhao will be destroyed by your hand!"