

Longevity 231

Chapter 231: Ying Zheng's Rewards

Amidst the resounding cheers of the entire court, the joy on Ying Zheng's face grew more pronounced.

"Read the battle report," he commanded with a smile, handing it over. "You will all understand why I am so pleased."

Zhao Gao respectfully accepted the report. He then turned to face the great hall and slowly unrolled the scroll. The ministers' gazes converged, all of them looking on with anticipation.

"Your servant, Wang Jian, hereby reports to the Great King.

"After routing Wei Wuji from Wei City, Qin's Main General, Zhao Feng, did not cease military operations. Having captured Shangwei City in Wei and secured half a year's worth of grain and fodder for an army of 200,000, he decided after careful consideration to lead his troops to attack Wei. His objective was to open a path between Yingchuan and the Zhao state.

"On the first day, he pursued the remnants of Wei Wuji's forces and slew the Wei General Gongsun Xi.

"On the third day, he reached Xing City, slew three thousand enemies, and successfully stormed and occupied the city.

"On the fifth day, he reached Shu City, slew two thousand enemies, and successfully stormed and occupied the city.

"On the seventh day, the army split into five routes..."

Zhao Gao's voice boomed as he read on. The battle report detailed Zhao Feng's step-by-step advance into Wei, listing his victories and the merit gained from breaching each city.

"On the thirty-ninth day, Zhao Feng led his 60,000 soldiers to besiege Lincheng. By this time, Wei Wuji had already gathered 50,000 elite troops to defend it, bringing the total defending force to nearly 80,000.

"On the forty-first day, after probing the defenses, Zhao Feng began a full-scale assault on Lincheng. Upon hearing Zhao Feng's name, the Wei army's morale plummeted. Lincheng fell within a day, and the path from Yingchuan to the Zhao state was clear.

"On the forty-fifth day, Zhao Feng led 50,000 soldiers across the Zhao border where he encountered the army of Lian Po. After engaging him in battle, he ultimately annihilated 20,000 of Lian Po's troops, with Zhao Feng personally slaying Lian Po himself.

"On the forty-sixth day, Zhao Feng's army joined forces with the second main battle camp from Lantian."

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As Zhao Gao concluded his proclamation, the ministers in the court had a clear picture of how Zhao Feng had vanquished his enemies and invaded the Zhao state. In the forty-six days since the Wei army's retreat—less than two months—he had achieved such incredible military feats. Had the battle report not arrived, who would have dared to believe it?

"Forty-six days to capture dozens of cities from Wei and seize a thousand miles of territory... all with just 60,000 troops? How is that possible?"

"Could it be that Zhao Feng is a natural-born commander?"

"Previously, Zhao Feng was known for his ferocity; he earned his position as Deputy General through sheer bravery. But since the battle of Wei City, his strategy of surprise attacks has proven his skill in leading troops. And now, seizing a thousand miles of Wei territory with a mere 60,000 men only confirms it further."

"Capturing a thousand miles of territory and slaying Lian Po for Qin... such achievements have certainly earned Zhao Feng the qualifications for promotion to Senior General. I fear that within a few years, he will become Qin's youngest Senior General."

"Incredible. With such a general, the King will favor him even more."

"Zhao Feng is truly a rising star in Qin."

"He is someone to be befriended, not alienated..."

Hearing the military report, the ministers in the court could not help but begin to take Zhao Feng seriously. At the very least, it cemented their belief that a place among the court's future elite was reserved for him.

"Gentlemen, did you all hear the report clearly?" Ying Zheng laughed heartily once the reading was finished, looking out at his civil and military officials.

"Heaven blesses Qin," Li Si immediately declared. "It is this blessing that has given our Great King a fierce and capable general like General Zhao Feng."

"Heaven blesses Qin!" all the courtiers shouted in unison.

"Hahaha." Ying Zheng laughed, the phrase "Heaven blesses Qin" sounding exceptionally pleasing to his ears. "Indeed. Heaven blesses Qin. In the past, I have felt regret over Qin's former Lord Wu'an. If Lord Wu'an were still here, I could have offered him even greater promises. But now, I have a war general who is in no way inferior to Lord Wu'an. This is truly a blessing from heaven," Ying Zheng said with a laugh, his words clearly displaying the high regard in which he held Zhao Feng.

He's comparing Zhao Feng to Bai Qi. To think the young man has become so important to the King... Perhaps it truly is time to try and mend our relations with Zhao Feng. Even if the Men Family has to take a loss, we at least cannot let him target the Eldest Imperial Son. Wang Wan sighed internally. Previously concerned with the prestige of the Eldest Imperial Son, he now found his stance shifting as he witnessed Zhao Feng's meteoric rise.

The pressure Zhao Feng exerted was simply too immense.

Within the imperial court, Wang Wan might have been able to suppress him, not fearing a mere general in the slightest. But within the army, Wang Wan's reach was limited. Even with commanders he had secretly recruited, he could not diminish Zhao Feng's glory.

This was because Qin's military merit system prevented interference from influential officials. Ultimately, it all came down to a single principle: one's merits reached the ears of the King directly. That was the essence of Qin's military merit system. With Ministerial Commissioner Liao personally overseeing the recording of merits before reporting them to the King, interference was impossible.

And what kind of man was Yu Liao?

He was a Disciple of Guiguzi, and his schemes were devilishly cunning. The strategies, tactics, and the entire blueprint for Qin's unification of the realm all bore his mark. Trying to challenge the military merit system and suppress Zhao Feng under Yu Liao's watchful eye? It was simply impossible.

As for winning Yu Liao over to their side to support Fusu? Wang Wan had tried.

But Yu Liao was completely indifferent. The reason he had left Guiguzi was to fulfill the grand aspiration that generations of disciples had failed to achieve: to assist a monarch in unifying the world. Before leaving, Yu Liao had evaluated the rulers of the various states and ultimately chosen King Zheng of Qin.

The day he made his choice was the very day Ying Zheng executed Lao Ai and took personal control of the government.

Perhaps the execution of Lao Ai had been Yu Liao's test for King Zheng of Qin. Once the test was passed, Yu Liao entered the service of Qin.