

## Longevity 258

### Chapter 258: Ying Zheng's Joy, Xia Wuqie's Shock! (Part 2)

"Compared to the great blow to our national power at Changping, the national power of Zhao is now even stronger."

"What have we to fear from Qin?" one of the ministers, a member of the Nine Ministers, stood and declared.

His words immediately sparked a chorus of agreement among the court ministers.

"We concur."

"Handan has been the capital of Zhao for hundreds of years. Even in our most difficult times, we have never abandoned it. As long as we defend Handan to the death, Qin will certainly not be able to annihilate Zhao."

"I am willing to fight Qin to the death!"

"We swear to defend Handan!" the ministers of Zhao proclaimed one by one.

Watching the court split into two factions, one wanting to retreat to Dai Territory and the other insisting on staying, Zhao Yan's expression was a mask of complexity, utterly uncertain. Of course, deep down he was leaning toward fleeing to Dai Territory. After all, there were over 200,000 troops there. With nearly

300,000 more from Zhao Territory, they would be sufficient to defend Dai Territory from being lost. If they chose to defend here, however, the outcome was far from guaranteed.

"I believe retreating to Dai Territory is the prudent course of action," Zhao Yi proposed, stepping forward.

Upon hearing Zhao Yi's words, Zhao Yan's brow furrowed, and a thought immediately surfaced. Like that old codger Lian Po, Li Mu also supported Zhao Yi for the throne. Li Mu's prestige in Dai Territory is extremely high, and he holds military power. If I really go to Dai Territory and Li Mu rebels, that would be a disaster. Even if we must retreat, I must first strip Li Mu of his military power.

With this thought, Zhao Yan immediately made his decision.

He turned his gaze toward Guo Kai. "Prime Minister, what are your thoughts?"

The eyes of all the court ministers in the great hall turned towards Guo Kai. Obviously, almost everyone could guess what his choice would be. Everyone knew that Guo Kai was a craven coward, and at such a critical moment, he would surely choose to flee to Dai Territory.

"To answer the Great King," Guo Kai began, "I believe we should defend Handan and fight the Qin Army to the last drop of our blood."

"In the past, Zhao was able to hold on, and now under the Great King's leadership, we can certainly do the same. Zhao is invincible!" Guo Kai declared loudly, stepping forward.

As soon as these words fell, the full court of Zhao ministers stared at Guo Kai, their mouths agape. Even Zhao Yi was shocked. Everyone found it extremely strange.

What's going on today? Guo Kai, the one most afraid of death, is suddenly not afraid to die? He even supports defending Handan? Has the sun risen from the west? Did he take the wrong medicine? How could he possibly agree to a fight to the death?

The numerous ministers watched in shock, utterly baffled as to why Guo Kai would agree to defend Handan.

Amidst the astonished gazes of the hundred officials, Guo Kai sneered internally. The King of Qin made it clear: under no circumstances can Zhao Yan be allowed to escape to Dai Territory. This is a mission of great merit, one that concerns my future wealth and glory.

Seeing Guo Kai so firmly committed to defending Handan, a flicker of surprise passed through Zhao Yan's eyes, and he thought, It seems the Prime Minister has realized that Li Mu's command of the army would pose a threat to me. That's why he's advocating for the defense of Handan. Only by doing this will I have an opportunity to strip Li Mu of his military authority.

At this thought, Zhao Yan's heart settled. He gave Guo Kai a look that conveyed, 'Only you understand me.'

Then he declared loudly, "For the Prime Minister himself to have such a patriotic heart is a blessing to me and a blessing to Zhao! I have made my decision. We will defend Handan to the death and wage a bloody battle against the Qin Army!"

"However, before that, we must transfer more troops to support Handan," Zhao Yan added gravely.

"Reporting to the Great King," Guo Kai announced, "in Dai Territory, there are still 200,000 frontier soldiers and nearly 100,000 prefecture soldiers."

"The Prime Minister is correct. The Qin forces harassing Dai Territory are not numerous. As long as we secure the border, the Qin Army will definitely be unable to breach it."

"Moreover, the cavalry of Zhao is the finest in the world, and our horse-backed archery in the nomadic style is unmatched. It is something the Qin Cavalry cannot hope to compare with."

"Leaving 100,000 of our nomadic-style cavalry to defend Dai Territory will ensure it does not fall," a minister from Guo Kai's faction resoundingly reported.

"I concur," Guo Kai immediately added. "Furthermore, we need General Li Mu himself to lead the reinforcements. Only then can we repel the Qin Army."

Watching Guo Kai and his partisans echo each other, Zhao Yi wanted to speak but found himself unable to refute them. After all, Handan was now in grave danger.

"Draft the edict," Zhao Yan commanded on the spot. "Summon Li Mu back."

「Later, in Zhao Yan's bedchambers.」

"Prime Minister, your loyalty to me is truly unparalleled," Zhao Yan said, looking at Guo Kai with a moved expression. "You knew that if I went to Dai Territory, I might be threatened by Li Mu. After all, he has always supported Zhao Yi. If he were to use his military authority to force me to abdicate, I would be finished. Of the entire court, civil and military officials alike, only you, Prime Minister, consider my plight."

Hearing this, Guo Kai was momentarily stunned, but he quickly recovered. "The Great King is wise. Your servant swears to serve you with his life."

"I have issued an edict sending Yan Ju to Dai Territory to take command of Li Mu's forces," Zhao Yan said somberly. "Furthermore, I've ordered Li Mu to return to Handan first. He is indeed a capable commander, but he must be kept under my control."

"Great King," Guo Kai immediately asked, "Li Mu has command over more than 200,000 soldiers. What if he is unwilling to comply?"

Zhao Yan frowned. "This matter, Prime Minister, must be handled by you personally. If he refuses to hand over his military authority..."

His voice trailed off, a flash of murderous intent in his eyes.

A surge of delight filled Guo Kai's heart, and he immediately replied, "I understand."

「Xianyang. In the Morning Discussion Hall of the Royal Palace.」

"Brilliant, truly brilliant! Pang Xuan commanded 300,000 soldiers to defend Wu'an City. And in just one day, a single day, Qin has breached Wu'an City, heavily guarded as it was! Beyond Wu'an lies Handan, a mere 100 miles away. The fall of Zhao is a foregone conclusion."