

Longevity 264

Chapter 264: Beneath Handan City! Dunruo's Shock: Where Did This Force Originate?

「Handan!」

「Longtai Palace!」

"The Qin Army is already at the city walls," "Old General, can our great Zhao withstand this invasion?"

Although his subjects had repeatedly assured him that the unity of the army and the people could keep Handan from falling, Zhao Yan's heart still filled with panic upon seeing the Qin Army at the city walls.

"This old servant swears to defend Handan to the death, to live or die with the city," Pang Xuan declared loudly.

Seeing his solemn expression and readiness for death, it was clear that Pang Xuan had already resolved to die. He had felt aggrieved ever since the retreat from Wu'an City. He considered it an immense dishonor that a city defended by an army of 300,000 had fallen to the Qin in a single day.

This time, he was prepared to die. Even if it meant his own death, he was determined to protect Handan from falling.

"The Old General's words have reassured me somewhat. However, the ferocity of the Qin Army cannot be underestimated. Old General, I do not blame you for the loss at Wu'an. I hope you can turn that

defeat into experience and devise a better strategy to repel the enemy," Zhao Yan said, a trace of anxiety in his voice.

Now that Lian Po was dead, Pang Xuan was the only one Zhao Yan could rely on. Although the defeat at Wu'an City worried him, Zhao Yan knew that victory and defeat were common for military strategists. Naturally, he was not overly harsh with this loyal old general.

"Please rest assured, Great King."

"The defeat at Wu'an was because one gate was lost. The routing soldiers fell into disarray, which in turn caused chaos at the defenses of the other two gates."

"For this battle, I have prepared a foolproof strategy."

"Regarding routed soldiers, I have decided to establish a one-hundred-man Supervisory Team for each Army Marquis Camp and a one-thousand-man Supervisory Team for each Wanjiang camp. If any disorder arises, the Supervisory Team will execute the routed soldiers on the spot. Furthermore, a complete roster of the Supervisory Army will be created, recording the family and place of origin of every member. If any member of the Supervisory Army dares to desert in the face of battle, their entire clan will be exterminated!" Pang Xuan announced loudly.

Upon hearing this, a gleam of delight flashed in Zhao Yan's eyes. "Old General, you truly excel at commanding troops! With this measure, the soldiers of the Supervisory Army will not dare to flee. With the Supervisory Army spread throughout our forces, we will certainly never again suffer a rout caused by our own men."

"This is a method I devised after much deliberation," Pang Xuan said gravely. "Only by doing this can the soldiers of Zhao unite as one to resist the formidable enemy."

"Old General, proceed with your plans," Zhao Yan said with the utmost seriousness. "Within Handan, we have nearly 300,000 troops. Besides the more than 200,000 you brought back from Wu'an City, there are also my 50,000 Imperial Guard Army. Now that the nation is in peril, I entrust all military authority within the city to you."

Then, he slowly stood up, picked up a box from the table, and walked toward Pang Xuan in the main hall. Pang Xuan, in turn, bowed deeply.

"I hereby bestow the Tiger Talisman upon you, Old General," Zhao Yan said, placing the box containing the talisman into Pang Xuan's hands. "With this Tiger Talisman, you command all the troops and answer directly to me. If anyone in the city dares to disobey your orders, collude with the enemy, or disrupt the army's morale, you are authorized to deal with them directly according to military law."

Hearing this, Pang Xuan bowed again. "This old servant swears to serve the Great King loyally unto death."

"In addition to the nearly 300,000 troops within Handan," Zhao Yan added, "I have already issued a decree to transfer 100,000 Frontier Army cavalry from the Dai Territory. They are all elite soldiers of our great Zhao. I expect them to arrive in the next two days. Their deployment is also entirely up to you, Old General."

Hearing of the 100,000 Frontier Army cavalry, a sharp glint flashed in Pang Xuan's eyes.

"The Great King is wise!" Pang Xuan stated with confidence. "Our Zhao's mounted archery is unparalleled in the world. With these 100,000 Frontier Army cavalry, this old servant is even more confident in our ability to defend Handan successfully, and perhaps even crush the Qin Army."

"With your words, Old General, I am even more at ease!" Zhao Yan laughed.

Afterward, Zhao Yan turned to the assembled court of civil and military officials, his gaze lingering on Zhao Yi for a moment.

"My lords," Zhao Yan declared coldly, "the nation is in peril, and the Qin Army is at our gates. I will not waste words. Anyone who dares to secretly collude with Qin or betray Zhao will have their entire clan exterminated."

Perhaps Zhao Yan was no wise ruler, but facing a national crisis, he naturally exuded a kingly aura. After all, his own survival was at stake. If Handan fell, his life would be forfeit. For that reason, he was exceptionally clear-headed at this moment.

"We swear to serve the Great King and Zhao loyally unto death!" cried the officials in the Longtai Palace Hall.

"Great King," Pang Xuan spoke again, "there is one more matter of critical importance to the defense of Handan."

"Please speak, Old General," Zhao Yan said immediately.

"Counting the 100,000 Frontier Army cavalry and their horses, Handan must have sufficient provisions and supplies," Pang Xuan respectfully petitioned. "An army of over 300,000 consumes a vast amount of food daily. If the Qin Army lays siege to the city, I fear Handan will be like a caged beast. Therefore, the matter of provisions must be handled with extreme care. This servant requests that the city's provisions not be managed through the Chancellor Mansion, but be placed under my direct jurisdiction."

Hearing this, Guo Kai grew anxious. He had always been in charge of provisions, and only he knew how much profit there was to be made. How could he simply hand it over? Besides, this might be another opportunity to serve Qin!

"Does the Shangjiangjun not trust my ability to manage the logistics?" Guo Kai asked, unwilling to concede.

"The Prime Minister exaggerates. It is not a matter of trust, but of prioritizing the overall situation," Pang Xuan said, his tone implying his sole concern was for the state of Zhao. "The provisions in the city can only sustain our army for three or four months. There are undoubtedly Qin spies in the city, and I do not wish to give them any opportunity to exploit a weakness. If our provisions are compromised, Zhao will be in grave danger."

"Shangjiangjun..." Guo Kai began, still wanting to argue.