

Longevity 31

Chapter 31: Wang Yan: Don't You Have Anything to Ask?

"I originally thought that Bao Yuan, that mongrel, had fled, so I led the troops in pursuit, vowing to capture him. But I never expected that bastard to be lurking in Yang City; he almost ruined everything."

"Had it not been for you, I might have been directly relieved of my command as Main General by now."

"Because of me, those ten thousand soldiers of the Logistics Army suffered."

Thinking back on these recent events, Li Teng felt somewhat helpless, but what weighed on him even more was his self-reproach.

Zhao Feng did not say anything to comfort him. This matter was indeed Li Teng's responsibility. His blind eagerness for merit and failure to station troops to defend Yang City had given Bao Yuan an opportunity to exploit. If only Li Teng had left more than ten thousand Sharp Warriors to defend Yang City, Bao Yuan wouldn't have been able to cause such a stir, and the Logistics Army wouldn't have suffered so many casualties.

Though it is said that a general's success is built on a mountain of bones, this time, Li Teng's actions could not be considered a success. Rather, they were his own fault.

Besides, deep down, when Bao Yuan's forces launched their surprise attacks, I was cursing up a storm. How could we still be ambushed by the Han army when the battle had reached this stage? It was utterly ridiculous.

"If General Li truly feels remorse, you could visit the graves of those soldiers another day to pay your respects," Zhao Feng slowly suggested. "Or perhaps petition the Great King for more compensation."

Hearing this, Li Teng looked up, gazing at Zhao Feng with a hint of surprise. It seemed he hadn't expected Zhao Feng to be so straightforward, showing no fear of his status as the Main General. Li Teng wasn't angry; instead, he nodded with a serious expression. "After the battle, I will go. As for the compensation for the fallen soldiers of the Logistics Army, the Shangjiangjun has already submitted a petition."

"If the compensation is indeed generous, those departed soldiers might find a measure of solace," Zhao Feng said.

In this era, perhaps many things were beyond one's control: being conscripted, joining the army, going to battle, and dying. But it was all for one unspoken purpose: to survive and to ensure one's family could survive. Though soldiers may die, their compensation was the final gift they could give to their families. An extra ten percent could allow their families to live a little better, as in this era, most common people earned a living by farming, aside from working in workshops.

"Rest assured," Li Teng said to Zhao Feng with a smile. "Qin will never fail to honor those who have served meritoriously. I've received word from the Shangjiangjun; he has already reported your military achievements and those of the Logistics Army. Within ten days, a Royal Edict may arrive. By then, you likely won't be in the Logistics Army anymore, but rather one of the Sharp Warriors in my main camp. The Shangjiangjun's intention is for you to be assigned under my direct command."

"When the edict arrives, I shall fulfill my duties," Zhao Feng responded calmly, clasping his fist in a salute.

"Don't worry," Li Teng said with a smile. "I know you've only recently recovered from your injuries, so take this time to rest well. Currently, our army is pursuing the remaining enemy forces and advancing gradually toward the Han Capital. There are no major battles imminent, so you have nothing to worry about."

"Understood," Zhao Feng nodded.

"General Li," a voice suddenly interjected. "I have a suggestion."

It was Wang Yan, who had been standing to the side.

"Speak, Military Commander Wang," Li Teng said, turning to her.

"I hope to have Zhao Feng reassigned to the army under my command," Wang Yan said, raising her head.

"Reassigned to your army?" Li Teng showed a hint of surprise. But upon meeting Wang Yan's gaze, he seemed to understand something and slowly asked, "Have you made up your mind?"

"I have," Wang Yan nodded. After speaking the words, she seemed to relax considerably.

"Alright, I will report this to the Shangjiangjun," said Li Teng.

"Thank you, General," Wang Yan said. Then, she turned to Zhao Feng. "Since you'll be reassigned to the main combat camp soon anyway, how about I show you around the barracks so you can get familiar with it?"

Zhao Feng did not refuse. "Alright, I'd also like to see how the main camp differs from the Logistics Army."

Afterward, Wang Yan led Zhao Feng out of the hall.

That kid holds a grudge against me, Li Teng thought, watching Zhao Feng's retreating figure. He could naturally sense the indifference in Zhao Feng's words. Perhaps I brought this on myself. Because of my actions, I brought harm to the Logistics Army... sigh...

Perhaps this is just my nature, a dislike for false pretenses. I truly can't bring myself to suck up to Li Teng or curry favor with the powerful. Besides, with the strength I now possess, I don't need to.

「On the way」

Wang Yan walked in front while Zhao Feng followed behind, the two of them heading toward the military camp in silence. In the quiet atmosphere, Wang Yan suddenly stopped.

Zhao Feng also stopped abruptly, a look of surprise on his face.

Wang Yan turned around and said with a hint of petulance, "Don't you have anything to say? Or ask?"

"What would I have to ask?" Zhao Feng replied, puzzled.

"How did you figure out that I was a woman?" Wang Yan asked, staring at him.

Zhao Feng glanced at her oddly, then laughed. "Isn't it obvious to anyone with eyes? There are few pretty boys like you in the army, and no matter how rough you try to make your voice, you can't conceal its feminine tone."

"Furthermore..." Zhao Feng's gaze swept across Wang Yan's chest. "No matter how tightly you bind it, what man has such ridiculously large pectoral muscles? Do you take me for a fool!"

As his words fell, Wang Yan subconsciously looked down, her fair face instantly flushing red.

"Rascal," she muttered softly.

"You're the one who asked," Zhao Feng replied, exasperated.

"Do you want to go home that much?" Wang Yan suddenly asked.

"What kind of nonsense are you talking about now?" Zhao Feng glanced at her and said irritably, "Don't you want to go home?"

"I don't," Wang Yan replied, shaking her head with a wry smile.

Seeing her like this, Zhao Feng didn't know how to respond. After a moment's thought, he said, "I'm just a commoner; I don't understand the affairs of your noble clans. I imagine there are far more trivial matters to deal with in a large family."

"Indeed," Wang Yan said with a bitter smile. "If I could, I wouldn't even want to be born into what you call a 'large family.' Perhaps then my life wouldn't feel so out of my control."

Zhao Feng fell silent, offering no reply.

It seems this girl has been targeted for a political marriage; otherwise, she wouldn't have run off to the military to hide. She's probably trying to earn military merits to change her fate. But that's almost impossible. Her surname is Wang, so she might be Wang Jian's daughter. If that's the case, his daughter is destined for a political marriage, perhaps even one decreed by the King of Qin himself, wedding her to a son from a royal clan. However, for women of this era, most were bound by their parents' wishes and the arrangements of matchmakers. It was a fate that was difficult to defy.