

Longevity 48

Chapter 48: There's Politics in the Army, Too!

Time dragged on.

Over four hours had passed.

The battle had reached a complete deadlock, descending into a drawn-out tug-of-war. Many Qin Sharp Soldiers scaled the city walls, but the Han defenders fiercely resisted. Ultimately, the Han soldiers within the city cut them down. The relentless volleys of arrows continued between both sides.

Inside and outside the city, everything was dyed red with blood. Bodies were strewn everywhere, creating a crimson marsh outside the walls. The number of Sharp Warriors' bodies at the city gate was innumerable. Dozens of them pushed the Siege Hammer, battering the gates again and again, yet the gate held firm.

"Strong spirits!"

"Fire oil!"

"Kill!"

On the city walls, spirits were poured and flames were ignited. Countless Qin Sharp Soldiers were instantly turned into men of fire. This grim battle seemed to have no solution.

"Charge!"

"Break the city with all our might!"

"Follow me and kill!"

General Wu Hua roared, leading his Sharp Warriors toward the city gates. But even with a general leading the charge, the outcome remained unchanged. The Han defense was tight, and without breaching the city gates, there was nothing he could do.

At that moment, a barrage of arrows descended. Wu Hua was pierced through and fell into a pool of blood. But the Qin soldiers below continued to advance relentlessly. Without an order to retreat, any who fell back would be executed by the Supervisory Army on the spot.

In the rear of the Qin Army's formation, Li Teng frowned deeply as he watched the vanguard fail to breach the city. An attack so meticulously prepared had not succeeded even after nearly half a day.

"Report."

"Reporting to General Li."

"The Vanguard Army has suffered heavy casualties, and General Wu Hua has fallen in battle."

"The vanguard's morale has collapsed."

"May I ask, General, should we withdraw the Vanguard Army?"

As a messenger delivered the news, Li Teng's brows locked even tighter.

"It seems I have underestimated Zhang Ping and the Han forces in the city," Li Teng said gravely.

"Waging war should be done in a single, vigorous effort. If we retreat now, it will surely affect the entire army and give the Han forces a chance to breathe. If the vanguard's morale is shattered, then we replace it with a new one."

"Issue my orders!" he declared loudly. "Command the Vanguard Army to withdraw. Send Chen Tao and his Wanjiang camp to attack. After Chen Tao, all Wanjiang camps will attack in sequence. I swear I will break Han Capital in this one battle!"

Having been a general for many years, he naturally understood the impact of morale. Retreating now would surely damage it.

"As you command," his trusted aide immediately responded.

Before long, the sound of a horn echoed across the battlefield—the signal for the vanguard to pull back.

BLAAARE!!!

Subsequently, the Vanguard Army at the base of Han Capital began an orderly retreat.

"Soldiers of Han!"

"We've won!"

"The Qin Army is retreating!"

"We can surely defend the capital and protect our kingdom!"

Watching the Qin forces withdraw, the Han commander Cao Yi shouted excitedly, his face triumphant. The Han soldiers on the city walls also beamed with joy.

"General!" a Han officer shouted from the front. "Something's not right! One contingent of the Qin forces has retreated, but another has mobilized, and their archers haven't pulled back either!"

Cao Yi's expression changed.

At that moment, Chen Tao gripped his sword and stood at the front of his formation.

"Zhao Feng! Liu Wu! Present!" Chen Tao shouted.

"Present!" Zhao Feng and the other Capital Commandant from the Wanjiang camp immediately responded.

"General Li has ordered the Vanguard Army to withdraw and my Wanjiang camp to attack," Chen Tao announced. "Whoever breaches Han Capital will earn the greatest merit! Whoever captures the King of Han will earn an unparalleled achievement! Until the city is broken, we will be treated as the vanguard! Drop your crossbows, raise your shields, and charge! Anyone who dares retreat will be killed without mercy! I will personally supervise the battle! Zhao Feng, Liu Wu, which one of you dares to lead?" Chen Tao bellowed, looking at the two Capital Commandants under his command.

Military systems and siege methods varied.

"I am willing," Zhao Feng and Liu Wu replied simultaneously.

"Zhao Feng, you've only just joined the main battle camp; your experience leading troops still needs improvement," Chen Tao said, his words a clear dismissal. He then turned his gaze to the other man. "For this battle, Liu Wu, you will lead the vanguard. Zhao Feng, if Liu Wu's forces falter, you will immediately take over the attack."

Liu Wu's face beamed with elation. "I accept the command." He then looked at Zhao Feng and smiled. "Commander Zhao, I won't be ceding this merit to you. Once the city gate is breached, follow me immediately." He was clearly certain the achievement would be his.

Zhao Feng merely looked on calmly, easily spotting the smugness in Liu Wu's expression.

Although the Qin Sharp Warriors are a single entity, there are still cliques and relationships within. It seems my rapid promotion has stirred some jealousy. Zhao Feng thought, a cold smile touching his lips.

He had been in the main battle camp for less than half a month. He was only familiar with the Junhou under his command and barely knew anyone else. His acquaintance with Liu Wu was superficial at best. General Li's decision made it clear he prioritized his own trusted Wanjiang commanders, which included Chen Tao. Chen Tao's subsequent choice of Liu Wu was undoubtedly because the two were on good terms. Under the Qin Army's merit-based system, everyone vied for honor and promotion. However, the appointment of the vanguard often came down to one's relationship with a superior officer. Otherwise, there wouldn't have been so many disputes over merit throughout history.

From ancient times to the present, it's always been about the game of favors and connections! This was the first time Zhao Feng had truly witnessed such politics within the army.

However, he did not care.

"Brothers!" Liu Wu shouted, his voice exuding confidence. "Did you hear? The general said we're still the vanguard until the walls fall! Follow me! Once we breach Han Capital, the greatest merit will belong to our Commandant Camp!" With that, he led his five thousand Sharp Warriors charging ahead.

Far too cocky. Zhao Feng thought, a faint smile on his lips as he watched Liu Wu's display. The city gates were tightly sealed and the walls were manned by Han troops. Zhao Feng was curious to see how Liu Wu actually intended to take the city.

"Commander Liu leads the vanguard with his troops; my Commandant Camp is in reserve," Zhao Feng announced to his men. "Everyone be careful. The Han arrow volleys are relentless, so spread out as much as possible." He turned to instruct Zhang Han and the other Junhou, his gaze lingering on Wei Quan for a moment.

"Understood!" Zhang Han, Wei Quan, and the other Junhou replied in unison.

Once Liu Wu had led his troops out, putting some distance between them and Zhao Feng's own men, Zhao Feng gave his order.

"Kill!"

Without wasting any more words, he drew his sword and charged, his expression serious. The Sharp Warriors followed, led by their respective Junhou, though they advanced at a more measured pace. With the gate still unbreached, rushing forward too quickly meant facing the enemy's arrow barrage like lambs to the slaughter.

On the walls, seeing one wave of Qin troops retreat only to be replaced by another, Cao Yi shouted, "They won't spare us if they breach the walls! Archers, fire on the troops below! Stone Throwing Machines, target their archers! Kill!"

Facing life and death, the Han army defended with all its might.

Liu Wu, shield in hand, led his Commandant Camp forward into the torrent of arrows, with his soldiers occasionally being struck down. Soon, he and his men reached the base of the city walls.

With fresh troops joining the fray, siege towers and ladders were pushed against the walls once more. Liu Wu led his five thousand Sharp Warriors in a ferocious and ceaseless assault, charging the battlements and climbing the ladders. Yet despite their onslaught, they could not take the top of the wall, and their casualties continued to mount.