

Longevity 9

Chapter 9: Han's Hidden Hand

With the fall of Yang City, the critical hub of Han had been breached, and with it, the very gates to the Han Capital. Han was doomed to fall.

"Report to General Li," Wang Yan said, hurrying into the tent and bowing to Li Teng. "The search within the city is complete. We found no trace of Bao Yuan; he has already fled Yang City. I request permission to lead troops in pursuit and capture him."

Upon hearing the report, Li Teng, seated in the place of honor, glanced at the other generals in the tent. "Although Yang City has been taken, the enemy forces within its bounds have not been completely eradicated. I give you half a month to wipe out the scattered Han forces around Yang City. After that, we march on the Han Capital."

"Yes, sir!" the commanders responded in unison before withdrawing from the tent.

After their departure, Li Teng looked at the youthful officer before him with an expression of helpless exasperation.

"Yan'er," he began, "I have already arranged for the pursuit of Bao Yuan, so you don't need to join the fray. The battlefield is no place for games; it's fraught with danger. I think you should return to the Senior General's side."

Li Teng felt utterly helpless when dealing with Wang Yan. As the beloved daughter of Wang Jian, born to him in his middle age, Wang Yan had always been coddled. Raised in the martial Wang Family, she had

developed a spirited eagerness for the battlefield. This time, in the campaign against Han, she had shamelessly tagged along.

"General Li," Wang Yan declared, bowing deeply. "The Senior General has already given me permission to contribute to this campaign, and I am a Junhou Commander, personally appointed by the Great King himself. As long as Han is not subdued, I will not leave the battlefield. Please assign me military duties, General Li. I will carry them out."

Seeing her persistence, Li Teng felt extremely powerless. As the daughter of his direct superior, the Shangjiangjun, he could not be too harsh with her. It was an impossible situation.

Li Teng's expression turned stern. "Wang Yan, heed my command. There are still Han soldiers hiding within Yang City. I command you to lead your five hundred trusted aides and grant you authority over ten thousand logistics troops to assist. You must completely clear the Han forces from inside Yang City. Furthermore, you are to assist the Logistics Army in escorting supplies and securing the supply lines."

Disappointment showed in Wang Yan's eyes, but she could only nod. "This commander obeys."

She then withdrew.

「Inside Yang City!」

The cleanup continued. Under the protection of her trusted aides, Wang Yan moved from the city's interior toward the outer walls.

"Where is the Wanjiang of the Logistics Army?" Wang Yan called out. Although it was a woman's voice, she deliberately tried to project a masculine boldness, but the result was somewhat awkward.

"This commander is Chen Lei," the Wanjiang of the Logistics Army promptly stepped forward.

"How goes the cleanup within the city?" Wang Yan asked directly.

"Reporting to the General," Chen Lei replied immediately. "The outer city is mostly clear, but the inner city will require three more days."

Although the young general before him looked youthful and wore only the battle armor of a Junhou Commander, the trusted aides at her side were from the Senior General's personal guard. This clearly marked her as a favored general from the main camp's direct line of command. Chen Lei dared not offend her.

"Speed up the cleanup," Wang Yan ordered gravely. "Finish it within two days. After clearing the streets, disperse the troops to search the residential houses. You must eliminate all remaining enemy soldiers in the city."

"Yes, sir," Chen Lei acknowledged and immediately went to relay the order.

Not far from where Wang Yan stood, Zhao Feng nearly cursed when he heard her order.

Damn it, is this girl crazy? She just turned a three-day job into a two-day one! How many attributes am I going to miss out on now? That bitch! Zhao Feng cursed inwardly, thoroughly annoyed.

One should not underestimate a single day of cleanup—it could have allowed Zhao Feng to gather attributes from at least several hundred more people. Standing just a short distance away, Zhao Feng was already tempted to give that little wench a good beating.

This won't do. I need a new approach. Moving corpses is easy, but digging pits and burying them is definitely not. I'll muddle through these next two days, then go to the burial pits to haul bodies. That way, I can pick up even more attributes. After a moment of thought, Zhao Feng came up with a solution. No one could stop him from collecting attributes and growing stronger.

With this in mind, Zhao Feng suppressed his frustration and hurried to get back to the cleanup. Any delay now would mean losing out on a lot of attributes. Zhao Feng was counting on Yang City to push all his attributes toward 400. Secure the four hundred mark, then push for five hundred.

「Xinzheng! The Han Royal Palace!」

"What is the battle situation?" King Han An asked, his expression grave as he looked at the man before him.

"Yang City has fallen," Chancellor Zhang Ping of Han said grimly.

The king's face fell, and he collapsed back into his seat.

"With Yang City fallen, my Xinzheng has no more defensible terrain. The capital's forces are less than fifty thousand; we cannot contend with Qin. Has Qin's national power truly reached such a stage? They've been campaigning against our Han for less than a month, and a third of our territory is already lost." The King of Han spoke with the utmost gravity, his voice filled with fear.

"Your Majesty," Zhang Ping said in a low voice, "Qin moved with extreme speed this time, giving our Han no chance to react. Our envoys have already departed for the states of Zhao and Wei, but even if they agree to send aid, it will be too late. Perhaps... we can only resort to the plan discussed with the Senior General."

"Must the foundation of my Han, built over nearly two hundred years, truly be lost?" King Han An's face was filled with unwilling resentment.

"Your Majesty, preserving the royal bloodline and the foundation of Han is paramount. In the future, there may be a chance to restore our kingdom. Besides, though Yang City has fallen, the Senior General once said he had one final, desperate strategy. If it succeeds, it could heavily damage the Qin Army. With aid from Zhao and Wei, we might ultimately save our kingdom from annihilation. However, for the future restoration of Han, we must first send the royal bloodline to safety," Zhang Ping urged, bowing respectfully.

"Understood," King Han An nodded. He looked up at the heavens, his eyes full of prayer. "I can only hope the heavens will protect Han!"

At this moment, he was out of options. All he could do was his best and leave the rest to fate.

「Inside Yang City.」

A day passed quickly. Night fell, and the city grew quiet. The Qin Army maintained strict discipline and did not bother the common people, but nearly every citizen hid in their homes, daring not to venture out. With Yang City only recently secured, several thousand Sharp Warriors from the main camp were still patrolling the city. The Logistics Army, meanwhile, had left the city to set up camp outside, where they were digging pits for cooking fires.

「Inside Yang City!」

In various alleys, something strange happened. It was unclear if there was a signal, but many seemingly solid patches of ground suddenly began to tremble. Then, wooden planks were pushed aside, revealing passages leading underground. It wasn't just the alleys. In many secluded houses throughout the city, doors were suddenly thrown open. From these houses and from the tunnels beneath the ground, soldiers in battle armor swarmed out. Their armor was not that of Qin, but of Han.

"The Senior General commands!"

"Kill every Qin soldier in the city without mercy!"

"Retake Yang City!"

In various parts of the city, thousands of Han soldiers emerged from the shadows, sweeping back to reclaim the streets. The patrolling Qin soldiers also heard the commotion.

"What's that noise?"

"Damn it, an enemy attack!"

"There are still Han soldiers in the city!"

"Quickly, report to the general! Form up to face the enemy!"

"Quick, to arms...!"