

Longevity 93

Chapter 93: Accumulating Strength! Mother's Birthday!

Zhao Feng naturally understood that the strategy of employing the Penal Battalion would inevitably become a trend in Qin. By proposing it first, he would be the pioneer once the Penal Battalion made achievements!

Seeing how earnest Zhao Feng was, Meng Yi and Li Teng were both very surprised. The other generals in the great hall felt the same way, finding Zhao Feng's declaration astonishing and shocking. It was common knowledge that reorganizing surrendered troops was extremely tricky, and it was considered impossible to forge them into a fighting force.

"General Zhao, are you serious?" Meng Yi asked in surprise.

"I am serious, Prefectural Governor," Zhao Feng assured. "If the reorganization of the surrendered troops is feasible, Qin can obtain a continuous stream of fresh forces for future conquests. This matter is worth exploring."

"Do you realize the gravity of this situation?" Li Teng said gravely. "If there is indeed a mutiny among the surrendered troops, if there is chaos in the camps, that would be a grave crime."

"I am willing to make a military pledge. Give me 20,000 surrendered troops to lead as the vanguard," Zhao Feng said with a determined bow, his fists clasped. "If there is indeed a mutiny or chaos in the camps, I am willing to take full responsibility."

To others, these surrendered troops are a hot potato, but for me, knowing history as I do, they can still fight for Qin as long as they are well-trained, reorganized, and given hope. More importantly, I can also secretly recruit my own Dead Soldiers from among them.

Looking at Zhao Feng, still so resolute, Li Teng couldn't help but look toward Meng Yi with a somewhat helpless expression.

"General Li," Meng Yi said with a smile, "I actually think General Zhao might really have a way to change the surrendered troops and forge them into a fighting force. Why not give him a chance?"

"But shouldn't this matter be reported to the Great King?" Li Teng hesitated. In the past, surrendered troops were directly demoted to slaves; in times of war, they were simply pushed onto the battlefield as cannon fodder. There had never been any attempts at reorganization.

"Since my arrival in Yingchuan, the Great King has already given his instructions," Meng Yi explained. "He has placed the surrendered troops under my command to be deployed as I see fit. Since General Zhao is willing, let him try. If it doesn't work, we can then suppress them with military force. As for this matter, I will make the decision on behalf of General Li."

Then, looking down at Zhao Feng, he continued, "I will give General Zhao 30,000 surrendered troops. No matter how you train or reorganize them, General Li will not interfere. But, General Zhao, you must remember the lesson of the Battle of Changping."

The underlying meaning of his words was clear.

In the Battle of Changping, more than 400,000 Zhao Jun were captured. Why not reorganize them? Why execute them all? Ultimately, it was because surrendered troops could not be reorganized, nor could they be kept for one's own use. Keeping them as slaves was too great a burden, draining the state's treasury and food supplies. Releasing them meant inflicting no real damage on the Zhao state. If there had been another option at the time, those 400,000 surrendered soldiers of the Zhao state would not have died.

"Please rest assured, Prefect Meng," Zhao Feng immediately replied. "I understand."

"General Li," Meng Yi said with a smile to Li Teng, "the war has just ended, and the Imperial Court's rewards have also been delivered. It's best for you to go and reorganize the army now."

"Alright." Li Teng nodded.

The battle to annihilate Han, while seemingly a splendid victory, had cost the lives of many Sharp Warriors. Many more would have to be discharged and return home due to injuries and disabilities. These Sharp Warriors were not just ordinary foot soldiers but also included officers and even those with the ranks of Junhou, Capital Commandant, and Wanjiang. The gaps left by fallen officers had to be filled from among the meritorious Sharp Warriors, after which the various camps needed to be reorganized to form a battle-ready force. After the New Year, once new recruits arrived, the ranks could be fully replenished.

「A day passed in this manner.」

「In the council hall of the city's military camp.」

Zhao Feng sat in the seat of honor, while five Wanjiangs and ten Capital Commandants stood in the great hall.

Among the five Wanjiangs, Zhao Feng was most familiar with Zhang Han, and another was Chen Tao. Previously, Chen Tao had been Zhao Feng's superior, but he was now Zhao Feng's subordinate. Perhaps this situation was extremely irritating for Chen Tao, but he could do nothing about it.

Originally, before Zhao Feng had achieved the merit of capturing the king, the highest promotion he could have likely expected was to the rank of Wanjiang—an advancement of two ranks for the merit of capturing a city. As a Wanjiang, Chen Tao would have also enjoyed such a reward. But with the merit of capturing the king, the position of Deputy General that might have been Chen Tao's was gone, effectively squeezed out by Zhao Feng's military achievements. In the Qin Army, strength and merit decided everything.

Among the ten Capital Commandants, Zhao Feng was familiar with four of them, including Liu Wu, with whom he had previously shared the rank. Perhaps Chen Tao and Liu Wu felt uneasy in their hearts now that Zhao Feng had become their direct superior.

"Greetings, General Zhao," the generals bowed in unison.

"Gentlemen, please take your seats," Zhao Feng said with a slight smile, gesturing with his hand.

"Thank you, General Zhao," the generals bowed and then sat down in order of rank on both sides of the hall.

Zhao Feng slowly began, "After a day of reorganization, the five Wanjiang camps under my command have been reformed into an army. Each camp now has a strength of around 7,400 men. We are temporarily short on numbers and our military structure is incomplete. However, this issue will be resolved after the New Year when the new recruits arrive."

"General," Zhang Han asked with a smile, "now that the war is settled, a temporary lack of troops is not a major concern. When do we set out for Wei City?"

"What do the generals think is a good time to depart?" Instead of deciding directly, Zhao Feng looked toward the several Wanjiangs.

"Everything shall follow the General's command," the other four Wanjiangs responded in unison.

"Moving the army requires scheduling and provisions. The journey from Xinzheng to Wei City takes five days for cavalry. For our army to break camp and march there, it will take half a month."