

## Longevity 95

### Chapter 95: Building Strength! Mother's Birthday! (Part 3)

Han Xi, a eunuch in his forties, was naturally weaker than others. He knew that if he were truly taken away as a slave, the only outcome would be death.

"My Lord," Han Xi said respectfully. "During this period, I have been searching in Xinzheng as you instructed and have recruited quite a number of people. Allow me to give you a detailed report."

"Wait until they have all arrived," Zhao Feng said slowly, his voice calm and steady.

"Yes, My Lord." Han Xi nodded respectfully and fell silent.

「A while later.」

Zhang Han, Wei Quan, and the other three men who had just left returned. Upon their arrival, they immediately closed the hall doors. They also stationed trusted Sharp Warriors outside to guard, preventing anyone from approaching.

"Greetings, My Lord." The five men bowed excitedly to Zhao Feng the moment they entered.

"Please, sit." Zhao Feng smiled faintly.

"Thank you, My Lord." The five stood up but did not take a seat, remaining standing before Zhao Feng.

"Speak," Zhao Feng said, looking at Han Xi. "How is the recruitment coming along?"

"Yes, My Lord," Han Xi responded respectfully before continuing, "This time, I recruited in secret. I found old hands among the common folk and discreetly gathered about three hundred boys and girls around the age of ten. I also recruited fifty-eight elite Imperial Guards retired from the former Han Royal Palace, twenty-six blacksmiths, eighteen brewers, and thirteen carpenters."

Hearing these numbers, Zhao Feng nodded with satisfaction. "Han Xi, you have done well. I originally asked you to gather only around two hundred children, but you managed to find three hundred."

"My Lord, the Han Land has just emerged from the chaos of war. Because of the turmoil, displaced people are everywhere. Finding three hundred was not difficult. If My Lord requires more, I can find them." Han Xi sighed. "It may seem like we are taking these children far away, but in reality, we are saving their lives."

"Why so pessimistic?" Zhao Feng asked, surprised. "The Han Land has become Yingchuan County, and Qin has appointed a capable Prefectural Governor. Yingchuan will soon be stable."

"My Lord, having always served the King of Han, I am naturally aware of the situation," Han Xi explained. "Over the years, to preserve his kingdom, the King of Han spent countless gold and silver constantly shifting his allegiances. All of these funds were extorted from the common people. The taxes in all of Yingchuan have been collected for years in advance. With winter approaching, who knows how many will starve or freeze to death. Even before the war, countless people starved or froze. Now, it will be even worse." Han Xi sighed again, his face filled with sorrow.

Though he was a eunuch and a citizen of a fallen kingdom, perhaps there was still goodness in his heart. The thought of the future filled him with unbearable grief.

Han Xi's words painted a vivid picture for Zhao Feng. A world of ice and snow, the ground littered with the starved, countless frozen bones—a tragic spectacle of the human condition. Compared to the battlefield, their deaths were even more agonizing.

"Alas," Zhao Feng sighed. "My abilities are limited right now; I cannot save so many. Besides, with several hundred people, we are already a large target. We cannot recruit any more for the time being, or it will surely invite disaster."

"However," he continued, "once we reach Wei City, we can recruit again. I can only do what is humanly possible. As for the rest, we can only wait and see what the Imperial Court does. I believe the King of Qin will not simply stand by and watch."

Hearing this, Han Xi knelt and kowtowed. "My Lord is benevolent! I swear to serve you until death!"

"I am not benevolent; this is simply a matter of mutual need." Zhao Feng waved his hand, rejecting the label. The recruitment was for his future plans. The reputation of benevolence was a burden he felt he could not yet bear. He understood his place and his duties clearly. At present, he was merely a Deputy General of the Qin Army. What did that amount to in the vast land of Shenzhou, in the world at large? If he were the sovereign of a nation, it would be his duty to find a path to survival for his people, but he was not.

"You have all heard what Han Xi said." Zhao Feng then called out, "Zhang Han."

"Your orders, My Lord," Zhang Han replied immediately.

"Arrange for these recruits to be discreetly integrated into the army and brought to Wei City," Zhao Feng commanded in a grave tone.

"A few hundred people is simple enough," Zhang Han said. "I will place them in the supply convoy and have them overseen by our own trusted men from the Commandant Camp."

"You see to the arrangements," Zhao Feng nodded. A few hundred people wouldn't be a major issue even if discovered; they could be passed off as servants.

Zhao Feng then turned to Wei Quan. "Big Brother Wei."

"My Lord!" Wei Quan's expression changed as he spoke with alarm. "Now that I have pledged my loyalty, that title is entirely inappropriate!"

Seeing this, Zhao Feng felt a strange, unfamiliar sensation, but he let the matter drop.

"Now that I have been promoted to Deputy General, I am permitted to have one hundred trusted aides," Zhao Feng said. "I want you to select one hundred loyal and reliable Sharp Warriors from among our old brothers in the Commandant Camp to serve as my personal guard."

Under military regulations, only a Main General was entitled to a personal guard, and they could command five battalions of one hundred men each, for a total of five hundred. A Deputy General did not have such a privilege. But Zhao Feng was no ordinary Deputy General; he held a tenth-rank title of nobility.

According to the laws of nobility, a Left Attendant could maintain one hundred private soldiers. In the army, these could be called trusted aides. Li Teng had been the one to tell him this. While it didn't conform to military regulations, it was a royal favor granted to those with meritorious titles.

"I accept the order, My Lord," Wei Quan said respectfully.

"Now, tell me about the promotions for the brothers in the army below the rank of Capital Commandant," Zhao Feng said, turning to Luo Hua.