

Mythical 16

Chapter 16: Gongsun Zan and Liu Yu

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Chen Xi tugged at the corners of his mouth and didn't respond. This wasn't a matter of confidence or lack thereof. He was extremely confident about the grand scheme of things, but when it came to details and the abilities of others, he truly had no answers.

Seeing that Chen Xi was silent, Liu Bei didn't press the issue. For Liu Bei now, he was already moving towards his youthful goals. The series of plans Chen Xi laid out had given him great confidence.

"Report!" A messenger rushed towards Liu Bei.

"What is it?" Liu Bei asked, looking up.

"General Gongsun has allocated three hundred White Horse Cavalry to our cause and has also provided three hundred horses. He requests you to come and receive them," the messenger said loudly.

"He really is a generous man..." Chen Xi muttered softly.

Yesterday, during the battle for Sishui Pass, Liu Bei's troops suffered some losses. After replenishing his own forces, Gongsun Zan also allocated a troop to Liu Bei. For Gongsun Zan, who was still considered wealthy at this time, cavalry was abundant. Constant battles with the Xianbei and Wuhuan had yielded many fine horses.

"Gongsun Bogui..." Liu Bei sighed. At this moment, he had no way to repay Gongsun Zan's generosity. He could only remember the old saying, "If you become rich, don't forget your old friends."

"They've already delivered them to the camp. Just accept them. We'll become successful sooner or later. Just don't forget this friendship when the time comes," Chen Xi said with a smile. He appreciated Gongsun Zan's behavior. This pure nationalist sentiment gave Chen Xi a great impression of him.

Liu Bei was now a minor figure, but Gongsun Zan was fully aware of that. Despite the vast difference in their statuses—Gongsun Zan being a state governor and Liu Bei a commoner—Gongsun Zan never looked down on Liu Bei, maintaining their friendship from their days as classmates.

"General Gongsun's subordinate, Du Bo, greets General Liu," a pale, beardless young officer said respectfully when Liu Bei arrived.

"No need for formalities. How is General Gongsun?" Liu Bei extended his hand to help the officer up. From his actions, Liu Bei could tell that this Du Bo was also an intermediary and likely a competent cavalry leader.

"The northern barbarians are preparing to invade again. Last winter was harsh, and many starved. In spring, the barbarians might march south. General Gongsun is considering whether to return and defend Youzhou. He is concerned about the state of Youzhou," Du Bo explained clearly, suggesting that Gongsun Zan had sent him to relay this message.

While Liu Bei was pondering the situation, Chen Xi spoke up, "If General Gongsun is worried, he can return to Youzhou. The task of punishing Dong Zhuo in Luoyang can be entrusted to General Xuande. As for Liu Gongbo of Youzhou, let Dong Zhuo deal with him."

Gongsun Zan might not see the situation of the coalition clearly, but he cared deeply about the people of Youzhou. Hearing that the northern barbarians might invade, he was inclined to return to Youzhou to eliminate the threat. Unlike most of the Han dynasty officials, Gongsun Zan had no concept of appeasement.

The title of the White Horse General and his White Horse Cavalry were earned through the blood of the barbarians.

This was also why Gongsun Zan nearly clashed with Liu Yu, the governor of Youzhou. Liu Yu was a legitimate Han descendant, and the Han dynasty had to consider the prestige of the Liu family. However, in 193 AD, Gongsun Zan directly killed Liu Yu.

Liu Yu was one of the capable administrators of the late Eastern Han Dynasty, governing the barren Youzhou to rival Jizhou. However, his policy of appeasement towards the barbarians led to frequent raids, causing the people to suffer greatly.

Gongsun Zan believed that only dead barbarians were good barbarians, while Liu Yu aimed to assimilate the barbarians. Naturally, their political differences led to discord and eventual conflict, with Gongsun Zan ultimately defeating Liu Yu.

Later, when Yuan Shao fought Gongsun Zan, many barbarians joined under the banner of avenging Liu Yu, indicating that Liu Yu had some influence among the barbarians.

If Liu Yu hadn't hindered Gongsun Zan, he might have driven the barbarians north of the Great Wall, possibly even crossing the Changbai Mountains to deal with the tribes in Bingzhou.

Chen Xi's current plan was to have Dong Zhuo summon Liu Yu back to Luoyang and perhaps grant him a higher position, at least one above Liu Yu. This would morally justify stopping Liu Yu from hindering Gongsun Zan. Once in Youzhou, Gongsun Zan, unimpeded, could decisively defeat the northern barbarians.

As for the potential criticism of withdrawing from the coalition, Chen Xi didn't care. Gongsun Zan would be returning to defend the borders, while his troops would remain in the coalition under Liu Bei's command. Who could claim he had withdrawn? Gongsun Zan was merely fulfilling his duty to defend the frontier.

Chen Xi explained this plan to Du Bo, whose eyes grew brighter with each word.

It was hard for people in the central plains to imagine the suffering of those on the border, which explained Gongsun Zan's high prestige in the north. Similarly, despite Lu Bu's dishonorable reputation, the troops from Bingzhou, including Zhang Liao and Gao Shun, never abandoned him, nor did Lu Bu dare set foot in Bingzhou after leaving it.

"Zi Chuan, isn't this plan a bit too opportunistic?" Liu Bei asked hesitantly after Du Bo left.

"Nothing wrong with it. Frankly, General Gongsun likely wants to return now. You've been in Youzhou for years, Xuande. You should understand General Gongsun's attitude towards the barbarians and Liu Yu's attitude towards General Gongsun," Chen Xi said with a smile.

Chen Xi was confident that, given Gongsun Zan's mindset, if someone could prevent Liu Yu from interfering, he wouldn't mind a minor blemish on his record. For such a person, official commendations were less important than the people's well-being. Historically, this man defied orders to attack when he saw his people suffering.

Defying orders that threatened execution, Gongsun Zan took action. After defeating the invading barbarians, he couldn't tolerate Liu Yu any longer and killed him. With no one hindering him, barbarian raids ceased. However, the subsequent challenge was that Gongsun Zan was not as effective a governor as Liu Yu.

This reaffirmed that conquering on horseback and governing a land were very different skills.