

Mythical 25

Chapter 25: You Have Nothing

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"Eighteen coalition lords, hahaha. As long as the Prime Minister retains his ambition, within three months, I'll make them understand the gap," thought Li Ru. With a myriad of strategies flashing through his mind, he once again saw hope and had the energy to play with the eighteen coalition lords camped outside Hulao Pass. But all of this was predicated on not discovering that Dong Zhuo was just having a brain fart and was otherwise still the greedy, lecherous, and tyrannical fat man he was in Luoyang...

While Chen Xi was contemplating how to deal with Dong Zhuo and expand Liu Bei's fame and influence, Li Ru was also thinking about how to wipe out the coalition of the eighteen lords within a month or two. In his view, this task wasn't particularly difficult.

"Xuande..." Chen Xi drowsily raised his wine bowl, toasting Liu Bei who had just entered.

"Zichuan, wake up, wake up!" Liu Bei shook Chen Xi left and right.

"What's the matter, Xuande?" Chen Xi reacted sluggishly.

"Zichuan, wake up first, quickly. I have something to ask you," Liu Bei said, his face flushed with joy and urgency.

"What is it?" Chen Xi's muddled eyes suddenly cleared. Though he didn't have the ability to expel alcohol like Guan Yu and Zhang Fei, he could use his mental strength to clear his mind.

Liu Bei quickly recounted today's events to Chen Xi. Chen Xi, scratching his head, said, "This is good news, what's the problem?"

After organizing his troops, Liu Bei had rushed to the nearby camps of Tao Qian and Kong Rong, the two people he had been getting along with recently. Despite the chaos caused by the surprise attack, Tao Qian's camp was well-defended by the Danyang elite soldiers, maintaining the center's security. When Liu Bei arrived, they quickly stabilized the situation together.

However, the situation in Kong Rong's camp was much worse. Although teaching and preaching came naturally to the descendant of the saint, fighting was another matter entirely. Kong Rong's camp was in complete disarray, and had it not been for a brave general holding off two enemy commanders, Kong Rong might have perished in the chaos.

Because of this, Liu Bei's timely assistance was a lifesaver for Kong Rong, greatly enhancing Liu Bei's already positive reputation with him. After driving off the night raiders, Kong Rong invited Tao Qian and Liu Bei to drink tea in his camp.

As they chatted, the conversation turned to their respective territories. Upon learning that Liu Bei was residing in Youzhou's Pingyuan County, Kong Rong generously offered to recommend Liu Bei as the governor of Taishan County next to his territory. Tao Qian also agreed to support Liu Bei's appointment as the governor of Taishan County.

With these two agreeing, as long as Liu Bei did not refuse, his appointment was almost certain. Although Kong Rong was a scholar, his status meant his words carried significant weight. If his proposal was rejected, he could still build up Liu Bei's reputation, ensuring that Liu Bei would eventually get the position.

"Zichuan, you don't understand the situation in Taishan County. The people of Qingzhou have always been fierce, and after the Yellow Turban Rebellion, banditry has become rampant. Some powerful bandit groups even occupy cities. The only relatively peaceful areas in Qingzhou are a few county towns," Liu Bei said with a wry smile, thinking that Chen Xi was still half asleep.

"Aren't they just some Yellow Turbans and bandits?" Chen Xi scoffed. "What's there to be afraid of? With Taishan County, you have your own territory and people to develop. No matter how troublesome Taishan is, it's better than being stuck in one place."

"Zichuan, are you sober?" Liu Bei said with a bitter smile. "Do you have any idea how serious the bandit problem is in Qingzhou?"

"Alright, I'm not sober. Tell me how serious it is," Chen Xi said nonchalantly.

"It's extremely serious. Qingzhou has over a million bandits. Including the civilians they've coerced, the bandits in Qingzhou number over two million. Taishan County alone has about three hundred thousand Taishan bandits!" Liu Bei said with a grim face, sharing the information he had gathered.

"Two million?" Chen Xi scratched his head, remembering that when Cao Cao dealt with Qingzhou, there were only about a hundred thousand. How did it become two million?

"Two million is a conservative estimate. With the civilians aiding the Yellow Turbans, Qingzhou is crawling with bandits," Liu Bei explained, his headache apparent. He was eager for the territory in Taishan, but it was too much to handle. His five thousand men would barely make a dent.

"Fine, let's say there are three million bandits. That's a lot of people—potential soldiers. Even if only a tenth are fit for battle, they can be trained into soldiers," Chen Xi said playfully, but Liu Bei didn't understand.

"Zichuan, this isn't about soldiers. Taishan used to be a good place, but now it's overrun with bandits. It would take an army of at least a hundred thousand to pacify it. And even then, we'd constantly face counterattacks from the Yellow Turbans. It's impossible to hold," Liu Bei said helplessly.

"Xuande, what are your ideals?" Chen Xi asked casually, looking off into the distance. "Still the same as before?"

"To restore the Han Dynasty! My ideal is to restore the Han Dynasty!" Liu Bei declared without hesitation, though he didn't understand why Chen Xi had changed the subject.

"Do you have the foundation of Yuan Shao?" Chen Xi turned and looked directly at Liu Bei.

"Of course not. Yuan Shao is the descendant of the prestigious Yuan family, four generations of high-ranking officials. I can't compare to that," Liu Bei shook his head.

"Do you have the reputation of Kong Rong?" Chen Xi continued to ask with a smile.

"Naturally, I can't compare to Kong Rong. He's a descendant of the saint and a great scholar of his time. How can I compare?" Liu Bei shook his head again.

"Do you have the power of Tao Qian?" Chen Xi's face showed a faint smile as he looked at the still puzzled Liu Bei.

"Of course not. Tao Qian controls the wealthy region of Xuzhou and has the elite Danyang soldiers. Ordinary people can't compare," Liu Bei shook his head and said.

"Then how do you plan to restore the Han Dynasty?" Chen Xi asked with a smile.

"Of course, of course..." Liu Bei opened his mouth but couldn't say his usual line about recruiting talents.

"Xuande, you have nothing," Chen Xi said softly.

"Nothing..." Liu Bei repeated the words, realizing that since the Yellow Turban Rebellion, he had achieved nothing. Although he now sat among the lords, commanded elite soldiers, and had some of the best generals, he truly had nothing.