

Mythical 39

Chapter 39: Ten Thousand Books of Books

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"Are we going to return these books to Cai Zhonglang?" Zhao Yun carefully tucked the selected books into the pocket on the belly of his horse, holding a hand-copied History of the Han and feeling a bit uneasy.

Zhang Fei stuffed scrolls and paintings into the pockets on his and Guan Yu's horses with a bandit-like expression.

"Stop joking. If you don't say anything and I don't say anything, who will know? With Luoyang gone in a fire, who would know the books are missing?" Chen Xi rolled his eyes. "Alright, keep the books safe. Take what you like; these will be useful in the future to attract scholars!"

"Isn't this a bit improper?" Zhao Yun, feeling somewhat embarrassed about acting like a thief, tried to argue. However, his hands didn't slow down, and he gathered all the scrolls without leaving a single scrap behind.

"Stop being so wishy-washy, Zilong. If you feel bad, give me the book you hid in your robe. I saw you take a copy of the Weiliaozi." Zhang Fei continued sorting the scrolls, keeping what he found useful and placing the rest in the prepared carriage.

"Alright, alright, Yide. And Zilong, stop arguing. We took these books for a reason. You must remember whose residence this is," Chen Xi said, tossing a rolled-up History of the Han onto the cart.

"It's Cai Zhonglang's residence. So what? If we don't take anything, we gain nothing. If we take them, at least we saved something from the fire," Zhang Fei said nonchalantly.

"Sigh, that's not the point. Don't you think there are too many books?" Chen Xi rolled his eyes.

"Now that you mention it..." Zhao Yun's eyes sparkled. "So, they're ill-gotten gains! Alright, I'll consider this as robbing the rich to help the poor."

"Not exactly ill-gotten. These books are from the Han Dynasty's Eastern Palace. When Dong Zhuo entered Luoyang, the aristocratic families feared the Xiliang warriors would act like Xiang Yu, so they divided the 300,000 volumes from the Eastern Palace. Cai Zhonglang originally worked on compiling the national history there, so he took a lot, giving Wang Can, Wang Zhongxuan, 10,000 volumes, leaving this many here," Chen Xi explained with a shrug. "So, reclaiming them is the most proper thing to do."

"Ten... ten thousand volumes?" Guan Yu stuttered slightly.

"Yes, ten thousand volumes," Chen Xi said helplessly. "Lord Xuande, being a relative of the Han, reclaiming these Han treasures is justified. I'm still planning to retrieve those ten thousand volumes from Wang Can."

Guan Yu, Zhang Fei, and Zhao Yun felt like cursing. They struggled to keep a single volume as a family heirloom, while Cai Yong had given away ten thousand volumes.

"Zichuan, where is Wang Can? I'll go retrieve those ten thousand volumes. How can we let the Han treasures fall into others' hands!" Guan Yu stood up with his Green Dragon Crescent Blade, looking righteously indignant.

"If I knew where he was, I wouldn't have brought you here." Chen Xi rolled his eyes. His family was a branch of the Chen family, and his father had been affluent. Even so, their library had only a few hundred volumes. A collection of ten thousand volumes would establish them as a scholarly family, leaving others speechless.

In this era, aristocratic families monopolized knowledge. Books, as the carriers of knowledge, were possessed only by these families. A common household with a book or two would consider them heirlooms to be passed down.

This was why great scholars garnered immense respect—they were willing to share their knowledge rather than hoard it. Though they only took on a few disciples and many auditors, they did indeed pass on their knowledge, changing destinies.

Seeing the red-eyed, furious trio, Chen Xi could only slowly soothe them. Three hundred thousand volumes, representing nearly all the Han Dynasty's collections save those destroyed by Wang Mang, ended up in the aristocrats' hands. What kind of situation was this?

"Alright, I'll find a way to retrieve those books in the future," Chen Xi comforted, seeing their gritted teeth.

"Zichuan, there's no need. For the aristocratic families, life is less important than their heritage. Land and family teachings are central to that heritage. The books they took won't be returned," Zhao Yun shook his head, indicating Chen Xi didn't need to console them.

"These here are an exception," Chen Xi said, waving a scroll. "It's relatively simple. You'll see later; they will return the books, as long as they aren't foolish. Let's gather and meet with Lord Xuande. The alliance against Dong Zhuo is ending, and we need to collect our assets."

When Chen Xi returned with Guan Yu, Zhang Fei, and Zhao Yun, they found Hua Xiong sitting cross-legged in the tent. Seeing Chen Xi enter, he stiffly stood up. "Zichuan, has the Chancellor left?"

"He has. We're planning to pursue him," Chen Xi said, looking at the sullen Hua Xiong. "Do you want to join? You might face Lu Bu."

"I don't want to. As we discussed, I'll switch my allegiance to Lord Xuande. Regarding Chancellor Dong, I don't want to confront him," Hua Xiong sighed. He wasn't disheartened by Dong Zhuo's actions. He now had new choices and hoped not to regret them this time.

"You won't face Dong Zhuo. I just need you to help retrieve our spoils. You don't want the Xiliang cavalry to be crushed, do you?" Chen Xi explained with a smile. Hua Xiong was important, previously the top general of Xiliang under Lu Bu, renowned in the army.

"Alright!" Hua Xiong hesitated briefly before agreeing.

With four great generals, Chen Xi found Liu Bei. "Lord Xuande, did Lord Cao invite you to pursue Dong Zhuo?"

"Yes, but I declined. I trust you have a plan. Zijian, since you've joined me, I will not treat you unfairly. For now, follow Zichuan's orders," Liu Bei said, familiar with Hua Xiong and offering no pleasantries, simply instructing him to follow Chen Xi.

"Yes!" Hua Xiong clasped his fists, then stood behind Chen Xi, looking like a bodyguard.

"This..." Chen Xi wanted to refuse but, recalling his earlier actions, realized Liu Bei thought he wanted to leave. Sighing inwardly, he accepted Liu Bei's arrangement. Even if I had thoughts of leaving, he didn't consider killing me but used affection to win me over. Rest assured, I won't leave unless absolutely necessary.