

Mythical 41

Chapter 41: The Original Aspiration

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When it comes to economic matters, Chen Xi was confident he could outmaneuver these famed Han ministers who had no understanding of economic circulation. This era had no concept of the necessity and destructiveness of commerce.

Therefore, Chen Xi was confident. As long as nothing unexpected happened, with his help gathering renowned generals and ministers, gradually spreading his ideas, developing the economy, and building a solid foundation, he could amass enough strength to crush all other lords before they even rose.

From the beginning, Chen Xi had positioned himself carefully. He would not go to the battlefield. His strategic insights were purely theoretical, relying on the strategies learned from history. He might function well as a mediocre adviser, but if he were to actually fight, he might not even be as good as Zhao Kuo.

Chen Xi saw himself as a logistics person, aspiring to be a harmless strategist like Zhang Liang. Unfortunately, he lacked the ability to win decisive battles from a distance. So he could only look up to Xiao He, hoping to match the prowess of this logistics genius.

Seeing Chen Xi's sincere gaze, Liu Bei hesitated. To him, this was a test from Chen Xi. Historically, rulers chose their ministers, and ministers chose their rulers. Li Si left Chu for Qin because he saw potential in the Qin king and not in the Chu king.

Naturally, Liu Bei considered this question crucial. Since Chen Xi appeared, many things had changed. What was supposed to be a minor role in the coalition against Dong Zhuo had turned him into a protagonist. Coupled with Chen Xi's previously demonstrated strategies, Liu Bei knew this might be his only chance.

【He previously explained his plans bit by bit for me to consider carefully. Is my ambition to restore the Han Dynasty? I've told Chen Xi many times, so why is he asking again? Is he dissatisfied with my ambition? Why am I also doubting my ambition?】 Liu Bei thought silently, without speaking, reflecting on his initial ambition. Having said the phrase too many times, he had forgotten his original wish.

【"I shall ride this chariot under heaven's mandate."】 Liu Bei recalled his earliest desire, pointing to that big tree and uttering those words. His original wish was to become the emperor!

Liu Bei laughed heartily, not caring about his status, nor that Chen Xi was beside him. He laughed unrestrainedly, finally stopping to look at Chen Xi and said, "I, Liu Bei, am loyal to the Han Dynasty, determined to restore it. However, if the Han cannot be restored, it must be replaced! As a member of the Han imperial family, I bear this bloodline and must set an example. The glory of the Han Dynasty must not be tainted. Anyone who dares to covet it is my mortal enemy!"

Chen Xi was stunned. Liu Bei didn't just talk about restoring the Han Dynasty but also showed loyalty to it, yet didn't hide his ambition. Indeed, bearing this bloodline came with responsibility. For the first time, Chen Xi sensed a flicker of the kingly aura in Liu Bei that he had seen intermittently in Yuan Shao.

Liu Bei's gaze made Chen Xi uncomfortable. Rubbing his forehead helplessly, he said, "I guess I'll stick with you for now. At least I haven't seen anyone more suitable than you, Lord Xuande."

Liu Bei felt a bit disappointed but then relieved. At least Chen Xi wasn't leaving. He had clearly stated there was no better choice, and Liu Bei was the most suitable. In a coalition of famed lords, this was a significant endorsement.

"In that case, Zichuan, do not slack off!" Liu Bei said with a smile, his demeanor radiating a boldness that was a stark contrast to the Liu Bei Chen Xi had first met in Gongsun Zan's camp.

"Even if I slack off, no one in this world would notice," Chen Xi laughed, his confidence surprising Liu Bei. He had always thought of Chen Xi as low-key and steady, not expecting this side of him.

"With your assurance, I am at ease!" Liu Bei laughed. "Come, let's go receive our Xiliang elite soldiers!"

Meanwhile, Cao Cao was desperately fleeing. During a meal preparation, they were ambushed by Lu Bu, and his forces nearly collapsed. If not for his capabilities, Lu Bu's Xiliang cavalry would have scattered them. Even so, they were chased relentlessly, with Cao Cao barely escaping thanks to the Hou brothers' sacrifice.

Fighting and retreating, the Hou brothers held off Lu Bu for only a few minutes, but it allowed Cao Cao a moment's respite.

With a hundred or so soldiers, Cao Hong escorted Cao Cao towards Xingyang, the only route left.

"Brother, go quickly!" Seeing Lu Bu's plumed helmet on the horizon, Cao Hong turned back to fight. He could die, but Cao Cao must live—that was his conviction.

Watching Cao Hong fall after twenty moves, Cao Cao felt despair. It seemed his end had come before achieving his goal.

However, Lu Bu was preoccupied with a letter's warning. Everything previously mentioned had come true, and it predicted multiple chases. This unnerved Lu Bu, as another ambush after repelling the first could mean total annihilation. So he remained cautious.

Close to catching Cao Cao, Lu Bu noticed he was separated from his main forces.

【Kill Cao Cao, then retreat immediately! That letter must be believed!】 Lu Bu trusted his hometown friend, who seemed reliable and genuinely concerned for his safety.

"Die, Cao Cao!" Lu Bu laughed maniacally, urging Red Hare forward, aiming to kill Cao Cao in one strike.

At that moment, a distant shout rang out, "Lu Bu, face your death!"

Lu Bu saw Guan Yu in the distance. Calculating, he figured he could catch Cao Cao in a minute.

"Face your death, Lu Bu!" Another shout came from Zhang Fei. Lu Bu hesitated but continued chasing Cao Cao, thinking he could finish him quickly, then turn to the other two.

Lu Bu glanced around and cursed. Zhao Yun was already close, silently cutting off his retreat.

He couldn't hesitate any longer. The letter clearly warned: if delayed, he might die here. Guan, Zhang, and Zhao might struggle to kill him quickly, but they could certainly hold him until the coalition's reinforcements arrived.

Lu Bu cursed again and made his decision.