

Mythical 59

Chapter 59: The Strategy Against the Bandits of Mount Tai

Hua Xiong beheaded Chang Xi with a single strike and then turned around, slashing down all of Chang Xi's so-called trusted aides. Chen Xi had told him that some of these bandit leaders in Mount Tai were local tyrants or forced to become bandits, but Chang Xi, who bore the title of a Mount Tai bandit leader, was actually the governor of Donghai in Xuzhou.

Hua Xiong didn't give Chang Xi a chance to reveal his identity. Being close to an expert at the level of an inner energy release master, Chang Xi, a third-rate warrior, didn't even get to say his last words before he was beheaded.

While Chang Xi's subordinates were still processing what had just happened, Hua Xiong stabbed his large saber into the ground and shouted, "Listen up! From now on, I'm your boss!"

"For Boss Chang Xi's revenge..." roared a burly, bearded man as he rushed toward Hua Xiong. But Hua Xiong swung his saber remotely, and the man was instantly split in two.

"Anyone else seeking revenge?" Hua Xiong said with a sinister smile.

When no one dared to step forward, Hua Xiong continued, "Good. Listen up, from now on, I am your boss. My name is Hua Hu! Remember, from now on, Mount Tai is our territory. If anyone dares to cause trouble, I'll cut them down with one stroke!"

"Boss Hua! Greetings, Boss Hua!" The plants Chen Xi had arranged beforehand responded loudly after a moment's hesitation, causing a chain reaction among the bandits. Soon, the hillside was filled with resounding shouts.

"Great. Now, let's go and raid other bandits. Tell me where the other bandit groups are!" Hua Xiong shouted loudly.

After a chaotic chorus of answers, Hua Xiong had a rough idea and ordered, "Let's go back to the mountain stronghold, gather the troops, and I'll show you what real bandits are!"

Back at the stronghold, Hua Xiong conducted another round of killing. Without a leader, these bandits, who only knew how to charge blindly, were no match for a master like Hua Xiong. Afterward, he promoted his men, placing the planted spies in high positions, and thus effectively took control of the stronghold.

Hua Xiong pulled out the silk pouch containing Chen Xi's instructions. There were no intricate strategies, just straightforward commands for what to do next. After subduing one stronghold, the next step was training.

Hua Xiong looked at the instructions with some confusion. There were no specific training methods, only a target and a hint.

The target was simple: train the bandits until they become like obedient fools who do what they're told without thinking. The hint said: "Don't treat them as humans. Create hardships if there aren't any, and train them to death."

The hint concluded with a note expressing a benevolent sentiment: "This is to give the bandits a chance to reform and to ensure that the good-hearted commoners do not become bandits. If you want to be pardoned for your crimes, you must understand the errors of your ways."

Hua Xiong barely understood the long-winded note, but he got the gist of the target and hint. Training meant training, and since the strategist said to train them to death, then so be it. They were just bandits, not his soldiers; if they died, so be it.

Chen Xi had certainly miscalculated. His idea of "train to death" was just a figure of speech, but Hua Xiong took it literally. The first day, over a hundred bandits died.

By the second day, some semblance of military order appeared. By the third day, some couldn't keep up and were buried. On the fourth day, there was a mutiny, resulting in three to four hundred deaths. Hua Xiong captured the mutineers and continued the grueling training. According to Chen Xi's instructions, he had to train them for a month, then take them out to subdue another group of bandits, rest for three days, and repeat the cycle for six months.

After twenty days, Hua Xiong noticed that the bandits had become very adept at formations, even more so than his own soldiers. They didn't understand formations, but when Hua Xiong gave commands about specific areas, the bandits quickly adjusted like they were on steroids.

Moreover, there were no more escapes or mutinies. When training, the bandits did exactly as they were told without delay. With these results, Hua Xiong eased up on the inhumane training methods. Meals were at least sufficient, which made the bandits extremely grateful, even though Hua Xiong felt awkward about it. He even slightly rewarded them, like giving extra food.

If Chen Xi saw this, he would probably have convulsed. This was a mass production of Stockholm syndrome victims. But, despite using the wrong methods, Hua Xiong had achieved the goal. In the 21st century, this approach would likely have been condemned as inhumane.

Hua Xiong continued training the bandits until they became highly disciplined. He could command them to fill a pit, and they would immediately obey. Not out of respect or admiration, but because they had been conditioned to obey without thinking. Under the shadow of death, these bandits became elite troops.

While calling them elite might be an exaggeration, they were absolutely first-class in terms of obedience and discipline. If Hua Xiong ordered a formation change, they would do it even if there were blades in their path. They had been trained into obedience, and, unintentionally, Hua Xiong's brutal methods had created a deep loyalty in them.

Chen Xi didn't know that Hua Xiong had misinterpreted his instructions and had inadvertently turned the bandits into the most obedient and disciplined troops of the era.

Even if he knew, there wasn't much he could do. He didn't have the time or energy to correct it, and it wasn't necessary. Who would know how Hua Xiong trained his men? Moreover, correcting them would weaken their combat strength. At least Hua Xiong had reformed the bandits and turned them into law-abiding soldiers, which was good from both the civilians' and bandits' perspectives. So, there was no need to correct them.

"Yide, go to Mount Tai and find Zijian. Tell him to bring Sun Guan to me. How dare he raid our supplies? I haven't even dealt with those bandits yet, and they're already causing trouble for me," Chen Xi said angrily. He hadn't even had a chance to subdue the bandits, just using facts to persuade them to come down and become civilians. Yet, Sun Guan had dared to raid his supplies—80,000 dans! If not for sending someone to escort the supplies, Sun Guan might have succeeded.