

Mythical 65

Chapter 65: Each Person's Thoughts

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Liu Bei was taken aback. Great scholars? He had never successfully recruited any of them before. The aristocrats never took him seriously, and up to now, all his attempts at recruitment had failed. Naturally, when he heard this news, he was stunned.

"Xuande Gong," Chen Xi called again, snapping Liu Bei out of his thoughts. Since he couldn't sleep anymore, there was no reason to let someone else daydream in front of him.

"Alright, alright," Liu Bei replied, coming to his senses. He was overjoyed. Regardless of who was coming, any scholar willing to join him now would be greeted with great ceremony, and he would ensure they were well taken care of in the future.

"Xuande Gong, let's go. Whether it's Mi Zizhong or Lu Zijing, they are both extremely important to us right now. Lu Zijing has a very long-term vision and insightful strategies for governance and politics, making him a talent for national strategy. The Mi family is extremely wealthy, comparable to the Zhen family in terms of fortune, being one of the five great merchant families," Chen Xi explained, highlighting their backgrounds to prepare Liu Bei.

Upon hearing this, Liu Bei calmed down. His initial excitement subsided, and he returned to his usual composure. Turning to Chen Xi with a smile, he said, "I thought that Liu Xuande would never catch the eye of extraordinary talents. It seems I underestimated myself. The Zhen family left, but the Mi family has come. Zhang Zhao and Zhang Hong did not come, but Lu Zijing has entered my door."

At this moment, Liu Bei was brimming with confidence. The dejection from failing to recruit notable scholars and the departure of the Zhen family, who didn't believe in his potential, was all swept away, leaving him looking more self-assured and assertive.

"Those people are not as good as me," Chen Xi yawned, saying, "Xuande Gong, if you ever feel down about not recruiting someone, compare them to me. For generals, compare them to Zhao Yun. If a scholar is better than me or a general is better than Zilong, let me know."

Chen Xi's words brought a confident smile to Zhao Yun's face, followed by his characteristic modesty. "I don't deserve such praise from the strategist, but the strategist is indeed a rare talent in the world, unmatched by many."

Chen Xi rolled his eyes. "As if there are several Lu Bu's in the world. Alright, everyone should understand. Xuande Gong, remember this: After this year, anyone who does not believe in you will not be a top-tier strategist of this era, as they will lack the necessary foresight."

"Thank you for the reminder, Zi Chuan," Liu Bei said solemnly, bowing slightly. "Let's go out and wait. Zi Chuan, if you are tired, you can go home and rest. Always being so weary is not good. I'll find some supplements for you. There isn't much administrative work now, so you should take a break."

"No, Lu Zijing will undoubtedly discuss some matters with me upon arrival. I'd better stay a while," Chen Xi shook his head. According to the habits of top-tier scholars of this era, their first task upon joining was often to present a strategy. If he was present, he could help Liu Bei cover some aspects, as Liu Bei wasn't fully aware of many details.

Sitting in the carriage, Mi Zhu looked at the bustling streets outside, feeling deeply shocked. The scene of people working energetically everywhere was astonishing. It might not compare to the wealthy Xu Province, but Fenggao in Taishan far exceeded his expectations. Just a year ago, the place had been ravaged by Taishan bandits, looking more dilapidated than a typical county town. Now, it surpassed most commandery towns.

Seeing the three-zhang wide moat and the ten-zhang high, eight-zhang thick city walls, Mi Zhu understood the immense effort required. Just building such a wall was enough to deter bandits. In just three months, ten thousand people had accomplished this. Mi Zhu did some quick calculations and understood the scale of the work involved.

Passing through the city gates, the wide bluestone roads made Mi Zhu feel like he had arrived in Xu Province, but even cleaner and more orderly. Mi Zhu felt overwhelmed. Considering the scenes he had witnessed and the information he had gathered along the way—water projects, land reclamation, city wall construction, disaster relief, and refugee collection—the total expenditure was over a billion.

If Chen Xi knew Mi Zhu's thoughts, he would have scoffed. A billion coins wouldn't cover it. With fifty thousand refugees, each receiving two hundred coins wouldn't even feed them for three months. So, if money were given directly, even the five great merchant families would be strained. With work-for-relief, the refugees would create their own profits...

Mi Zhu felt twitchy. He had heard that the Zhen family left, and considering the expenses, he doubted even his Mi family could sustain it. The Taishan magistrate seemed to be a master of spending money. Though effective, such practices wouldn't be sustainable for every commandery.

Lu Su had also learned a lot during the journey. Unlike Mi Zhu, Lu Su had a long-term perspective and didn't count the Zhen family, who had returned to Jizhou, as part of Liu Bei's holdings. Thus, he found Taishan commandery worth studying. From the mud-brick houses still under construction to the constantly excavated canals and the bustling work sites, there was much to learn. Everything was busy but orderly, which was Lu Su's immediate impression.

Observing all this, Lu Su concluded that it seemed like no money had been spent on restoring Taishan. The grain was real, but very little actual money was spent. The results compared to the grain expenditure were astonishing. Most importantly, within these three months of work, all the people under Taishan's jurisdiction had come to fully recognize Liu Bei's rule, effectively gaining their hearts.

This deeply impressed Lu Su. He didn't completely believe that winning the people's hearts meant winning the world, but having their support made many things much easier. To break the people's mistrust of the government in such a short time and restore their confidence, even earning their voluntary support for Liu Bei's rule, Lu Su could only call the administrator, Chen Xi, a true genius!

With such a genius assisting, Lu Su gained more confidence in Liu Bei. Originally, he hadn't thought highly of Liu Bei. However, when Liu Bei's recruitment letter was seen by Lu Su's grandmother, she insisted he reconsider. "Go see the world," she said. "Always staying at home with me, reading and farming, is not the way for a hero. Since the Han imperial relative Liu Gong invites, why not visit and see?"

Unable to refuse his grandmother, Lu Su took his servants and followed Liu Bei's envoy, feeling somewhat sentimental when he left. But once he left Dongcheng, he quickly put his feelings aside. This was his first time leaving his grandmother and venturing out alone, seeing the grand landscape of the world. Lu Su was eighteen this year.

Initially, Lu Su didn't plan to join Liu Bei. He intended to visit Taishan to fulfill his grandmother's wish. But the situation he observed during the journey piqued his interest. His keen eyes recognized the wealth this year's harvest in Taishan would bring, and what that wealth would mean near Qingzhou.

"Let's see how Liu Xuande is. If he's like Yuan Shu, ambitious but lacking talent, I'll just stay a few days. If he is truly benevolent and capable, I, Lu Zijing, don't mind helping him," Lu Su thought, observing the busy scene outside the carriage window. Though his heart was stirred, his demeanor remained refined and composed.