

Mythical 76

Chapter 76: Talents Across the Land

Having just arrived in Jinan and preparing to transfer to a carriage, a frail young man reeking of alcohol, with bleary eyes, coughed lightly. "Huazi, why are you lingering here instead of heading to Beihai with your master?"

"Master, Master, come and see this," the young boy tugged at his master's sleeve, pointing excitedly at the notice on the wall.

The slender young man, referred to as master, squinted at the recruitment decree posted on the wall. After touching his bare chin, he muttered, "Finally, someone has the guts to do this. Let's go, let's see this Liu Bei. Just for this recruitment decree, your master here will help him establish a foundation no less than that of King Zhao of Yan." The young man's previously lethargic posture straightened with newfound confidence, exuding an aura of self-assuredness.

"Ah, Wenruo, if only you had stayed a month longer. We could have gone to see Liu Xuande together before deciding whether to go to Cao Cao!" The young man's pale face showed a hint of color, his eyes sparkled with determination. He patted his attendant's head, "Let's go, Huazi. Since Yuan Shao has been such a disappointment, we'll help Liu Xuande deal with him when we get there."

The young man glanced towards the north and sneered, "The foundation of King Zhao of Yan, perfectly positioned to encompass Ji Province and Qing Province. Overthrowing you is only natural. Let's go, Huazi."

Another top strategist, recognizing that any warlord establishing a foothold in the north would inevitably clash with Yuan Shao, had already begun planning to undermine Yuan Shao before either party had fully established their power.

Liu Ye looked at the recruitment decree on the wall, turned around, and headed back home. Man Chong had written to him, saying that Xun Yu had invited them to join Cao Cao, whom Man Chong had already assessed as a capable leader. Liu Ye had been considering joining Cao Cao until he saw the decree posted on his own wall.

As he walked back, Liu Ye's lips curled into a smile. The Liu family was not yet in decline. Why join others when he could follow his own kin? He was a true descendant of the Han dynasty. Serving others would never compare to serving his own. At least the emperor still bore the Liu name, and that alone was a significant endorsement.

"Steward, pack up our belongings and sell the property. We're heading to Mount Tai," Liu Ye commanded his steward as he entered the house.

"Yes, sir!" Though shocked by Liu Ye's decision, the steward did not question it.

"Liu Xuande, I believe in your boldness. Lack of capability is not an issue; there are many talented people in this world. With the Liu family name alone, we can make a decent living. Mount Tai isn't too bad, though it's a bit small. Those fools at the Imperial Clan Office have no vision!" Liu Ye muttered to himself, both scolding the officials at the Imperial Clan Office and writing a letter to Man Chong.

Liu Ye's letter contained only two sentences, "My kin has issued a recruitment decree. You know what this means! Get back here quickly and come with me to Mount Tai!" After finishing, Liu Ye handed the letter to a servant, instructing him to deliver it to Man Chong as swiftly as possible.

Liu Ye, who spent most of his time at home, had a close bond with Man Chong despite his perpetually stern expression. Although Man Chong's demeanor often repelled others, Liu Ye found it endearing and stuck close to him. Consequently, the friendless Man Chong cherished their friendship and shared any benefits he received with Liu Ye.

This was why Man Chong, after spending a month secretly evaluating Cao Cao and confirming his worth, had quickly informed Liu Ye and waited at an inn for him to arrive so they could join Cao Cao together.

After five days of waiting, instead of Liu Ye, Man Chong received a letter. Seeing the frightened servant who delivered it, Man Chong managed a rare smile, which only served to terrify the poor man further.

Reading the letter, Man Chong remained silent. Both sides offered potential, but one had the call of a brother. One side had Xun Yu; the other, Liu Ye. Ignoring Xun Yu, Man Chong left immediately. Brotherhood called, and that was all that mattered.

In Fufeng County, the magistrate stared at the recruitment decree posted on the county office wall. Casually removing his official robe, he handed it to the county lieutenant and stretched lazily. "I'm done

here. Heading to Mount Tai. I refuse to believe someone with the guts to issue a recruitment decree would fear the influential families."

With that, he turned and left. After serving as a figurehead magistrate for three months, Fazheng had had enough. At sixteen, Fazheng was still hot-blooded and did not care about his superiors' opinions.

"Jiafu, do you think I can sneak over to Mount Tai? It's unbearable here in Chang'an. I've seen Lu Bu visit Wang Yun frequently. Just a few days ago, even Dong Zhuo went there. I reckon in a couple of months, while Lu Bu is sweet-talking that maid, Dong Zhuo will take her away. I can't stay here any longer," Jia Xu said, looking at the recruitment decree and addressing his servant, who maintained his usual non-committal expression.

"King Zhao of Yan built a terrace to recruit talents. I wonder what Liu Xuande will build? Start digging a tunnel. They're resorting to such underhanded tricks as beauty traps. Even Li Wenyu isn't doing anything about it. He's given up hope entirely," Jia Xu continued, urging his servant to keep digging. He had already planned his escape. Dong Zhuo's fate was of no concern to him. If the fat man died, so be it. If it weren't for Li Ru dragging him into Dong Zhuo's faction, he wouldn't care. Once Dong Zhuo was gone, he'd be a free agent again, able to join anyone without reproach.

"A recruitment decree?" Li Ru muttered, setting down the document in his hand. His eyes vacant, he stared at the ceiling. "Wang Yun, do you really think I don't see through your plans? Separating the Flying Bear Army, you're planning a coup. Fine, let it be. Zhongying won't listen anymore. After his death, destroy all his enemies' hopes, then die under a hail of blades. I have nothing left to strive for. I miss the old Zhongying..." Li Ru's face showed an abnormal flush.

Huang Zhong, holding his battle sword, sighed as he looked at the recruitment decree. When would his son's illness end? They had even arranged a marriage to lift his spirits, but instead of recovering, his son collapsed during the wedding feast and had been bedridden since.

Would the Huang family line end with him? Huang Zhong had worked hard his entire life, mastering his martial skills by observing the flow of the Yangtze River. He was ready to showcase his abilities to the world, but his son's condition weighed heavily on him. What was the point of titles and honors if his lineage was at risk of dying out? All the achievements would be meaningless if there was no one to inherit them.