

Mythical 78

Chapter 78: Taishi Ci of Donglai

Back when Yan Zhao Wang issued his recruitment edict, he built a grand platform, referred to later in Li Bai's poem as "Golden Terrace for the honored guests, Qing Jade table for the wine." The original high platform thus became the Golden Terrace, giving rise to the saying "Golden Terrace for recruiting guests."

With such a precedent, Liu Bei also needed to build something following the ancient rites after issuing his recruitment edict. Even if someone were to question it, there was the long-dead Yan Zhao Wang as a precedent. Liu Bei initially planned to build a platform five zhang and nine chi high. Unlike Zhao Wang's lavish twenty-acre platform, Liu Bei aimed for a smaller mound about 200 meters in circumference—he was, after all, just an Andong General, not a Spring and Autumn hegemon.

Before Liu Bei's suggestion could gain consensus among his advisors, Chen Xi outright vetoed it. If everyone agreed, his veto would seem contrary to popular sentiment. A smart person always positions themselves with the majority, or at least with the ability to dominate the majority. Now, Chen Xi hoped Liu Bei would stand by him.

"We should build a library," Chen Xi suggested with a smile. "With our block printing, we can produce three to five hundred books a day. While Yan Zhao Wang had his Qing Jade wine table, we could offer everyone a book..."

Chen Xi's proposal was immediately vetoed. While the initial idea of a library was good, the notion of giving away thousand-gold worth books was too extravagant, and Liu Su was the first to disagree.

Realizing his mistake, Chen Xi adjusted his suggestion. Unlike his era, where mass-printed books were common, here a ten-thousand-word book was a family heirloom. Distributing them was indeed overboard.

"Alright, how about we place the over ten thousand books we've printed in the library? Those we select can borrow them for a month to three months for study. As for the library, it can be divided into two sections: one for military texts, the other for various literature. Between the two, we can build a small altar for martial demonstrations."

"This sounds reasonable," Liu Su nodded, and the others followed suit. Liu Bei decided to go with this plan, constructing the library with stone walls over two meters thick, using materials and methods for city walls and palaces. The building would be of traditional mortise and tenon structure.

Such a monumental project required reporting to the central government. But in these chaotic times, a royal descendant like Liu Bei building such a structure for recruiting talents would likely get approval.

All this explanation leads to the fact that the construction hadn't started yet. Therefore, the recruitment was currently held in a square...

When Liu Bei and Chen Xi arrived, they saw a fair-faced man standing beside Zang Ba. He was carrying two short halberds on his back, a long bow in his hand, a sword at his waist, standing at eight chi tall, looking both imposing and dignified, with a fine steed at his side.

"My lord, this is the righteous Taishi Ziyi from Qingzhou, who heard of your recruitment and came to join us," Zang Ba greeted Liu Bei loudly as he arrived.

"Wonderful! We need heroes like Taishi Ziyi here. Will you be willing to serve under me?" Liu Bei laughed heartily, addressing Taishi Ci.

"Greetings, Lord Xuande," Taishi Ci bowed. "I traveled from Donglai in Qingzhou to Taishan. Qingzhou is in decline, while Taishan prospers. I once sought refuge in Youzhou and saw Taishan's villages in ruins. Yet, within a year of your governance, Taishan has regained its former glory. Hearing all this, I know you to be a benevolent and virtuous lord. I am willing to serve you, to ride into battle and follow your every command!" With that, Taishi Ci knelt on one knee.

Liu Bei helped Taishi Ci up, seeing the sincerity in his eyes. "There is no need for such formality. Rise, Ziyi. With you, the Han's revival gains another great general!"

"Ziyi, this is Chen Xi, the prefect of Taishan, my advisor. Everything you saw along the way is the result of his strategies. Within half a year, he gathered refugees and revitalized agriculture and commerce." Liu Bei introduced, and Chen Xi respectfully bowed, "Taishan's Chen Zichuan greets Taishi Ziyi."

"You flatter me. I heard the Taishan prefect is not yet twenty, and indeed you are young. I once took refuge in Liaodong, Youzhou, and saw four great scholars—Hua Ziyu (Hua Xin), Bing Genju (Bing Yuan), Guan Youan (Guan Ning), and Wang Yan Fang (Wang Lie)—governing Liaodong, transforming it into a

paradise within half a year. I did not expect to see a similar figure here in the Central Plains," Taishi Ci remarked.

"Your praise is too generous," Chen Xi smiled wryly. Those four were benchmarks in virtue and scholarship, who could match them? Even comparing oneself to them seemed like courting disaster.

Taishi Ci had revealed a crucial piece of information: those esteemed scholars were still in Liaodong. According to Chen Xi's plan, Liu Bei hosted a grand banquet to welcome Taishi Ci, assigning him to assist Zhao Yun with military drills and agricultural tasks.

Taishi Ci was a local of Qingzhou, familiar with the area. With Guan Yu and Zhang Fei discreetly encroaching on Qingzhou territory and Zhao Yun leading humanitarian aid efforts and directing refugees to farm, Taishi Ci was the perfect guide.

Taishi Ci was pleased with his role, leading 5,000 soldier-farmers and over 1,000 infantry, tasked with clearing out Yellow Turban bandits and aiding fellow Qingzhou natives—aligning perfectly with his ideals. He pledged to make the bandits labor for the cause.

Confident in Taishi Ci, Chen Xi entrusted him with the troops for support. However, he was wary of the next person. "We never said we were recruiting child labor!" Chen Xi stated firmly.