

Mythical 96

Chapter 96: Gaining Public Trust

With such a guarantee, Chen Xi was so delighted that he almost laughed out loud. He only needed to make plans, and his subordinates would handle the implementation. His most capable aide was Lu Su, who could assist with anything. Chen Xi had already planned up to next autumn, and now he could take a long break.

Seeing their cheerful expressions, Liu Bei smiled and said, "Judging by your happy faces, I guess you've finished all the government affairs. Come, I have just prepared some fresh lamb and tofu. Let's eat and warm up."

"Xuande, you're mistaken. It's not just finished; we've completed all the work for the entire year," Lu Su said, standing up and shaking off the cold, though his voice still trembled a bit.

Liu Bei was taken aback and turned to look at Liu Ye and Lu Su, who were both staring intently at Chen Xi. It seemed that the man standing in the middle had indeed finished a whole year's worth of work.

"Cough, cough, why are you all staring at me?" Chen Xi coughed a couple of times and then, seeing no reaction from them, said domineeringly, "Come on, let's eat. Freshly cooked lamb and tofu, delicious and warm. I'm heading out first."

Tofu existed as early as the Western Han Dynasty, but the quality was poor. The tofu Chen Xi ate was an improved version. In China, with a large population, as long as you were willing to invest, someone would always figure out how to improve things, even innovate, as long as it wasn't too unrealistic. If you had the funds and people, it could be done.

Chen Xi had grown tired of seeking craftsmen for help. The variety of his requests was too diverse to find a suitable craftsman easily. So, he got smart. As the governor, he only needed to issue orders. He put up notices, and naturally, someone would get the job done and receive rewards accordingly.

Initially, Lu Su tried to prevent such seemingly frivolous activities. But Chen Xi ignored him and issued notices under the banner of establishing government credibility. Who dared to stop him?

Chen Xi began posting notices every now and then. At first, people were skeptical of these notices, which seemed geared towards eating, drinking, and entertainment. But once someone completed a task and got paid, they had to believe it.

As Chen Xi said, establishing government credibility worked. Now, for any government notice in Taishan, regardless of how absurd it seemed, the people took it at face value and followed it. They trusted the government completely.

Seeing this effect, Lu Su didn't know what expression to wear when looking at Chen Xi. His gaze always carried a mix of helplessness and curiosity, wondering what was in Chen Xi's mind.

Why hadn't anyone thought of this simple method before? Lu Su asked Chen Xi, who replied that this was nothing new. Shang Yang had done it long ago. History recorded it as "under great reward, there are brave men," but in effect, it established public trust. He was merely replicating the method.

Chen Xi had developed a habit of posting random notices. Fortunately, any notice required his approval and seal to be valid, so unofficial notices were ignored.

Recently, Chen Xi's notice was about getting people to collect ginseng from Youzhou. At this time, ginseng was cheap, even less valuable than radishes, which were still rare. Ginseng was just a wild vegetable.

Under the guise of helping Taishan residents earn extra money, Chen Xi had them gather ginseng. Fresh ginseng weighing over a pound was acceptable. Chen Xi felt a bit thick-skinned but continued happily. Wild ginseng was common at this time; cultivated ginseng was rare.

The collected ginseng was abundant, so much so that even the locals felt guilty bringing bags of it to Chen Xi. It was more than anyone could eat, but Chen Xi took it all.

Regardless of its immediate use, he planned to have Hua Tuo study it later. Though Shen Nong's herbal book mentioned it as medicine, it wasn't widely used. But this was beneficial for the people, so Chen Xi stopped collecting to prevent overharvesting. Many Taishan residents, idle during the farming off-season, regretted this—there was money to be made!

Boiled cabbage leaves with lamb and tofu sounded delightful, especially for Lu Su, who hurried ahead. Eating would warm him up. Chen Xi, on the other hand, planned just to drink some soup. He wanted

beef but felt it was unnecessary to kill cattle just yet. He'd wait until Zhang Shiping and Su Shuang brought back cattle and sheep from the north.

Although Zhang Shiping and Su Shuang were badly tricked, Liu Bei did not abandon them. Instead, he comforted them and furiously criticized the Zhen family. He then reassured them that money wasn't an issue; they wouldn't do business in Jizhou anymore but would take their salt north to sell. Eventually, they would make back everything the Zhen family took.

Zhang Shiping and Su Shuang, initially anxious, were moved to tears by Liu Bei's generosity, pledging their loyalty and requesting to become his vassals, willing to work for him for life.

Liu Bei, after some thought, declined their offer. They had been among the first wealthy merchants to support him, and their downfall partly stemmed from his involvement. Helping them was only right. He provided them with funds and salt equivalent to what they had lost, sending them to do what they did best—trade cattle, horses, and sheep from the north.

Grateful, Zhang Shiping and Su Shuang thanked him profusely and led a new trading caravan north. Their strength lay in their northern connections. Although they had failed before, this time, they paved the way with money and worked diligently to repay their debt to Liu Bei. Soon, they had gathered a herd of cattle and horses, currently making their way to Taishan. Transporting such a large herd was no small feat, proving their expertise.

When Liu Bei opened his sitting room door, he found it in disarray. Guan Yu was gnawing on a lamb leg, Zhang Fei was drinking with Taishi Ci, and Zhao Yun was elegantly slicing lamb into strips, sharing them with Jian Yong. The pot of lamb stew was nearly empty, with only a few cabbage leaves left. As a cold wind blew in, Lu Su felt even colder. Where was his warming lamb soup?