

I. Dynasty 118

Chapter 118: Reactions

“Isn’t it obvious? Different categories mean different things to do after graduation,” Scholar Du said matter-of-factly.

“That’s why it’s strange. The sages taught us that studying is for self-cultivation, governing the country, and bringing peace to the world. It’s about becoming a high-ranking official and serving the nation and its people. If that’s the case, why does the Bowen Academy need so many categories? The classics, history, philosophy, and literature should suffice,” one scholar argued.

“I disagree. I think the Bowen Academy is different from private schools. Scholars don’t have to focus solely on passing the imperial exams. They can do other things too,” another scholar countered.

“Brother Su, are you saying you won’t take the imperial exams anymore?” Scholar Du asked a scholar wearing patched clothes.

Scholar Su nodded. “I take the imperial exams every year, and every year I fail. My family is getting poorer, and I can’t even afford the travel expenses for the exams anymore. Rather than copying books in the bustling market, I’d rather take the Bowen Academy exams. Even if I don’t become an official, I can still live a decent life.”

“Brother Su, that’s not the right attitude. As the saying goes, ‘Wealth cannot corrupt, poverty cannot sway.’ Even if you don’t take the imperial exams, you can still apply for the political history category at the Bowen Academy. Serving in Qingzhou’s government would be a good path.”

“Brother Zhang, it’s not that I don’t want to. But just look at the number of applicants for the political history category. It’s like ten thousand people trying to cross a single log bridge. I’m already in my twenties; I can’t afford to waste more time.” Scholar Su sighed deeply.

The atmosphere grew awkward. Scholar Du said, “We’ve gone off-topic. We were talking about the Sun family’s rebellion, and now we’re discussing the Bowen Academy.”

Everyone laughed bitterly. It was precisely because of the fall of the Sun family and other noble clans that they were paying attention to the Bowen Academy. With the nobles gone, there would be many vacancies in the six states. Now was the perfect time to become an official.

Unlike the scholars’ reactions, when the newspaper reporters read the news to the villagers of Zhu Family Village, there was an outburst of cheers, followed by continuous shouts of “Long live the Prince!”

The reputation of the Prince of Qi was once again deeply rooted in the hearts of the people. He was a feudal lord who feared no noble clans and worked for the benefit of the common people. Now, this feudal lord stood tall in their hearts like a hero.

Who else would dare to attend a banquet knowing it was dangerous, all for the sake of eradicating the harm caused by the noble clans?

More villagers were concerned about what would happen next. According to the newspaper, the properties of these noble clans would be confiscated, and families whose lands had been seized by the nobles could report to the local government. After verification, the land would be returned to them.

This news excited the villagers even more. Many had already received fertile land after the Wang family incident. The tangible benefits made the villagers believe this was no lie.

The Prince of Qi kept his promises.

After cheering, they listened carefully while calculating how much land had been taken from them by the noble clans.

Including the newly cultivated land, many families now had over a hundred acres.

“Father, if we get all our land back, will we be able to farm it all?” Zhu Wuliu asked his father.

Zhu Da said, “Your third brother is right. With so much land in the production team, we won’t be able to farm it all unless we buy more plow oxen.”

“Let’s wait and see after this harvest. The production team said if the harvest is good, we’ll sell some grain to buy plow oxen. Before, we worried about not having enough land to farm. Now, we worry about having too much.” Zhu Wuliu’s father laughed heartily.

Zhu Wuliu’s mother glared at her husband. “You’re happy now, but don’t complain when your back breaks from the work.”

“I’ll still be happy,” Zhu Wuliu suddenly said. “I still need to get married.”

The whole family burst into laughter.

On the threshing ground, the villagers of Zhu Family Village gathered in groups, their eyes filled with dreams of a better future.

Land was the lifeblood of farmers. Now that Xiao Ming had given them land, he had given them everything.

As the Zhu family chatted and laughed, Zhu Sansi, who had been silent, suddenly said, "Father, Mother, I want to join the army."

"What the hell are you talking about? We don't even have enough people to farm the land, and you want to join the army?" Zhu Wuliu's father scolded, almost kicking him.

When the Qingzhou Army surrounded the Sun family's militia, Zhu Sansi had been carrying firewood to sell in the city. Seeing the battle, he wasn't scared; instead, he was awed by the majestic armor of the Qingzhou soldiers.

Back home, he couldn't stop thinking about the Qingzhou Army, itching to wear such impressive armor himself.

How wonderful it would be to be one of those soldiers in the battle formation.

“Father, if the Qingzhou Army hadn’t surrounded the noble clans’ militia, could we have gotten our land back? To put it bluntly, what if the barbarians attack again? What good is all this land if we can’t protect it?” Zhu Sansi argued.

Zhu Sansi’s father fell silent, and the surrounding villagers stopped talking, struck by his words.

Only then did they realize that everything they had now was something the Prince of Qi had fought for through blood and sacrifice. The Prince was willing to risk his life for the people of his fiefdom. Shouldn’t they also do their part to protect the Prince and their land?

“Sansi, have you thought this through? If you join the Prince’s army, you can’t be a coward on the battlefield,” Zhu Sansi’s father said seriously.

Zhu Sansi was thrilled. “Father, you agree?”

“This kid is usually quiet, but what he said today left me with no rebuttal. You’re right. If no one joins the army, how will the Prince fight the barbarians?”

“I’ll join the army too,” a voice came from a nearby family.

“Me too.”

“...”

Soon, the threshing ground was filled with the voices of young men eager to enlist.

The reporter reading the newspaper in the middle stopped. He silently recorded what he had seen today. Suddenly, he remembered a question he had asked his teacher years ago: "What is the people's will?"

His teacher had replied, "The people's will is food. The people's will is an endless supply of soldiers. The people's will is the laborers who transport grain to the battlefield. Lose the people's will, and a nation will lack soldiers, unable to afford even a single defeat. With the people's will, even after a hundred defeats, an endless supply of soldiers will eventually win the war."

This was exactly the scene his teacher had described.

As a reporter, the more places he visited, the more he saw. Qingzhou was constantly changing, and these changes reflected the Prince of Qi's vision.

Although he had initially resisted this job, he now found himself enjoying it.

Continually delivering news and reflecting the issues of the common people to the higher-ups, the newspaper office was the bridge between the Prince's palace and the grassroots. He felt he wasn't an official advisor, but he was doing even more than one.

Putting away the newspaper, he headed to the next village, eagerly anticipating more changes in Qingzhou's future.