

I. Dynasty 310

Chapter 310: Taking the Initiative

The light scent of tea floated through the main hall.

Feng Deshui sipped gently from his cup while watching Xiao Ming's expression, trying to gauge his reaction.

The idea of relocating the capital had already sparked intense opposition in Chang'an from Empress Zhao, the Crown Prince, and many officials bribed by Prince Zhao. They argued using old ancestral laws and feng shui superstitions, but everyone knew their real motive: self-interest.

If the capital moved, Prince Zhao's influence over the Emperor would shrink dramatically.

"So, where does the Emperor plan to move the capital?"

Feng Deshui wasn't just making small talk—he was clearly probing Xiao Ming's stance.

"Among all royal lands, only Bianzhou is truly suitable. If we move there, Prince Zhao will guard the west, Hulao Pass lies beyond, Prince Yong guards the north, Prince Wei guards the southeast, and Your Highness guards the northeast. With three princes surrounding the capital, it will be safe."

Feng smiled as he spoke, clearly pleased with the plan.

Bianzhou—modern-day Kaifeng, once the Northern Song Dynasty’s capital—was a wise choice. As Feng explained, a new capital there would be defended by loyal royal princes, and could finally stand firm against powerful vassals with different surnames.

“Father is wise. Bianzhou is indeed a blessed place,” Xiao Ming said after a pause.

On the surface, he remained calm—but in his heart, waves of thought surged.

In modern terms, the capital was like the core of an economic zone. A rich capital meant wealth for surrounding regions. If the capital moved to Bianzhou, his goods would cost far less to transport.

Chang’an was 800 kilometers away from Qingzhou, but Bianzhou was only 400. From Bianzhou, it was just 100 kilometers to Yunzhou, the westernmost part of his territory—the same as the distance from Qingzhou to Jinling City.

That meant the capital would be twice as close to his land, greatly increasing its strategic and economic importance.

And with his influence nearby, he could help prevent internal chaos from breaking out—just as crucial as resisting foreign threats.

Overall, the relocation only brought benefits for him.

In fact, he'd gain a geographic advantage over the capital just like Prince Zhao once had.

"So Your Highness supports moving the capital?"

Feng smiled slyly.

"Chang'an is already in uproar over this. If that's the case, Your Highness should submit a memorial to declare your support. That way, the court officials won't target you over it."

Xiao Ming was briefly stunned. He usually stayed out of court politics, but Feng wanted him to submit a formal petition backing the move.

He smiled faintly.

So without realizing it, he was no longer just a minor prince.

Now, even the central court counted on his voice.

He was, after all, a powerful territorial prince—a key player in the empire.

It became clear: Feng's visit wasn't just to deliver good news, but to secure Xiao Ming's support. He'd probably head to Prince Wei next.

But then Feng said something that truly surprised him:

"Since Your Highness supports the move, you might have to help with building the new capital."

Xiao Ming's face paled.

"Lord Feng, you know how tight our finances are. Where would I find money to build a capital?"

"Hahaha, Your Highness misunderstands! The court will fund the construction. You'll only benefit—never lose."

Feng grinned as if sharing a secret.

Xiao Ming relaxed.

Feng meant that he could take part in the construction project—a golden opportunity to make a profit from public works.

Big construction meant big money, and he wasn't about to miss out.

Still, Xiao Ming would've preferred the new capital be built in Youzhou.

"The ruler guards the gates, the king dies for the people"—he wished for a golden age where emperors stood firm against invasion.

But right now, Youzhou was in enemy hands. Suggesting that site would be a joke.

After talking about the capital, Feng changed the topic with a smile:

"Your Highness, when I arrived in Qingzhou, I saw many construction projects and strange roads. What are they?"

"Those are cement roads," Xiao Ming replied, then glanced at Feng.

"What do you think of them?"

"Very nice. They're as sturdy as the stone roads in Chang'an, but better—they don't flood or get slippery in the rain or snow," Feng said, impressed.

Even though the capital move might take years—and face many political hurdles—this was a good chance to show off Qingzhou’s construction capabilities.

Xiao Ming needed to build up capital, and constructing the new capital could be a massive moneymaker.

If the relocation happened, there would surely be competition among princes to oversee the building process.

“But Lord Feng has only seen the surface.”

Xiao Ming smiled.

“It’s still early—why not let me show you something even more interesting?”

“Oh?” Feng leaned forward with curiosity.

So the two left the palace and walked through Qingzhou’s streets.

By now, about 20% of the roads had been paved, and many underground pipes had already been installed.

But instead of going to a government building, Xiao Ming brought Feng to the Wei Family Restaurant.

“Is Your Highness treating this old man to a drink?”

Feng chuckled as they arrived.

“Not quite. Lord Feng, take a look here.”

Xiao Ming pointed at a trench where cement pipes were being laid.

“What’s this?” Feng asked, puzzled.

“Cement drainage pipes. One connects from inside the restaurant to the main pipe outside. In the future, customers will be able to use a toilet inside the restaurant—and even during heavy rains, the streets won’t flood.”

Feng was confused.

“Aren’t toilets already inside restaurants? Isn’t a bucket enough? Isn’t this overkill?”

“That’s the difference, Lord Feng,” Xiao Ming said.

“With these pipes, no need for chamber pots. Guests can enjoy modern comfort. See those ceramic pipes going from upstairs to downstairs? Each room will have a flushing toilet.”