

## I. Dynasty 312

### Chapter 312: Signs of a Locust Plague

The sky was still dim. Night had not fully faded.

On the streets of Qingzhou, a man was walking in a hurry.

It was Pang Yukun, holding a memorial report as he rushed to Prince Qi's palace.

The contents of this report were extremely serious—it could threaten the agricultural stability of all six prefectures.

"Lord Pang, you're up early today. His Highness took Lord Feng around Qingzhou yesterday. He might be tired and still asleep," said Lu Luo, stopping him at the bedroom door.

Pang Yukun looked anxious.

"This is urgent. Please call His Highness."

Lu Luo frowned. She thought Prince Qi deserved a bit more rest after how hard he had been working. Pang could be a little too serious.

"What's going on?" Xiao Ming's voice came from inside.

Pang Yukun immediately called out,

“Your Highness! I received a letter from a friend in Jizhou. He says they haven’t had rain for months—and signs of a locust plague are appearing!”

“A locust plague?!”

Xiao Ming had been dressing slowly but now rushed out half-dressed, alarmed.

“Yes, Your Highness. As the saying goes, where drought strikes, locusts follow. Jizhou barely had any rain last year. The resulting drought cut harvests. Most people have no grain left. Spring planting is about to begin, but the ground is cracked and dry—it’s impossible to farm. Even Qingzhou only had a light rain this spring and nothing since.”

Pang Yukun looked grave.

Xiao Ming’s expression darkened.

“Go on.”

“Historical records show that when locust plagues hit, they usually affect Jizhou, Bianzhou, and Qingzhou together. After receiving the letter, I ordered all six prefectural governors to investigate—and

they confirmed that this year's locust numbers are far higher than usual. Your Highness must act early and purchase grain in bulk as a precaution."

Pang's voice was filled with concern.

"Could this really be the Little Ice Age?"

Xiao Ming muttered bitterly.

Pang had just mentioned Jizhou, Bianzhou, and Qingzhou—roughly modern-day Hebei, Henan, and Shandong.

Even in modern times, this region was prone to droughts and locust outbreaks.

In Xiao Ming's memory, the Great Yu Empire had suffered massive locust disasters before, with famine and even rebellions.

He glanced at Pang with deep respect.

This was the kind of advisor he needed—someone who could anticipate trouble and prepare ahead of time.

“How are our grain reserves?” he asked.

“Your Highness, we only have enough for one year. We don’t know how severe the locusts will be, so we must prepare for the worst.”

“Understood. Notify Li Kaiyuan immediately. Use barter to trade for as much grain as possible. Stop trading for anything non-essential.”

Then, while finishing dressing, he continued:

“Also, draft a memorial to the court. Let the Emperor know early so they can prepare as well.”

Pang took note of every instruction.

“Also, my friend said that despite the drought, Prince Yong didn’t lower taxes. In fact, he raised them, claiming it was to rebuild Jizhou’s defenses against the barbarians. I fear this may worsen things and eventually affect us.”

Xiao Ming frowned.

The rule among princes was usually “don’t interfere in each other’s business”. It wasn’t his place to question Prince Yong’s actions—but Pang’s concern made sense.

The powerful noble families had been grabbing up land, and trust between citizens and government was fragile.

If Prince Yong pushed too far, chaos might erupt.

“I understand. But this is not our jurisdiction. Reporting to the court is already stepping over the line. What happens next is up to my father.”

Now dressed, Xiao Ming said,

“Let’s focus on how to prevent the locust plague in our six prefectures.”

Pang furrowed his brows.

“But Your Highness, this is a divine punishment. All the sins of the nobles over the years... The heavens are angry. How can mortals stop it?”

“Nonsense!”

Xiao Ming snapped.

"I just praised you for being observant and cautious, and now you talk superstition? I don't believe in fate—I believe in people defeating fate!"

Pang was stunned silent.

Lu Luo, who had never seen Pang get scolded like that, covered her mouth to stifle a laugh.

Pang's face turned red, but he admitted honestly,

"Then... please instruct me, Your Highness!"

"Eat."

"Eat?"

"Yes. Humans, chickens, ducks, toads—anything that eats locusts. Get them all into the fields. Tell Li Kaiyuan to buy up poultry. I'll also publish notices in the newspaper encouraging people to raise birds."

In Xiao Ming's science archive, there were many methods of pest control—but the most practical one in Great Yu was biological control.

According to the data, 2,000 ducks could wipe out locusts over 4,000 mu (about 660 acres).

Pang had never heard such things before, but Xiao Ming spoke confidently—it clearly had a scientific basis. Pang saluted and left the palace to act.

“Your Highness... can ducks really stop something as terrifying as a locust plague?”

Lu Luo asked, a bit unsure.

Xiao Ming sighed.

“The locusts haven't become a full-blown disaster yet. Early intervention may still work. I'm not worried about Qingzhou—I'm worried about Jizhou. Prince Yong is brave but reckless. If he doesn't act fast, there'll be famine there.”

“Right... even when the weather's good, many of Prince Yong's people have already fled to Qingzhou. If disaster hits... won't even more refugees come?”

“Isn’t labor exactly what Your Highness needs?”

A voice chimed in—it was Ziyuan, carrying a cup of mouthwash.

“Sister, that’s not fair. His Highness would never take advantage of others’ suffering!”

Lu Luo pouted.

Ziyuan grinned.

“How is it taking advantage? Taking in refugees is a public service—for the empire and the people.”

Xiao Ming shot her a look.

“Let’s not bad-mouth Prince Yong. We haven’t even dealt with our own locust problem yet. Focus on our duties first.”

Ziyuan stuck out her tongue.

“Yes, Your Highness.”



