

Longevity 107

Chapter 107: Ying Zheng: Truly a Filial Person! (Part 3)

Under his peculiar gaze, Wang Yan was somewhat at a loss.

"Tell me," Wang Jian said.

"Tell... tell you what?" Wang Yan's heart tightened with apprehension.

"About your time in the army. About you and Zhao Feng," Wang Jian said, his face stern.

"Father... how did you find out?" Wang Yan's expression changed as she stared at him in astonishment.

"Were you planning to hide it from me forever? If Zhao Feng hadn't been so bold, I might never have known," Wang Jian said gravely.

"He... he told you everything?" Wang Yan asked, shocked. This was something she had never expected.

In this era, it was difficult to find childhood sweethearts or engage in love by choice. The reason Wang Yan had shared a night with Zhao Feng was perhaps due to that eight-character principle: repaying the grace of saving one's life by pledging oneself in return.

"Leaving that aside, the lad is indeed responsible. He didn't stay silent out of fear of me," Wang Jian said with a note of appreciation.

Seeing this, a flicker of hopeful relief stirred in Wang Yan's heart.

"Today at court," Wang Jian suddenly began, "Wang Wan and the others proposed to the Great King that you be betrothed to Mr. Fusu."

At these words, the color drained from Wang Yan's face. What was fated to happen has finally arrived.

"I knew this day would come sooner or later," Wang Yan said bitterly, her eyes filled with despair.

"I refused," Wang Jian stated plainly.

Hearing this, Wang Yan looked up, staring at her father in utter disbelief. Mrs. Wang, standing beside them, was just as stunned.

"My Lord," she began, looking at Wang Jian with great concern, "you... you didn't defy the Royal Edict, did you?"

"How could I dare defy the Royal Edict!" Wang Jian said irritably.

"Then how did you refuse, My Lord?" Mrs. Wang asked, puzzled.

"The Great King asked my opinion, and I refused. The reason, of course, is that Yan'er has already pledged her heart to another," Wang Jian explained with a slight smile, his gaze softening as he looked at Wang Yan.

"Yan'er, I once told you that if possible, I would let you find your own happiness rather than be forced into a marriage. Today, I have done so. In fact, we have Zhao Feng to thank. If he hadn't spoken up, I would have had no reason to refuse the Great King," he said, looking at his daughter with fatherly affection.

Hearing this, Wang Yan could no longer hold back. Tears welled in her eyes as she knelt before Wang Jian. "Father, thank you."

Wang Jian chuckled and moved to help her to her feet. "You are my daughter. Since I have the power to give you a choice, how could I not?"

"The Great King didn't blame you, My Lord? And who is this Zhao Feng, exactly?" Mrs. Wang asked, still utterly perplexed.

"Perhaps the Great King empathized," Wang Jian mused with a faint smile. "He himself was once forced to end an engagement. Now that Yan'er has already pledged her heart to Zhao Feng, how could the Great King tear another couple apart?" He, too, had heard something of the matter back then.

"The Great King was forced to end an engagement?" Mrs. Wang exclaimed. "Who would dare to be so bold?"

Wang Yan was equally astonished.

"There's no need for you to know about these things; it's not good for you to know anyway," Wang Jian said with a smile. "In short, Yan'er will not have an arranged marriage, nor will she have to marry Mr. Fusu."

"Actually, I quite admire Mr. Fusu," Mrs. Wang chimed in with a laugh. "He is gentle and refined, the eldest of the princes, and the most likely to become the Crown Prince. If our Yan'er married him, she might be the future Queen."

"A woman's shortsightedness," Wang Jian glanced at her and said dismissively. "It's true that on the surface, Mr. Fusu has the best chance of becoming the Crown Prince, but why hasn't the Great King officially named him as such?"

"Why?" Mrs. Wang asked.

"Because Mr. Fusu is not yet qualified. He hasn't met the Great King's expectations. Or rather, he is too entangled with men like Wang Wan, who value their own interests over the nation's. Mr. Fusu allows himself to be manipulated, and the Great King is very displeased with this. The Great King is a man of immense talent and vision; he naturally expects his successor to be the same. As it stands, Mr. Fusu does not measure up.

"If our Wang Family were to form a marriage alliance with Mr. Fusu, we would be forced to take his side. If he were to fail in the struggle for succession, our Wang Family would be doomed beyond recovery. Therefore, in this matter, Yan'er has actually done our family a great service by keeping us out of this conflict. The wisest course of action for self-preservation is to remain an observer on the sidelines, completely uninvolved," Wang Jian finished with a knowing smile.

Wang Yan, of course, heard all of this. But at that moment, another matter consumed her thoughts.

"Father," she began, a hopeful look in her eyes, "do you truly approve of me and Zhao Feng?"

"I have already refused Mr. Fusu before the Great King and stated that you have pledged your heart to Zhao Feng. Can I possibly take that back?" Wang Jian said, a teasing tone in his voice. "I have only one question for you. Do you truly love Zhao Feng? If the man you marry isn't him, then your father will have committed the crime of deceiving the sovereign."

"I do," Wang Yan said quickly. "I love him." The words tumbled out before she could stop them, and she blushed with shyness.

"Then it's settled! Zhao Feng will be my, Wang Jian's, future son-in-law!" he declared with a hearty, pleased laugh. "I will find an opportunity to personally discuss the marriage arrangements with his mother."

At this, however, Wang Yan looked hesitant.

"Yan'er," Mrs. Wang interjected, "your father has gone to such lengths for you. What are you still hesitating about? If you have something to say, just tell your father. And you've been back for so long,

looking so glum all the time. Your mother hasn't heard you mention this Zhao Feng even once. Who is he?"