

Longevity 115

Chapter 115: Annual Salary Arrives at Sha Village! The Anticipation of Zhao Ying and Her Mother!

If the soldiers escorting the consignments were to commit theft, they would face the death penalty, and their entire clan would be implicated. This was also a strict policy, as King Zheng of Qin would never allow anyone to tamper with the annual salaries.

「On the other hand.」

"Zhao girl, don't worry. In a moment, you'll know about your brother's situation," Wu Lizheng said to Zhao Ying, who was standing by his side.

"Yes," Zhao Ying nodded, but just to be safe, she lowered her voice. "Mr. Wu, may I ask you for a favor?"

"Go ahead, Zhao girl," Wu Lizheng said immediately.

"If there's any bad news about my brother, could you please tell the villagers not to spread it around? My mother's health is already poor. If something terrible really has happened, she definitely won't be able to bear it," Zhao Ying said, her voice filled with worry.

Hearing this, Wu Lizheng thought for a moment before nodding. "I promise you."

He was, of course, well aware of Mrs. Zhao's physical condition.

「Back then.」

It was he who had taken pity on Mrs. Zhao and allowed her to move into the village. He had also been silently looking after her ever since. It could be said that Zhao Feng, his sister, and Mrs. Zhao all owed their lives to his kindness.

"Thank you, Mr. Wu," Zhao Ying immediately said, her gaze returning to Chen Fen, who was reading from the list.

Holding the roster, Chen Fen continued his announcements. "From Sha Village of Shaqiu County, Li Fu! Third-Rank Nobility, appointed Commander of a Hundred. Annual Salary: one hundred and fifty dan. Positional Salary: four dan per month, for forty-eight dan a year. Total remuneration received: one hundred and ninety-eight dan."

"Wow!"

"The Li family! Your eldest son is truly remarkable! He's already a Third-Rank Noble and a Commander of a Hundred! This is an honor for our whole village!"

"Incredible!"

The surrounding villagers all exclaimed in admiration.

In a small place like Sha Village, producing a Commander of a Hundred was quite an achievement. To an ordinary villager, this was an incredibly high official position, and being a Third-Rank Noble on top of that was a tremendous honor. A Commander of a Hundred led a hundred men, and these were real Sharp Warriors.

Under the admiring and envious gazes of the villagers, the Li family walked toward Chen Fen with excited smiles.

Meanwhile, Wu Lizheng watched attentively. Distributing the annual salaries naturally required identity verification. With each distribution, Chen Fen, the official in charge, would glance at Wu Lizheng for confirmation, as it was essential that the funds be given out with perfect accuracy.

The responsibility for verification lay with the Village Chief, a practice followed in every village. If this were in a county or prefectural city, one would need a specialized household registry to collect the salary.

"Press your handprint here and receive your annual salary."

When the Li family approached Chen Fen, a soldier brought out a larger bag of money and handed it to them. The family accepted it with repeated thanks, then stepped aside to count the money together.

As farmers with their own fields to cultivate, they would use the money not to buy grain, but rather cloth and other daily necessities. In contrast, the families of Sharp Warriors serving in the cities needed to purchase their grain from shops. This was perhaps a difference between urban and rural life that would persist into later generations.

"From Sha Village of Shaqiu County, Luo Miao! First-Rank Nobility, Wuzhang. Annual Salary: fifty dan. Positional Salary: one dan per month, for twelve dan a year. Total remuneration received: sixty-two dan."

"From Sha Village of Shaqiu County, Xiao Yi! Second-Rank Nobility..."

Chen Fen continued reading the list.

One by one, the soldiers' families went forward with beaming smiles to receive their salaries. Even the annual salary for a First-Rank Noble was a significant sum for a commoner. Sha Village might not be large, but over the years, it had supplied a considerable number of young men for military service. In total, over sixty men from the village were serving in the army.

So many names have been read, why haven't I heard my brother's?

Zhao Ying listened quietly, watching her fellow villagers collect their salaries one after another. A good deal of time had passed, and about thirty people had received their payment, but she still hadn't heard her brother's name.

This made her extremely anxious. Wu Lizheng had sent word that her brother had been transferred to a main battle camp. Although Zhao Ying didn't believe her brother had the ability for such a post, the thought still worried her deeply. She had heard since she was young that the Daqin Elite Soldiers were invincible and unstoppable. But war meant people died, and the main battle camps were for those who charged headfirst into the fray.

Zhao Ying was truly terrified.

"Zhao girl, don't be anxious," Wu Lizheng said, immediately trying to comfort her when he saw her distress. "We have more than sixty people from our village serving in the army. They haven't even announced half of them yet."

He had watched Zhao Feng and his sister grow up and felt a deep affection for them. As the Village Chief of Sha Village, Wu Lizheng's standing came from more than just his seniority; his three sons had all died in battle for the country over the decades. In return, Wu Lizheng received a pension from the government, and as the Village Chief, he was greatly respected by the several hundred villagers of Sha Village.

"Mr. Wu, my brother isn't really in trouble, is he?" Zhao Ying's worry was growing by the moment. "You said he was transferred to a main battle camp... it wasn't really him, was it?"

Chen Fen's announcements continued. Many villagers excitedly collected the salaries belonging to their sons. A festive atmosphere filled the village entrance.

But Zhao Ying was not the only one feeling anxious. Others whose family members' names had not yet been called shared her worry. After all, this distribution was unlike those of the past. In previous years, there were few wars, but this time Qin had attacked Han, so casualties were inevitable.

The longer they waited, the greater the chance of bad news seemed—a fear shared by everyone whose loved one's name had yet to be called.