

## Longevity 122

### Chapter 122: Zhao Ying: Mother, Brother Is Alive and Well! Mrs. Zhao Is Shocked! (Part 2)

"Rest assured, Mr. Wu, I will prepare everything," Zhao Ying immediately replied.

"Mrs. Zhao," Wu Lizheng began, then hesitated slightly, "I need to discuss something with you."

Seeing Wu Lizheng's expression, Mrs. Zhao smiled gently. "Mr. Wu, if it weren't for you back then, my daughter, Feng'er, and I might not have survived. We will never forget the kindness you showed us by taking us in and looking after us."

"I said it back then," she continued. "You saved our lives. Feng'er and Ying'er are like your own grandchildren. No matter what you ask, our family will absolutely not refuse."

Mrs. Zhao's profound gratitude for Wu Lizheng was evident in her words.

Wu Lizheng, moved by her sentiment, smiled. "It's not about anything else," he said. "Your boy Feng has really made something of himself, gaining a rank-ten title and a thousand mu of fertile land. The problem is, many of our villagers don't have enough land to farm. They have to rent from the wealthy landowners and pay exorbitant tenant fees. I was thinking, could you possibly lease some of that land to them at a more reasonable price? At the very least, a lower rent than what others charge."

"Mr. Wu," Mrs. Zhao said with a gentle smile, not taking the issue to heart, "you don't need to discuss these matters with me. My daughter and I don't understand any of it. If we truly have that much fertile land, please, arrange it as you see fit."

"Your word is enough," Wu Lizheng said with a grateful smile. "On behalf of all the villagers in need, I thank you."

It had to be said that Wu Lizheng indeed deserved his reputation as a respected elder. Now approaching sixty, he was considered long-lived for the era. He once had three sons, but all had perished on the battlefield. His wife had also passed away, leaving him all alone.

Because his sons had all died for their country and earned merit, their titles and lands had been transferred to Wu Lizheng, to be reclaimed by the state after his passing. However, Wu Lizheng didn't keep the dozens of mu of land for himself. Instead, he distributed it evenly among the village's needy households, particularly those with large families. He only kept two or three mu for himself to farm. Even the land the Zhao family cultivated had been a gift from him.

At his age, he no longer harbored desires for worldly pleasures. He had experienced too much and now only wished for the struggling villagers to live a better life.

At that moment, a series of footsteps sounded from outside the courtyard.

Many villagers who had always been on good terms with the Zhao family began to gather, though some were naturally just there to see what was going on. Now that the Zhao family had produced a general—a major figure in Sha Village and even the entire Shaoqiu County—many people naturally came hoping to curry favor.

A group of village women, one after another, walked into the courtyard, all offering their congratulations to Mrs. Zhao.

"Mrs. Zhao, congratulations!" one called out.

"Your Zhao Feng has done so well for himself!"

"Yes, he's a general now! We came to congratulate you!" another added.

"Your difficult days are over..."

Facing them all, Mrs. Zhao maintained her usual smile, responding to each one in turn.

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「Xianyang, within Zhangtai Palace」

Ying Zheng sat upon the throne, facing several of Qin's most important officials. At this moment, they all wore varied expressions, each holding a copy of the memorial that had been passed around.

"Have you all finished reading?" Ying Zheng asked.

"Replying to the Great King," Wang Wan answered respectfully, "we have all finished reading."

"What do you think of General Zhao Feng's strategy?" Ying Zheng asked, his gaze sweeping over the officials.

"This old official believes that integrating the surrendered soldiers is too risky," Wang Wan stated directly. "It would be better to demote them to slaves. First, we wouldn't have to pay them salaries, which avoids draining the treasury. Second, the potential for unrest is simply too great. If we really integrate them as proposed, it would also be a considerable drain on our national power."

"This official, however, believes General Zhao Feng's strategy is feasible," Yu Liao interjected, stepping forward. "Throughout history, warfare has involved numerous strategies, but the best is to outmaneuver the enemy. Han has already fallen and the state no longer exists, having been converted into Qin's Yingchuan County. Strictly speaking, the surrendered soldiers of Han are now Citizens of Great Qin. This is what General Zhao pointed out, and it eliminates the risks that came with integrating surrendered soldiers in the past.

"Previously, surrendered soldiers would rebel because their home country still stood, meaning their allegiance was never sincere. But now that the Han Capital has fallen, would they still dare to betray us? Under Qin's laws, their entire clan would be implicated. If any of them dare, we will execute their whole family to serve as a warning to the others.

"Furthermore, integrating these soldiers is undoubtedly beneficial to Qin. Our goal is to conquer all other states and unify the world. With each state we conquer, we will take in a large number of surrendered soldiers. These veterans are a capable fighting force, far better than newly trained recruits, and integrating them consumes far fewer national resources. As General Zhao proposed, they would remain in the status of surrendered soldiers before being converted into Sharp Warriors. Qin would only need to provide them with a full meal each day, without paying an annual salary. This avoids a significant drain on our national power."

Compared to the conservative Wang Wan, Yu Liao, as a disciple of Guiguzi, was naturally far more open-minded and innovative. He immediately recognized the feasibility of Zhao Feng's proposed strategy.

"Tingwei, give your opinion," Ying Zheng said, not making an immediate decision and instead turning to Li Si.

"While this official does not understand much about military deployments or the specifics of army integration," Li Si began, clasping his hands in a salute, "Shaofu is a student of Guiguzi and is well-versed in military strategy. His insights are naturally far superior to those of us who reside within the court. Therefore, this official believes Shaofu's words are reasonable."

He had said a great deal, but in the end, Li Si revealed nothing of his own stance. Instead, he simply aligned himself with Yu Liao's view while subtly criticizing Wang Wan as someone who, confined to the court, lacked true understanding.