

## Longevity 124

Chapter 124: Zhao Ying: Mother, Brother Is Alive and Well! Mrs. Zhao Is Shocked! (Part 4)

Han Fei's argument also played a deeper role, ultimately leading to Yao Jia being poisoned.

"To undertake a diplomatic mission to the Zhao state, a person of distinguished status should represent Qin. This will better demonstrate that we are seeking an alliance out of necessity. I nominate Lord Changping Mi Qi. In terms of status, he is the Eldest Imperial Son's maternal grandfather; in terms of position, he is a Senior Minister of Qin. It is most fitting for Lord Changping to undertake this mission," Wang Wan stepped forward and proposed loudly.

Obviously, he was also competing with Li Si.

Hearing Wang Wan's words, Ying Zheng grew thoughtful.

Wang Wan and Li Si looked anxiously at Ying Zheng. As ministers of Qin, they knew the court was now clearly under the king's absolute control. If they wanted to remain prosperous, they had to rely on their sovereign. Thus, they only had the power to make suggestions.

"What the Chancellor says is quite right," Ying Zheng said after a moment. "Sending Lord Changping would indeed make Zhao Yan more likely to believe that Qin is genuinely seeking an alliance out of desperation."

Upon hearing this, Wang Wan's face lit up with joy, while Li Si looked slightly disappointed. If this diplomatic mission succeeded, it would naturally be a great accomplishment.

"Although Lord Changping is capable, he comes from a military background and is not a master of diplomatic debate. Yao Jia, on the other hand, possesses that gift of persuasion."

"Issue my secret edict," Ying Zheng declared at once. "Appoint Mi Qi as the chief envoy and Yao Jia as his deputy. Once Yu Qing's arrangements are complete and the time is right, both of you are to proceed immediately to the Zhao state."

This was an unexpected turn of events. Li Si, who had thought his recommendation was futile, now found himself smiling.

Wang Wan and Li Si exchanged a glance and replied in unison, "The Great King is wise."

Fusu stepped forward and bowed. "Father, Han Fei has been confined in the imperial prison for nearly half a month. May I ask how you plan to deal with him? Your son has long heard that Han Fei is a great talent of this age. If he could be made to serve Qin, he would surely strengthen our nation."

As these words fell, a flutter of unease stirred in Li Si's heart, and his brow furrowed.

It's true. Fusu is trying to win over Han Fei.

Li Si's hand, hidden inside his sleeve, clenched into a tight fist. He was well aware of his former classmate's talents. If Han Fei were to truly serve Fusu, it would be anything but good news for him. Another great Legalist scholar, used against him? Li Si instantly understood Fusu's intentions.

"If it may please the Great King," Li Si immediately stepped forward, an expression of helpless familiarity on his face. "I once studied with Han Fei at the Jixia Academy under Master Xunzi. In my view, Han Fei has always been fiercely loyal and righteous. Persuading him to willingly submit to Qin will not be easy."

"Then according to you, Tingwei, Han Fei cannot be used by me?" Ying Zheng asked, looking at Li Si.

The Han officials had been escorted to Qin along with Han Fei. Those who were capable and willing to surrender had already been assigned posts, with their families being brought to Qin as hostages. Those unwilling to surrender, particularly the high-ranking ones, were executed, their families reduced to slavery. But Han Fei was a unique case. After capturing him, Ying Zheng had not summoned him. Instead, he had Han Fei locked away in the imperial prison and ignored him, perhaps to grind down his will, making him easier to recruit when they finally met.

"Father," Fusu bowed deeply, making his formal request. "I believe that since Han Fei is a man of talent, he also possesses great pride. As long as we appeal to his reason and his emotions, we can surely persuade him to serve Qin. I am willing to go to the imperial prison on your behalf and convince Han Fei to surrender. I ask for your permission, Father."

Seeing this, Li Si's heart pounded with urgency. He promptly stepped forward as well. "Great King, Han Fei is my former classmate and a close friend of many years. I am willing to go and persuade him."

Ying Zheng briefly scanned the two men vying to persuade Han Fei. When his gaze fell upon Fusu, a flicker of distaste crossed his eyes, vanishing as quickly as it appeared. In the next moment, his eyes rested on Li Si. "Tingwei, you will make the trip for me."

"Your servant obeys the decree," Li Si replied at once, casting a smug sidelong glance at Wang Wan.

Fusu, meanwhile, retreated to the side, his disappointment clear. Wang Wan watched him with a worried expression.

After the courtiers had withdrawn, Ying Zheng stared out from the hall. Wang Wan. Fusu. Time and again... he coldly muttered the two names, his voice laden with deep meaning.

Zhao Gao, who was serving nearby, heard this. Though his expression remained unchanged, his heart leaped with joy.

「Inside the Royal Palace.」

Fusu and Wang Wan walked side by side.

"Your Highness was too hasty just now," Wang Wan said, his old face etched with concern. "You absolutely should not have suggested to the Great King that you wanted to persuade Han Fei."

"Why?" Fusu asked, puzzled.

"For a sovereign, do you know what matters most?" Wang Wan asked in return.

Fusu thought for a moment. "Power?"

"Precisely. Power. And forming cliques for personal gain is a monarch's greatest taboo. Han Fei is a prisoner who has not yet submitted to Qin. Your enthusiasm for him was far too obvious."

"Although you are the Eldest Imperial Son, you are not yet the Crown Prince. By broaching this matter, you made it seem as though you intend to recruit Han Fei for your own purposes. Even if that is what you desire in your heart, you must never show it before the Great King," Wang Wan said with a sigh.

"No wonder Father chose to send Li Si," Fusu said, a look of sudden understanding on his face. "I have displeased him."

"Initially, this old servant wished for Your Highness to gain military support to pave the way for your ascension to Crown Prince. Therefore, I had people secretly spread the rumor that the Great King intended to arrange a marriage between Your Highness and a lady of the Wang Family. This was, in truth, a test of the Great King's attitude. He did not stop it and seemed pleased by the prospect in court that day. This shows that in the Great King's heart, Your Highness is very important."

"Therefore, you need not worry about what happened today. But in the future, you must be careful not to appear too eager before the Great King. You must never seem like you are striving for power. In the Royal Family, there are no fathers and sons—only power. Your Highness must etch this into your heart," Wang Wan said with grave seriousness.

Fusu nodded and bowed. "Thank you for your guidance, Chancellor Wang."

"Your Highness need not be so formal. This old servant will spare no effort on your behalf," Wang Wan said with a cold smile. "Although you did not get the opportunity to meet Han Fei personally this time, your maternal grandfather has at least secured the mission to the Zhao state. As long as Lord Changping earns merit, that merit will be yours. Li Si's influence at court is still no match for yours. He cannot win against us."

Just then, Li Si approached slowly from behind them. Seeing Wang Wan and Fusu in conversation, he didn't even slow his pace.

"The Tingwei is certainly riding high today," Wang Wan said coldly as Li Si walked past them, his brow furrowed. "The Eldest Imperial Son is present. Do you not offer a salute?"

"Why should I salute?" Li Si retorted, turning his head back with a hint of chill in his voice. "The Eldest Imperial Son, though an imperial son, is not the Crown Prince. If this official is to offer a salute, it is to the Great King and the Crown Prince. In terms of official rank, Mr. Fusu is still beneath me."

He then turned and walked away without another word. This exchange alone made it clear just how irreconcilable the animosity between Li Si and Wang Wan was. They no longer even tried to conceal it.