

Longevity 128

Chapter 128: Han Fei!! The Prefectural Governor Arrives! Sha Village Is Shocked!!!_4

"A Royal Edict?" Wu Lizheng gasped in surprise.

"General Zhao has worked tirelessly for the nation, and the Great King has bestowed a reward upon him. It is being delivered this time along with the general's Annual Salary," Chen Fen said with a smile.

"Excellent, excellent," Wu Lizheng replied eagerly. "I'll make the arrangements immediately." He nodded quickly and hurried off to have a villager notify Mrs. Zhao.

Meanwhile, the Prefectural Governor's carriage had stopped at the village entrance. A large contingent of Prefecture Soldiers arrived in an orderly fashion to guard him.

Back in the village, Mrs. Zhao and her daughter had not let the previous day's events disrupt their daily task of grinding herbs. For them, the greatest gain had been the news that Zhao Feng was still alive. That alone brought them peace of mind.

Just then, a villager came running over, shouting excitedly, "The Zhao family! Get ready, quickly! The Village Chief just told me to tell you that the Shaoqiu Governor is coming, along with many other high officials!"

"The Prefectural Governor is really coming?" Zhao Ying was surprised. She had assumed Chen Fen was joking yesterday, but it turned out to be true.

"Yes, he's here!" the villager said with a laugh. "There are lots of carriages and people outside. It's a grand procession!"

"Mother," Zhao Ying said, turning to look at her.

"It's nothing. They're just here to deliver your brother's Annual Salary," Mrs. Zhao said, much calmer than her astonished daughter.

"Mother, how can you not be afraid?" Zhao Ying asked, wide-eyed. "He's the Prefectural Governor! That's a very high-ranking official—the highest in all of Shaoqiu County! In the past, commoners like us would have never had the chance to meet him."

Her mother acted as if she had seen officials of an even higher rank than the Prefectural Governor before; she wasn't flustered or hurried in the slightest.

"Ying'er, what is there to be afraid of?" Mrs. Zhao said with a faint smile. "You think too much. The Prefectural Governor is just a man, not as fearsome as you imagine."

At this, Zhao Ying hugged her mother's arm and wheedled, "Mother, you have to tell me. Are you secretly from some great noble family? You're the only one in the entire village who can read, you know so much, and you're even skilled in medicine."

Zhao Ying had wanted to ask this question for a long time but never had the chance. Ever since she was old enough to be aware of such things, she had noticed while playing with the other village children that, aside from her own family, almost no one else could read.

Literacy was a symbol of the nobility, something commoners rarely had the chance to learn.

In response to her daughter's sudden question, Mrs. Zhao just smiled calmly. "I'm no noble lady. It's just that your maternal grandfather was a physician who traveled far and wide. He saw a great many things, and I learned much from him."

"Then what about Grandfather? And where is your home, Mother?" Zhao Ying pressed on, still curious. "You've never told me before."

A shadow of sorrow crossed Mrs. Zhao's face, her expression telling its own story.

Zhao Ying wanted to ask more, but seeing her mother's expression, she knew she couldn't.

At that moment, a series of footsteps echoed from outside the courtyard. Over a hundred Prefecture Soldiers had arrived, forming two orderly lines. Each held a weapon, but none wore Battle Armor.

Only the elite soldiers of the Qin Army were permitted to wear Battle Armor.

"The Zhao family!" Wu Lizheng called out as he hurried over to open the courtyard gate. "The Prefectural Governor is here!"

Mrs. Zhao and her daughter walked over slowly.

A middle-aged man in official robes approached them slowly. When he saw Mrs. Zhao and Zhao Ying, a gentle smile appeared on his face. "You must be General Zhao's mother," he said. "I am Yan Bing, the Shaoqiu Governor."

Mrs. Zhao stepped forward, offered a faint smile, and performed a woman's curtsy. "For the Prefectural Governor to visit personally is an honor. You humble us with your presence."

Seeing Mrs. Zhao so composed and without the slightest hint of timidity, a look of surprise flashed in Yan Bing's eyes. It seems General Zhao's mother is no simple woman. The reports described her as an ordinary villager, but this composure is far from simple. That's right... to have raised the youngest general in all of Qin, she must be extraordinary.

Regaining his composure, Yan Bing smiled. "Ah, Mrs. Zhao, you're too kind. How could this be called a condescension? This is General Zhao's home; it is my honor to visit. General Zhao has made great contributions to the nation, even capturing a king. I have heard much about his resounding deeds. Moreover, he is held in high esteem by the Great King, who has ordered his name be spread throughout the army. His future is truly limitless."

Even as the Shaoqiu Governor, Yan Bing's words were filled with humility. As the governor of the prefecture, he naturally understood that the rank of Deputy General was not Zhao Feng's final destination, but merely his starting point. From the moment the Great King began to circulate Zhao Feng's military achievements via Royal Edicts, it signified profound royal favor. It showed that the Great King intended to cultivate Zhao Feng as one of Qin's future great War Generals.

Perhaps one day, Zhao Feng might even have the chance to become a Senior General of Qin.

Having one's military deeds so widely proclaimed was a rare honor, one once held only by the great Lord Wu'an, Bai Qi! And he eventually became the Commander of the entire Qin Army.

"You are too kind, Prefectural Governor," Mrs. Zhao replied with a smile. "It is my son's honor to be able to serve his country."

"Mrs. Zhao, you truly possess great righteousness," Yan Bing said. "Well, I will not delay further. Men! Bring General Zhao's Annual Salary forward!" he ordered the soldiers behind him.

"Yes, sir!"

In response, several Prefecture Soldiers carried three large wooden chests into the courtyard and set them down.

"Mrs. Zhao," Yan Bing said, pointing to the chests, "this is General Zhao's Annual Salary, which includes the stipends for both his noble rank and his official position. It totals eight hundred shi."

"Thank you for delivering this personally, Prefectural Governor," Mrs. Zhao said gratefully.

Mrs. Zhao would not refuse what belonged to her son; he had earned it by risking his life on the battlefield.

"Furthermore," Yan Bing continued, "there is also the matter of the thousand mu of fertile land awarded for his noble rank. Bring forward the deeds for the land allocated to General Zhao!" he ordered promptly.

Several more Prefecture Soldiers came forward, carrying more chests.

Yan Bing opened one of the chests, revealing it was filled with bamboo slips.

"Mrs. Zhao," Yan Bing explained, "this is for the thousand mu of fertile land. Each mu has its own corresponding deed. These lands include all the unallocated fertile fields outside Sha Village, totaling more than three hundred mu. The remaining seven hundred mu of fertile land are in the four adjacent villages. All of it has been registered under General Zhao's name. General Zhao will hold one copy of these deeds, the Prefecture Governor's office will hold another, and a third copy is registered in the Capital."

"With these deeds, under Qin Law, no one may seize the general's land. However, this land cannot be sold, only leased out," Yan Bing stated solemnly, offering a kind reminder.

"I understand," Mrs. Zhao nodded.

"In addition to the general's Annual Salary and fertile lands," Yan Bing announced, his voice rising, "I have come today on royal decree to announce a Royal Edict!"