

## Longevity 129

Chapter 129: Mrs. Zhao: I Never Thought I'd See This Again! Fusu, Having You Is Truly His Blessing!

"In addition to General Zhao's annual salary and fine farmlands, I have come by royal command to proclaim the Royal Edict!"

Yan Bing then produced the Royal Edict from Xianyang and unfolded it.

"This humble commoner awaits the Royal Edict."

Upon hearing the words "Royal Edict," a flicker of emotion crossed Mrs. Zhao's eyes, but she composed herself instantly, immediately kneeling in reverence. Her daughter, Zhao Ying, immediately did the same. The surrounding villagers without titles knelt down, as did all the Soldiers.

To receive a Royal Edict was to stand in the presence of the King himself. To defy it was tantamount to defying the King.

"An Edict from the King of Qin."

"Deputy General Zhao Feng has rendered meritorious service to the state. As his mother is without care in her hometown, We hereby bestow upon her a mansion to be built by craftsmen, fifty servants, one hundred pieces of gold, ten thousand coins, and one fifty-year-old Ginseng."

"Furthermore, the one thousand mu of fine farmland belonging to General Zhao Feng shall be exempt from agricultural taxes for two years."

Yan Bing read aloud with a strong voice. The edict's contents were not long, but they clearly demonstrated the great favor bestowed upon Zhao Feng.

"This humble commoner accepts the edict on my son's behalf," Mrs. Zhao replied at once.

Yan Bing promptly stepped forward, helped Mrs. Zhao to her feet, and placed the Royal Edict in her hands.

"Bring forth the Great King's gifts!" Yan Bing called out, turning his head to those behind him.

At his command, fifty servants were brought forward from behind the group of Prefecture Soldiers. Perhaps out of consideration that Zhao Feng only had his mother and sister at home, all the servants were women; there were no men among them. Judging by their appearance, all were well-trained, held registered servant status, and would not dare to defy their master's command.

In addition to these servants, the Prefecture Soldiers also carried in many chests containing one hundred pieces of gold, ten thousand coins, and a fifty-year-old Ginseng.

"Mrs. Zhao," Yan Bing said with a stern tone, his words directed at the servants, "the servants granted by the Great King, as well as the gold and silver, are all here. The servitude registries are in these chests, just like land deeds. Their servitude contracts have been transferred to Shaqiu Prefecture. If any of these servants dare to flee or disobey your command, they may be executed at any time." This was a clear warning, intended to quash any thoughts of disobedience.

"Thank you for the reminder, Prefectural Governor," Mrs. Zhao said gratefully.

Afterward, Mrs. Zhao naturally invited Yan Bing and his accompanying officials into her home for a while. They, in turn, accepted with a round of calculated pleasantries. After a considerable amount of time, Yan Bing and his subordinate officials departed.

"Mother, I'm truly in awe," Zhao Ying said, looking at her mother with admiration. "You managed to talk with the Prefectural Governor for so long. I was just standing there, completely lost for words."

"It was all just false pleasantries. That Prefectural Governor is simply trying to curry favor now that he sees your brother is young and has potential," Mrs. Zhao stated calmly. "If your brother hadn't achieved great merit and shown such promise, let alone the Prefectural Governor, even a county magistrate wouldn't have come to visit. If the day ever comes that your brother truly falls from grace, all of this so-called honor will become a laughingstock."

Hearing this, Zhao Ying nodded with a flicker of understanding. She then looked at the fifty Maids standing motionless in the courtyard. "Mother, what are we going to do with all these people?"

Seeing the Maids before her, an expression of helplessness appeared on Mrs. Zhao's face. "It's certainly not easy to arrange for so many people," she said with a sigh.

At that moment, an elderly craftsman approached and said respectfully to Mrs. Zhao, "Madam, we are craftsmen from the Prefectural City. By order of the Prefectural Governor, we have come to construct a mansion for you."

Mrs. Zhao glanced at the Maids before turning to the craftsman. "May I ask how long the construction will take?"

"Please rest assured, Madam," the chief craftsman replied immediately. "The mansion will be completed within a month."

"Then I'll leave it in your capable hands," Mrs. Zhao said with thanks.

With so many Maids, there's no way this small courtyard can house them all, even if we squeeze them in. We'll have to rely on the new mansion once it's built.

Mrs. Zhao then turned to Wu Lizheng. "Uncle Wu," she said, "could I trouble you with something?"

"Just tell me what you need," Wu Lizheng replied at once.

"With so many people, that's a lot of mouths to feed. I must trouble you to arrange for some people to go to the county town and buy daily necessities," Mrs. Zhao explained to Wu Lizheng. "Also, regarding the land granted with the title, please help arrange that as well, Uncle Wu. Our family can't farm that much on our own. We'll keep ten mu for ourselves, but I'll trouble you to lease out the rest. For the rent, please halve it for our fellow villagers who wish to farm it. For those from other villages, we'll charge the standard market rate."

"For the Zhao family's land? Are you certain you want to halve the rent for our fellow villagers?" Wu Lizheng asked, surprised. If it were only a few mu, the amount wouldn't be significant. But with several hundred mu in Sha Village, the total would be substantial.

"Consider it our family's way of thanking the villagers for their years of kindness and care," Mrs. Zhao said with a smile.

"Rest assured, Mrs. Zhao," Wu Lizheng said at once. "Leave these matters to me. I'll make sure they're handled perfectly for you." He then turned and left the courtyard.

Just then, a slightly older Maid looked toward Mrs. Zhao and her daughter and knelt. "Greetings, Madam."

All fifty Maids knelt in unison, their demeanor deeply respectful.

The next task was to arrange for the Maids. However, with the mansion's construction yet to begin, it would be some time before they could be properly settled inside. Still, seeing Zhao Feng's annual salary and the rewards from Xianyang in the courtyard, it was clear there were more than enough resources to support them.

Mrs. Zhao gripped the Royal Edict, her heart flooded with a mix of emotions as she gazed at the handwriting that was so familiar to her. I never thought that in this lifetime, I would once again see a Royal Edict written in your own hand.