

## Longevity 135

### Chapter 135: King of Qin's Wrath! Zhao Feng's Rise! (Part 3)

Beneath the dark night, more than a dozen gazes fell upon the temple officials standing guard outside the grand Dahua Palace.

SWISH! SWISH! SWISH!

A crisp sound of crossbow bolts cutting through the air came from the shadows. Before the six temple officials could react, a sharp pain struck them. They writhed in agony, clutching their necks as bolts pierced their throats. A group of men in black rushed over. They moved with light-footed speed despite their full sprint—a clear sign of specialized training. Reaching the fallen officials, they drew daggers to finish off any who were still struggling.

Once all the guards were dead, a man who seemed to be the leader gestured with his hand. Two of his subordinates immediately stepped forward and slowly pushed open the palace doors.

Inside the palace, a maidservant heard the noise. Seeing the doors open, she called out softly, "Who's there?"

Before she could gather her wits, the well-trained assassins filed into the palace. The sudden, murderous intent made the bewildered maidservant freeze for a moment before she snapped to her senses, screaming, "Assassins! There are assassins!"

She only managed that single cry. One of the black-clad men charged forward, a cold glint of steel flashing in the dark, and slit her throat. The other maidservants in the palace were jolted awake by the commotion.

"Assassins!"

"There are assassins!"

"Quickly, save His Majesty!"

Several maidservants cried out in terror, but the assassins were on them in an instant, swiftly dispatching them.

On the bed, Zhao Ji was still unconscious. Several black-clad men rushed over to her just as a temple official ran into the room.

"This is Empress Dowager Zhao Ji! Take her, quickly!" the temple official shouted.

The assassins immediately wrapped the still-sleeping Zhao Ji in her bedding and hurried out of the palace.

As they retreated, patrolling temple officials heard the commotion and drew near. They turned pale with shock when they saw the bodies in front of the palace.

"Quick, there are assassins!"

"Summon the Imperial Guard Army!"

"Hurry!"

The temple officials yelled in a panic, and the entire Yong City Royal Palace was thrown into chaos.

Not far from Zhao Ji's residence stood another massive palace. Hearing the commotion, a dignified noblewoman sat up in her bed.

"What is happening? Why is it so noisy?" she called out.

In response, several maidservants hurried in and knelt before her. "Reporting to Empress Dowager Huayang, it seems there are shouts about assassins coming from the other Empress Dowager's palace," a maidservant replied reverently.

"Assassins?" Empress Dowager Huayang's brow furrowed, and she stood up abruptly. "To assassinate Zhao Ji?"

Just then, a voice came from outside the hall. "Tu Sui, Commander of the Yong City Guards, seeks an audience with Empress Dowager Huayang."

The imposing voice carried clearly into the hall.

"Admit him," Empress Dowager Huayang commanded at once.

At her order, several maids promptly stood and drew a thin gauze veil to conceal Empress Dowager Huayang's figure as others lit the candles in the hall.

"By decree of Empress Dowager Huayang, the commander is to be admitted!" a maidservant announced loudly.

In response, a man in battle armor entered the main hall and bowed deeply. "This subordinate pays his respects to the Empress Dowager."

"What has happened?" Empress Dowager Huayang asked, her voice grave.

"Reporting... reporting to Empress Dowager Huayang," Tu Sui stammered, his voice trembling. "The Empress Dowager... she has been abducted."

Empress Dowager Huayang's expression changed drastically. She shot to her feet. "What did you say? Zhao Ji has been captured? You are in command of five thousand Imperial Guards defending the Royal Palace! How could such a lapse occur?"

"Reporting to the Empress Dowager," Tu Sui said, forcing himself to be steady. "The Yong City Royal Palace had an insider. This mole was familiar with the palace layout and the patrol schedules. They opened a rear gate and let the intruders in during the changing of the guard.

"Moreover, these intruders are highly skilled. They left more than twenty of their own behind to delay our Imperial Guard Army. My men engaged them, and even with a numerical advantage, we lost eleven Imperial Guards before we could eliminate them.

"These intruders are professionally trained; they are not common bandits. Furthermore, they are all Dead Soldiers. I had hoped to take one alive, and while we managed to capture two, they immediately committed suicide by taking poison.

"This subordinate has failed in his duty," Tu Sui reported respectfully, lowering his head.

Hearing this, Empress Dowager Huayang grew pensive. Kidnapping Zhao Ji in the dead of night, and with an insider's help... it seems this was planned long ago. And the objective is very clear... it's all for Zhao Ji.

"But this subordinate does not understand," Tu Sui said, his face a mask of confusion. "Empress Dowager Zhao Ji is, after all, only an Empress Dowager in name. She lost all her power after the Great King began his personal rule. What could they possibly gain by abducting her, other than provoking the wrath of Qin?"

Empress Dowager Huayang gave a cold sneer. "Although she has lost the authority of an Empress Dowager, she is still Zheng'er's birth mother. If she falls into the hands of an enemy state and is used to threaten him, it will be a disaster."

The color drained from Tu Sui's face, and he fell to his knees. "Please save me, Empress Dowager!"

The matter was too grave. If Zhao Ji truly ended up in the hands of an enemy, the consequences would be catastrophic—far more than he could ever hope to bear.

"First, dispatch men in pursuit immediately and lock down the entire city," Empress Dowager Huayang commanded sternly. "Second, send an urgent dispatch to the Great King at once. Explain everything that has happened."

"Yes, Your Highness," Tu Sui nodded immediately.

"Commander Tu," she continued, her voice heavy with meaning. "This is a grave matter. If Zhao Ji truly falls into the hands of another nation, your crime will be immense. If it truly comes to that, the most this palace can do is spare your life. However, if you manage to retrieve her, you will have atoned for your failure with a great merit, which may spare you from punishment."

A look of profound gratitude washed over Tu Sui's face as he kowtowed. "This subordinate thanks Empress Dowager Huayang for her immense grace! This subordinate will personally lead the pursuit and will not allow the culprits to escape."

With that, Tu Sui immediately rose and strode out of the palace.

Zhao Ji... Huayang thought to herself. To think that even now, you still bring disaster upon the National Fortune of our great Qin.