

Longevity 144

Chapter 144: Why Does Empress Dowager Zhao Ji Fear Me So Much? (Part 4)

"Zhao Feng."

Zhao Feng returned the fist and palm salute. Upon hearing the name, Tu Sui gasped in disbelief. "Could you be General Zhao Feng," he asked, his gaze fixed on him, "the one who slew the Han Senior General, conquered the Han Capital, and captured the King of Han?"

"The very same," Zhao Feng replied with a slight smile. The King of Qin's royal edict had truly resounded throughout the nation. By now, the entire Qin army knew his name, and his military achievements were widely celebrated.

"I pay my respects to General Zhao," Tu Sui bowed again, his expression full of reverence. "I have long admired your great name, General." Before Zhao Feng could bid him rise, Tu Sui turned and shouted to the men on the ship behind him, "Hurry and pay your respects to General Zhao! He is a hero of our great Qin who conquered the Han Capital and captured the King of Han! The Great King himself issued a royal edict, commanding it to be known throughout the army!"

At Tu Sui's words, the Yong City Imperial Guards all turned toward Zhao Feng with awe, then bowed in unison. "We pay our respects to General Zhao!"

"Please rise, brothers," Zhao Feng said with a smile, gesturing with his hand. At his side, his one hundred trusted aides swelled with pride. This was their lord, a man revered by the entire army.

"Thank you, General Zhao," Tu Sui replied, straightening up. His gaze swept over the ships Zhao Feng occupied. They were littered with corpses, some already being carried away by the river's current.

"General Zhao, did your men suffer heavy casualties?" Tu Sui asked tentatively. "This group of bandits is from the Zhao state, the so-called Zhao Country Royal Guard. Every one of them is an elite among elites. We suffered heavy losses just pursuing them here."

"They are indeed exceptionally skilled. A few of my brothers were injured," Zhao Feng acknowledged with a nod. He was telling the truth. In a battle of equal numbers, his one hundred trusted aides had faced off against one hundred men of the Zhao Country Royal Guard. Against ordinary soldiers, Zhao Feng's aides would have achieved a crushing victory. It was only because their opponents were the Royal Guard that a few of them sustained injuries.

"Only a few were injured?" Tu Sui looked at Zhao Feng in astonishment, his eyes sweeping over the surrounding trusted aides. Indeed, aside from a few men who were bleeding from minor wounds, the rest were completely unharmed.

"Your trusted aides are truly valiant, General," Tu Sui said with a bitter smile. "These men from the Zhao Country Royal Guard have killed many of my brothers—and not just men under my command. The other pursuing Prefecture Soldiers also suffered heavy losses."

"You mean there were more than just these one hundred men?" Zhao Feng asked, surprised.

Tu Sui said with lingering fear in his voice, "A total of five hundred members of the Zhao Country Royal Guard entered Qin territory. Their commander used four hundred of them as a diversion, preventing our army from identifying their primary objective. Because of that, this group nearly escaped. If you hadn't intercepted them, General, my brothers and I would have been guilty of a capital crime. If the Empress

Dowager had actually fallen into the hands of the Zhao state... I dare not even imagine the consequences. General Zhao, you are the savior of my life and the lives of my men."

"It was a chance encounter, Commander. There's no need for such gratitude," Zhao Feng said with a slight smile.

"If I may ask, General, who notified you to set up an interception here?" Tu Sui asked respectfully.

"No one," Zhao Feng replied. "My presence here was a complete accident. I just happened to spot them coming down the river carrying weapons and decided to stop them for questioning. After all, these are the waters of Qin, so I have the authority to conduct an inspection. But before I could even begin, the bastards were already preparing to fight," he finished with a chuckle.

Tu Sui was stunned into silence, his amazement growing. "General, you mean you ran into them purely by chance?"

"If it weren't by chance, I wouldn't have brought only my trusted aides. I would have brought an entire army," Zhao Feng laughed.

Tu Sui's gaze swept the area again. Including the three vessels the fleeing Zhao Country Royal Guard had used, Zhao Feng only had three ships in total. It was clear this was a complete coincidence.

"I had heard that you rose from the Logistics Army, General, making a name for yourself by killing Bao Yuan's son and then Bao Yuan himself. They said luck played a part in it," Tu Sui said, deeply moved. "Seeing you today, I finally understand. You are truly blessed by fortune to stumble upon such a great deed for Qin while simply taking a trip down the Wei River."

He wasn't just flattering him; he truly felt this way. To have rescued the Empress Dowager not through a planned interception, but by a random, unintentional encounter... it was truly beyond words.

"Do you know who orchestrated this kidnapping of the Empress Dowager?" Zhao Feng asked with a slight smile.

"The Zhao Country Royal Guard are the most elite Dark Guards of the Zhao state," Tu Sui replied without hesitation. "They would never mobilize without an edict from the King of Zhao. This plot must have been orchestrated by the King of Zhao."

"Then do you know who this man is?" Zhao Feng asked, pointing to Guo Kai beside him.

Tu Sui glanced at the man. "He looks too frail to be one of the Royal Guard, surely?"

"This is Guo Kai, the Prime Minister of the Zhao state," Zhao Feng said with a smile. "And he was the one who personally orchestrated the abduction of the Empress Dowager."

"Prime Minister Guo Kai?" Tu Sui's eyes widened as he stared at the man, his gaze filling with murderous intent. This was the man who had nearly cost him his head. If he had succeeded, Tu Sui would have been finished.

"I'll kill you!" Tu Sui snarled, drawing his sword to cut down Guo Kai, who began to tremble violently in terror.

Zhao Feng immediately stepped in front of him. "Commander, the best course of action is to hand this man over to the Great King. If you kill him yourself, you could be charged with a crime."

At these words, the anger on Tu Sui's face slowly subsided. "You're right, General. I was being reckless," he admitted, immediately sheathing his sword. "Thank you for the advice."

"Where is the Empress Dowager?" Tu Sui asked respectfully.

"In the cabin," Zhao Feng said, pointing behind him.

Tu Sui hurried over. When he saw Empress Dowager Zhao Ji seated inside, calm and unharmed, he finally let out a long sigh of relief.

"This servant pays his respects to the Empress Dowager," Tu Sui bowed deeply. But Zhao Ji didn't acknowledge him, her eyes still vacant as if in a trance.

"Commander," Zhao Feng said to Tu Sui, "I'll leave these two in your hands. Take them back and report the mission complete."

Hearing this, Tu Sui immediately replied with respect, "Please rest assured, General. I would never dare to take credit for your accomplishment. I will report everything exactly as it happened. If not for your interception, my men and I would have faced certain death."

Zhao Feng waved a hand dismissively. "Think nothing of it. As a War General of Qin, how could I stand by and allow the Empress Dowager of our nation to fall into the hands of another state?"

Then, Zhao Feng gave Zhang Ming a look. Zhang Ming immediately had several Sharp Warriors hand Guo Kai over to Tu Sui's men, while Han Xi helped a still-dazed Zhao Ji out of the cabin.

On the other side, Tu Sui's Imperial Guards quickly came forward, taking custody of Guo Kai first and escorting him onto their ship. But when it was Zhao Ji's turn, she froze as she passed by Zhao Feng.

"It wasn't me who killed you... No... it wasn't me..." she whispered, looking at Zhao Feng with absolute terror. "Get away from me..." She recoiled, shrinking back from him.

"The Empress Dowager has been frightened," Tu Sui said, then immediately ordered, "Quickly, escort her back to the ship!"

Several of his guards promptly moved forward to support Zhao Ji and guide her onto their vessel.

Zhao Feng was just left standing there, completely baffled.

Why is she so terrified of me?