

## Longevity 157

Chapter 157: Royal Edict Arrives at Sha Village! Mrs. Zhao Remembers the Past! (Part 2)

"Great King."

"This is surely a ploy by Qin. I implore you to reconsider, Great King. It is impossible that Ying Zheng would sign an alliance with you for no reason," Guo Kai said, his expression hardening as he spoke gravely.

"Rest assured," Zhao Yan sneered, looking quite smug. "I have already investigated this thoroughly. Numerous incidents have erupted in the Han Land occupied by Qin; their granaries have been burned and their military camps breached. Ying Zheng is at his wit's end, pouring significant national power into controlling the region.

"To gain complete control will require at least a year and a half. If I add more fuel to the fire over there, it will be two or three years before he can even think of extricating himself."

Seeing this, Guo Kai said nothing more. Before returning, he had committed Ying Zheng's words to memory: until he received a new decree, he was still Guo Kai and was to have no contact with Qin whatsoever. Now that he had regained Zhao Yan's trust, his best course of action was to speak little and do little. Every extra word or deed increased the risk of exposure. Guo Kai cherished his life and would not be so foolish.

「Sha Village!」

A troop escorted by several hundred Prefecture Soldiers headed toward the Zhao family home.

"Hello, the Zhao family!" Wu Lizheng called out loudly as he approached the courtyard of the Zhao estate. "Governor Yan is here!"

In the time that had passed, craftsmen dispatched by the Shaofu had been hard at work, and the Zhao estate had undergone a great transformation. Rows of houses had been built, enclosed by a courtyard wall, making it the largest residence in the entire village.

This estate, its construction bestowed by the Great King himself, was naturally befitting a Deputy General. The timber and tiles used were of the finest quality, and the ground was even paved with bluestone bricks. This, too, was a testament to the power he held.

However, at Mrs. Zhao's request, the small wooden hut where the family of three had originally lived was not demolished but was preserved within the estate grounds.

Of course, as the grand residence was constructed in a hamlet of only a few hundred people, the villagers' feelings were mixed. Some were envious, while others cursed the family under their breath. However, most of the villagers were simple and honest. After Zhao Feng was enfeoffed with a thousand mu of land, many families with too many mouths to feed and not enough fields of their own were allocated land to farm. The rent for fellow villagers was much lower than the standard rate, which naturally earned their gratitude.

Those who cursed in secret, of course, felt that since Zhao Feng was now a success, the Zhao family should be handing out money and grain directly to their fellow villagers. Only then would he live up to his status as a General. The Zhao family, naturally, paid no heed to such people. Mrs. Zhao's decision to lease the fertile land to the villagers at a reduced rent was already a great kindness to her neighbors.

Upon hearing the call, Mrs. Zhao and her daughter came out of the residence, looking perplexed. They saw several hundred Prefecture Soldiers, as well as over a hundred servants, both men and women. Leading the procession was the Shaoqiu Prefectural Governor, Yan Bing.

"Greetings, Governor Yan," Mrs. Zhao and her daughter said, stepping forward and offering a woman's bow.

Yan Bing, however, quickened his pace and gently helped them up.

"Mrs. Zhao, there is no need for such formalities," Yan Bing said immediately, a warm smile on his face.

"May I ask the reason for your visit, Governor Yan? Has something happened to my son?" Mrs. Zhao asked, her face filled with worry. She knew that the governor would not come all this way for no reason. For him to visit again in person, something must have happened to her son.

Beside her, Zhao Ying also looked on with concern.

"Mrs. Zhao, you worry too much," Yan Bing said with a smile. "General Zhao is well. He is currently under orders to garrison Wei City, a sign of the Great King's immense trust. I have come today to congratulate you, Mrs. Zhao. General Zhao has once again performed a meritorious service for Qin! I am here with the Royal Envoy to proclaim the Royal Edict."

At his words, an Imperial Guard commander standing beside Yan Bing stepped forward, holding a Royal Edict.

"A meritorious service?"

Mrs. Zhao and her daughter exchanged a surprised glance.

"A Royal Edict from the King of Qin!" the Imperial Guard commander announced loudly, holding the edict high.

At his call, all present who held no noble rank immediately knelt. "We respectfully listen to the Royal Edict."

"To Deputy General Zhao Feng of Great Qin: for intercepting brigands at the Wei River and rescuing the abducted Tai Hou, you have performed a great service for the state. You are hereby promoted one rank to Right Custodian. You are additionally granted five hundred mu of fertile land, one thousand gold, ten thousand coins, one hundred jade articles, one hundred servants, and ten Spirit Pills."

"As General Zhao is garrisoned abroad, all rewards shall be delivered to his place of origin," the commander proclaimed.

At that moment, everyone understood the great deed Zhao Feng had accomplished.

"My heavens!"

"That Zhao family boy is incredible! He actually rescued the Tai Hou, the mother of our current King!"

"The Zhao family has truly produced a great man. Zhao Feng was already a Deputy General, and now he's saved the King's mother, the Tai Hou of our Great Qin! His future is boundless!"

"Incredible!"

"It hasn't been long at all, and Zhao Feng has performed another great service!"

"He's just too lucky..."

The surrounding villagers erupted in discussion. The incident had been a shock to the entire imperial court, let alone these simple villagers.

He rescued the Tai Hou! He will surely gain even greater favor from the Great King in the future. His prospects are limitless. It seems I must visit the Zhao Mansion more often from now on and stay on his good side, Yan Bing thought to himself.

The Royal Envoy was arriving, passing through Shaoqiu to announce a promotion and another grant of five hundred mu of land, so Yan Bing had naturally accompanied him. He had not known the details of the merit Zhao Feng had earned this time. Now that he had heard the edict, Zhao Feng's importance in his eyes grew even greater. He was the Prefectural Governor of Shaoqiu; if he maintained a good relationship, perhaps Zhao Feng would one day become one of the Nine Ministers, or even the Shangjiangjun.