

Longevity 295

Chapter 295: A Private Conversation with Ying Zheng! Dragon Spring Meets Zhan Lu!

The next day!

Outside Handan City, atop a desolate mountain, Imperial Guards were stationed every ten steps. The security was extremely tight.

In front of a solitary grave, offerings and incense had already been laid out.

Ying Zheng stood before the grave with a look of reminiscence and sorrow on his face. Behind him, Wang Jian, Wang Ben, and Zhao Feng waited in silence.

"Teacher," Ying Zheng murmured, gazing at the tombstone. "I have returned. I, Zhao Zheng, will never forget the teachings you bestowed upon me. Without you, there would be no Ying Zheng today. Huaxia, all under Heaven... Zhao Zheng has been striving. I have already conquered Han of the Three Jins, and the Zhao state will soon follow. Once Zhao is taken, Wei will be next. With the Three Jins belonging to Qin, only three states will remain. I am confident that within eight years, I will pacify all under Heaven. One day, when all under Heaven is united, when Huaxia is one, our people will no longer suffer the calamity of war. I will allow the people to rest and recover, free from the tragedy of civil strife."

Approaching the grave, Ying Zheng seemed to see once again the teacher who had spared no effort in instructing him, and even more vividly, the teacher who had risked his life to protect him. Returning now, Ying Zheng felt as though he was presenting his achievements to his teacher. He wanted to tell him that he had succeeded, that the unification of the world was within his grasp, that he could and would achieve it.

History records that Emperor Qin Shi Huang had two teachers, Zhao Feng thought to himself, standing behind Ying Zheng. One was Shen Yue, his tutor during his time as a hostage in the Zhao state. He gave the future emperor his first taste of true learning, laying the foundation for his reign, and after his Return to Qin, it was Shen Yue who helped him first reveal his talents. The other was Lv Buwei. After returning to Qin and being designated as the successor and later the Crown Prince, Lv Buwei became his second teacher. It must be said, both men had a profound influence on Emperor Qin Shi Huang, especially the first one, Shen Yue. If he were still alive, history would remember him with even greater renown.

Seeing the name Shen Yue carved on the tombstone naturally made Zhao Feng recall these historical records.

Of course, Zhao Feng had not wanted to come here today. It was a Royal Edict from the King of Qin that compelled his attendance; otherwise, he would still be in the Wounded Soldier Camp treating the injured. A Royal Edict could not be disobeyed, so naturally, Zhao Feng could not refuse.

"Bring Zhao Yan to me," Ying Zheng commanded, his voice filled with authority.

In response, two Imperial Guards escorted Zhao Yan forward. Considering he was so weak he couldn't even truss a chicken, he wasn't shackled.

"Make him kneel before the grave," Ying Zheng ordered sternly.

"Yes, Your Majesty."

Ren Xiao acted immediately, kicking Zhao Yan to the ground. For a moment, Zhao Yan, uncharacteristically defiant, tried to stand up. He understood that Ying Zheng would not spare him, so it would be better to be killed outright and have it all be over.

However, that was merely his wishful thinking. Suicide? He didn't have the courage. If he did, he would have done it already. Though he was a king, he was not a true king.

"Teacher," Ying Zheng said slowly, his voice laced with ice. "I have brought Zhao Yan, the man who killed you. However, I don't plan to kill him directly. I will torture him. I will make him watch his country fall and his people be enslaved. Killing him now would be letting him off far too easily."

Ying Zheng's gaze turned frigid. "Have him kowtow to the grave and atone!"

The command was filled with a surging rage.

"Kowtow," Ren Xiao ordered coldly.

"Ying Zheng, if you have any guts, just kill me!" Zhao Yan sneered. "Make me kowtow to a mere commoner? Is Shen Yue worthy? I should have dug up his grave back then and scattered his bones!"

Ying Zheng's eyes narrowed, radiating murderous intent, but he held back his fury. Ren Xiao, however, showed no such restraint. He grabbed Zhao Yan's head and slammed it into the ground.

"ARGH..." Zhao Yan struggled, but how could he possibly overpower Ren Xiao, a Military Commander? Ren Xiao relentlessly forced his head down, making him kowtow hard against the earth. Without a command from Ying Zheng, he would not stop.

Soon, Zhao Yan's forehead was a bloody mess. Only after this continued for some time did Ying Zheng finally wave his hand, and only then did Ren Xiao cease.

"I just received a piece of news," Ying Zheng said, looking down condescendingly at the broken man on the ground. "Your dear older brother, Zhao Yi, is now king."

As these words fell, Zhao Yan's expression changed dramatically, his face flooding with terror. "What did you say?" he gasped, his face turning ashen. "No... impossible. How could he have escaped? How could he become king?"

"The throne of the Zhao state was rightfully his to begin with," Ying Zheng stated calmly. "Back when you sent men to assassinate Mao Sui, who was escorting Zhao Yi back to Zhao, do you know why it went so smoothly? It was because I was stirring the pot from behind the scenes. Do you know why I didn't let Zhao Yi return then, but instead allowed you to become king? It's because Zhao Yi is far smarter than you. If he had become king, my Great Qin would have had to exert much more effort to conquer Zhao. But with you as king, conquering Zhao was effortless. Because from start to finish, you have been nothing but a waste."

The words struck Zhao Yan like a bolt of lightning.

"No... impossible," he stammered in disbelief. "How could my ascension to the throne have been your doing? Impossible!"

Since taking the throne, Zhao Yan had always been pleased with himself, believing it was all the result of his own brilliant scheming. But now, it seemed the reality was completely different from what he had imagined. The fact that Ying Zheng, the man he hated most, had been pulling the strings all along was the ultimate defeat.

"Zhao Yan!" Ying Zheng's voice was sharp. "Didn't expect this, did you? I deliberately allowed you to take the throne. Now do you understand why I only sent Zhao Yi back to the Zhao state after you were securely in power? I was waiting for you to smoothly ascend. I was waiting for Zhao Yi to return and tear your kingdom apart fighting you for it."