

## Longevity 71

Chapter 71: Within Zhangtai Palace

"It's nothing."

"From now on, I will keep an eye out for news of Zhao Feng and inform you as soon as I hear anything," Wu Lizheng said with a smile.

Mrs. Zhao and her daughter naturally thanked him repeatedly.

Once Wu Lizheng had left, Zhao Ying turned to her mother.

"Mother, you can rest assured now," Zhao Ying said with a smile. "Brother is in the Logistics Army; he's very safe."

"As long as he can return safely, nothing else matters," Mrs. Zhao replied, smiling as well.

The news from Wu Lizheng truly allowed them to breathe a sigh of relief.

"Mother, go back to your room and rest," Zhao Ying said to her mother. "Leave the herbs to me."

"Alright." Mrs. Zhao nodded, saying nothing more.

Now she had something to look forward to. In a year, her son would be home.

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「Xianyang!」

A mansion stood close to the royal palace.

Dressed in a long, black and red skirt, Wang Yan slowly descended from her carriage.

At the mansion's entrance, a middle-aged woman walked over briskly.

"Yan'er, you've finally returned!" the middle-aged woman called out joyfully upon seeing Wang Yan descend from the carriage. "Mother has been worried about you for so long. Someone, prepare a meal!"

Wang Yan walked forward, offered a curtsy to her mother, and greeted her, "Mother."

"As long as you're back, that's all that matters." Mrs. Wang grabbed Wang Yan's hand and pulled her into the mansion.

Wang Yan looked up at the sign that read "Royal Mansion." As she stepped through the gates, she smiled bitterly to herself. I tried so hard to change, fleeing for so long, yet in the end, I was forced to return. However... I did manage to change some things. I gave myself to the man my heart desires.

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「Within Zhangtai Palace of the Great Qin Palace!」

A man in formal attire, his face masked, reported to Ying Zheng. "Reporting to the Great King, General Wang Jian's daughter has returned to Xianyang."

Inside the palace, Ying Zheng, who was handling petitions, paused. His expression was unchanged as he simply waved a hand and replied quietly, "Acknowledged."

A senior general commanding troops in the field is naturally a cause for apprehension. For a king, even one who trusts his general, caution is a necessity.

When Wang Jian mobilized his forces, his son and daughter were with him—a fact that did not escape the scrutiny of Qin's intelligence service, the Heibing Platform.

The infiltration capabilities of the Heibing Platform were the result of centuries of effort, a testament to the formidability of this intelligence agency.

"Additionally," the masked man continued, "the Heibing Platform has focused its investigation on the Zhao state. The political landscape there is now clear. After Zhao Yan ascended the throne, he appointed his former attendant and study companion, Guo Kai, as Prime Minister. He has even made a courtesan his Queen."

"When Your Majesty released Zhao Yi, the former Crown Prince of Zhao, back to his home state, he did make some moves. Ultimately, however, he was no match for Zhao Yan and has now been completely suppressed. Although he still leads the Zong Shi of Zhao, he has no chance of claiming the throne," Dunruo continued to report.

"Zhao Yi," Ying Zheng mused. "I sent him back to distract Zhao Yan and stir up internal conflict in Zhao. It's just a shame that Zhao Yi lacks the ability to succeed." He sighed. "What a pity."

"Your Majesty's strategy was not a complete failure," Dunruo said. "After all, Zhao Yi was once the Crown Prince of Zhao, the legitimate heir. Zhao Yan's accession, on the other hand, is still a matter of debate in Zhao. Although he has suppressed Zhao Yi, he has not dared to kill him."

"Furthermore, two of Zhao's three commanding generals, Lian Po and Li Mu, support Zhao Yi. And the Prime Minister Zhao Yan appointed, Guo Kai, is a greedy man of no use to the Zhao state. On the surface, Zhao may seem peaceful, but turbulent undercurrents are surging."

"And the reason Zhao offered no resistance when Qin moved against Han was because Your Majesty sent Zhao Yi back. This stirred the pot within their court, leaving them no opportunity to intervene," Dunruo added respectfully.

"Zhao Yan seized the throne through scheming," Ying Zheng stated. "To quell dissent, he will inevitably seek to expand his territory as a pretext. If he dares, then I will dare to move against Zhao. However, that will not be in the near future. Keep a close watch on the situation in Zhao. Report any movement directly to me."

"Please rest assured, Your Majesty," Dunruo replied respectfully. "I will maintain a close watch."

"Zhao remains quiet. What of Wei?" Ying Zheng asked. "Wei Wuji is no simple man."

"Indeed, Wei Wuji is not a simple man," Dunruo reported immediately. "He repeatedly sent envoys to the Zhao state, asking them to send troops to aid Han while he provided support from the side. However, Zhao Yan flatly refused. Consequently, Wei Wuji turned to the Chu State to seek aid from Huang Xie, but he was also rebuffed. After all, Qin's current relationship with Chu is not poor."

"Wei Wuji..." Ying Zheng said with a faint smile. "He is a clever man and can see the situation for what it is. But ultimately, he cannot change the tide of the times."

"Your Majesty," Dunruo reported, a hint of excitement in his voice, "yesterday, I received news that the Daqin Elite Soldiers have surrounded the Han Capital. Perhaps we will receive good news very soon."

Just then, Zhao Gao hurried into the hall, bowing as he spoke. "Reporting to Your Majesty! The Eldest Imperial Son, the Chancellor, the Shaofu, the Tingwei, and other ministers request an audience outside the hall."

Ying Zheng said nothing, merely glancing at Dunruo, who took the hint. Bowing to Ying Zheng, he quickly headed towards the back of the hall.

Dunruo's very existence was a secret in Qin. Only Ying Zheng had ever seen his true face. No one else had, not even the close attendant Zhao Gao. The eunuch only knew that a mysterious man named Dunruo existed, but not what he did, as he was always dismissed whenever Dunruo came to report.

Once Dunruo had left, Ying Zheng looked at Zhao Gao and uttered a single word: "Announce!"

Zhao Gao bowed, turned, and called out to those outside the hall, "The Great King has decreed: Summon the ministers to the hall for an audience!"

At the summons, a group of Qin's most important ministers entered the hall, led by Fusu. Among them were Wang Wan, Li Si, Yu Liao, Meng Yi, Feng Quji, and Zheng Guo.

"We, your humble servants, pay homage to the Great King!" the ministers proclaimed in unison, bowing deeply to Ying Zheng as they entered.

"Rise." Ying Zheng waved his hand. His gaze fell directly on Yu Liao. "For all of you to arrive together, it must be for some joyous occasion."

"The Great King is wise," Yu Liao said. "Your servant has just received an urgent dispatch from the Senior General. Please review it, Great King."

Yu Liao immediately took an unopened military dispatch from his robes. Zhao Gao bowed, quickly stepped forward to receive it, and promptly presented it to Ying Zheng.

"You know it is good news without even opening it?" Ying Zheng asked, a faint smile playing on his lips as he looked at the sealed dispatch.

"If it were not a report of victory, why would the Senior General have sent it with such urgency?" Yu Liao replied with a confident smile.

Ying Zheng smiled slightly and broke the seal on the dispatch.

Upon reading the very first line, a look of delight spread across Ying Zheng's face.