

## Longevity 76

Chapter 76: Zhao Feng Again? Shocking the Court!

"I shall carry out the decree."

Zhao Gao immediately opened the military report, facing the court.

"Urgent military report from the Han territory! Your subject, Minister Wang Jian, presents this report! On the day the Han Capital fell, King Han An abandoned his officials and fled the city. General Li sealed off the entire capital to search for Han An. Fortunately, while guarding the Han Royal Palace treasury, Lantian Camp's Capital Commandant Zhao Feng discovered a secret passage. He led his troops into it and eventually found the tracks of King Han and the remnants of his army. Capital Commandant Zhao Feng fought bravely and captured the King of Han. The state of Han has been completely wiped out!"

As Zhao Gao's loud voice finished echoing through the hall, every Qin minister present wore an expression of astonishment. This was especially true for ministers like Wang Wan and Li Si. Having been in Zhangtai Palace the previous day, they already knew the Han Capital had been taken and by whom.

The ministers who had been in Zhangtai Palace the day before began to murmur amongst themselves.

"The one who captured the King of Han... it's Zhao Feng again?"

"Is his luck that heaven-defying? He found a secret passage just by guarding the royal palace treasury? And managed to capture the King of Han because of it?"

"This young man is truly unbelievable."

"The merit of breaching the city walls combined with the merit of capturing the king... his future is truly limitless."

"Just yesterday in Zhangtai Palace, the Great King already showed how highly he thinks of this Zhao Feng. Now that he's earned new merit, the Great King will value him even more."

Meanwhile, the other courtiers in the grand hall found the name Zhao Feng vaguely familiar.

"Zhao Feng... that name sounds very familiar, doesn't it?" one whispered.

"Isn't that the fellow from the Logistics Army who earned enough merit for the Great King to permit his transfer to a main combat unit?"

"If it's him, then this is another great achievement."

"The merit of capturing a king is not to be taken lightly."

As the courtiers recalled who Zhao Feng was, a murmur of amazement spread through the hall. It wasn't just the ministers, either. Even Ying Zheng, seated upon his throne, felt a flicker of surprise. He had anticipated the King of Han's capture, but he had never imagined who would be the one to do it.

Interesting. It's this Zhao Feng again. He truly is my lucky general.

A smile spread across Ying Zheng's face. While everyone was still processing the news, he let out a great laugh. "Bravo!" he cheered.

"The King of Han is captured! The state of Han is no more!" the ministers chanted in unison. "We, your subjects, congratulate the Great King!"

"Minister Yu," Ying Zheng said with a smile, turning his gaze toward Yu Liao. "It has been a day. How goes the tally of merits and rewards for the war against Han?"

"Replying to the Great King," Yu Liao announced loudly, "the Shaofu has nearly finished the tally. It will be fully completed today and submitted for Your Majesty's review."

"Good." Ying Zheng nodded, surveying the entire court.

"The state of Han is no more," he declared. "From this day forward, the land of Han will cease to exist. In its place, a commandery will be established to govern it, named Yingchuan County.

"I have already appointed Meng Yi as the first Prefectural Governor of Yingchuan County. Do any of you ministers object?"

Many of the ministers in the court were already aware of this, so naturally, there were no objections.

"We support the decree," the civil and military officials chorused in unison.

"Very well." Ying Zheng nodded and waved a hand. At his side, Zhao Gao immediately retrieved a royal edict from the desk. Holding it high, he walked into the main hall and announced, "Meng Yi, receive the edict!"

"Your servant, Meng Yi, receives the edict!" Meng Yi declared, stepping forward. Zhao Gao approached and presented the royal edict, which Meng Yi accepted with reverence.

"Minister Meng," Ying Zheng said, his gaze fixed on him. "I trust in your capabilities. The governance of Yingchuan County is entirely in your hands.

"I grant you full authority over its affairs and the power to coordinate with the military.

"I give you two years to ensure the people of Yingchuan completely submit to Qin and to bring the territory firmly under our control."

"Your servant will not disappoint the Great King!" Meng Yi replied loudly, filled with confidence.

"Minister Yu," Ying Zheng said, turning back to Yu Liao. "Now, as for Zhao Feng's merits, how should he be rewarded?"

"Since Minister Meng is heading to Yingchuan to take up his post, he can deliver the royal edict for Zhao Feng's enfeoffment, along with the edicts for all the other meritorious soldiers."

"Replying to the Great King," Yu Liao responded immediately. "Based on his merits, Zhao Feng may be promoted two ranks in office and four levels in nobility."

"Zhao Feng is currently a Capital Commandant. A promotion of two ranks would make him a Deputy General, commanding fifty thousand troops. An advancement of four levels in nobility would make him a Left Metropolitan," Ying Zheng noted, then added with a slight smile, "And if I recall correctly, he hasn't even been enlisted for a year."

"Replying to the Great King," Yu Liao said with a smile, "I have checked Zhao Feng's enlistment records. He is half a month short of ten months of service."

At these words, the entire court of civil and military officials was once again thrown into a state of shock. The ministers erupted into discussion, unable to hide their amazement.

"Is this a joke?"

"Enlisted for less than ten months? He's gone from a commoner to a Deputy General commanding fifty thousand troops? And his noble rank is now Left Metropolitan?"

"Left Metropolitan! That is a truly high noble rank! Upon reaching this rank, one receives an annual salary of five hundred dan of grain, and his descendants can inherit his title and land. This is a meteoric rise!"

"A Left Metropolitan can be granted five hundred mu of land. That's a tremendous fortune!"

The court buzzed with discussion, the ministers unable to contain their astonishment. The fact that Zhao Feng had achieved all this in less than ten months was particularly shocking. If word of this spread throughout the lands, countless people would likely refuse to believe it.

Seeing the lively discussions and the growing clamor in the hall, Ying Zheng showed no sign of anger. On the contrary, a smile graced his lips.

"My lords," Ying Zheng's voice boomed over the court.

"This is the system of military merit of my Great Qin!

"In all the lands under heaven, what other nation can elevate a commoner to such a position of power in a single leap?"

"What other nation allows those from the lowest rungs of society to leap over the Dragon Gate?"

"It is precisely because of this that every one of my Qin's elite soldiers has the chance to reach the highest echelons of the court! Everything depends entirely on the merit they earn in battle!"

"In all the world, only my Great Qin can do this!"

As his voice fell, every civil and military official in the court stood in solemn reverence, looking up at Ying Zheng on his high throne with expressions of pure awe.

"Long live the Great King! Ten thousand years!"

"Only our Great Qin will unify the world!"

"Long live the Great King..."

The resounding cheers echoed throughout the great hall.

"Draft the edict," Ying Zheng announced to the full court, his face a mask of authority.

"Capital Commandant Zhao Feng, for breaching the Han Capital and capturing the King of Han, has achieved merit of the highest order.

"In accordance with the military merit system of our Great Qin, he shall be rewarded thus:

"Promote Zhao Feng two ranks in office to the position of Deputy General, with command over fifty thousand troops and authority over five Wanjiang.

"Elevate Zhao Feng's noble rank by four levels to that of Left Metropolitan, with an annual salary of five hundred dan of grain.

"In accordance with his noble rank, grant him five hundred mu of land in his home county, with an exemption from the land tax for two years.

"Furthermore, all of his past unpaid annual salaries shall be paid out at the full rate of a Left Metropolitan."

This decree made evident the special regard Ying Zheng held for Zhao Feng. An exemption from land tax for two years was an unprecedented token of grace. Moreover, the decision to pay all of his back pay at the rate of a Left Metropolitan was equally astounding. Since Zhao Feng's enlistment, Qin had been at war, so his salary had never been issued. For the entire accumulated sum to be paid out at this new, high rate was an unparalleled reward. It clearly showed the depths of the Great King's pleasure