

## Rise 253

### Chapter 253: First Encounter with Yang Jisheng

"Hey, that young man on horseback, if you don't mind, you can stay with me."

Just as Zhu Ping'an was about to mount his horse and find an inn to stay at, he suddenly heard a deep, hoarse voice coming from behind.

In the station, which was filled with sarcasm and rolling eyes, this voice sounded very out of place.

Curious, Zhu Ping'an pulled the reins of his horse and turned around, looking in the direction of the voice towards the station.

The speaker was a man around 1.75 meters tall, with a square face, in his thirties, dressed simply but exuding an air of righteousness. Standing there, he seemed like a sword freshly drawn from its sheath.

Although this man was dressed modestly, the station staff treated him with great respect, or perhaps more accurately, with flattery and servility.

As a result, Zhu Ping'an became somewhat curious about this man.

"Such a request is a blessing. It's like meeting rain after a long drought; I can't thank you enough," Zhu Ping'an said as he dismounted and, from a distance, cupped his hands in a bow, smiling and expressing his gratitude loudly.

"Hehehe, you young man are interesting. My room is quite spacious," the man laughed, then turned to the station staff standing beside him and asked with a confirming tone, "Is there any violation of rules with what I am doing? Should I report this to the station manager?"

Upon hearing the man's question, the station staff, with smiles full of flattery, shook their heads repeatedly, saying, "No, there's no violation of any rules. This is a trivial matter; there's no need to trouble the station manager. Lord Yang is truly kind-hearted."

The man seemed completely indifferent to the station staff's flattery, showing no interest in responding, and didn't even glance at them again.

"Thank you so much, sir," Zhu Ping'an said, leading his horse to stand beside the man and bowing in gratitude once more.

"It's just a small favor," the man casually waved his hand.

After a few more words, following the station staff's instructions, Zhu Ping'an placed his horse in the stable, then, with his bundle on his back, followed the man to his room.

This station was far better than any Zhu Ping'an had stayed at before. The buildings were much cleaner and more spacious, even surpassing most inns in quality. The man's room was one of the best in the station—an apartment with two rooms, the outer one slightly smaller, and the inner one being a spacious master bedroom.

"Rest here," the man said, leading Zhu Ping'an into the outer room. "I can't possibly occupy two rooms by myself."

Zhu Ping'an bowed and thanked him.

The man's clothes were not much better than his own—quite plain, so it seemed that the man's family wasn't particularly wealthy. It was probably because he noticed Zhu Ping'an's simple attire that he had taken pity on him and called him over.

What puzzled Zhu Ping'an was the man's position; judging by the way the station staff fawned over him, he must hold a significant position.

"Thank you very much, sir. I am Zhu Ping'an, from Anqing Prefecture. May I ask your esteemed name? I would like to express my gratitude in the future," Zhu Ping'an said, placing his belongings in the outer room, then bowing once again.

"There's no need for thanks. After all, I can't stay in two rooms by myself. I see you are a young scholar. Your future is limitless. The staff here are experts at flattering the powerful and oppressing the weak, so don't take it to heart. My surname is Yang, courtesy name Zhongfang. There's no need to address me as 'sir' or 'lord'—

you are younger than me, so just call me Brother Yang," the man said, smiling as he shook his head, patted Zhu Ping'an on the shoulder, and pointed at himself.

Yang Zhongfang?

Upon hearing the name "Yang Zhongfang," Zhu Ping'an's body trembled as if struck by lightning. Was this the Yang Zhongfang from the Ming Dynasty during the Jiajing era? Could it be the renowned "strongest man in the Ming Dynasty," Yang Jisheng?

As for why Yang Jisheng was known as the strongest man in the Ming Dynasty, there was good reason for it. The Ming Dynasty's censors were famous for caring more about reputation than life itself, daring to criticize everyone from the emperor to the officials. Yang Jisheng and Yang Lian were representative figures of these bold censors, and Yang Jisheng, although not an official censor, often carried out their duties, so it wouldn't be wrong to include him among their ranks.

Yang Jisheng came from a farming family. He had tended cattle in his childhood and only started studying at the age of thirteen. However, by his twenties, he passed the provincial examination to become a juren, and at thirty-one, he passed the imperial examination to become a jinshi, graduating in the same year as Zhang Juzheng. He had no money, no power, but he had his life and was brave enough to risk it.

This man had impeached the most powerful military figure in the country and also the most powerful political figure.

Impeaching such tough characters could never win him any goodwill. I won't go into too much detail, but this man was imprisoned multiple times because of his impeachments. On one occasion, before being thrown into prison, he was beaten with over a hundred lashes, his skin torn open, and his flesh rotted. In prison, he broke a bowl and used the shards to cut off the rotten flesh, remaining unfazed. It is said that even the prison guards watching this were so terrified they fainted. A colleague once offered him a snake gallbladder for pain relief, but he not only refused it but also said, "I have my own gallbladder, why would I need a snake's?"

Therefore, this man was undoubtedly the most formidable person of the Ming Dynasty.

If it was Yang Jisheng, this time, he should have been promoted three ranks after being imprisoned by the military prison for impeaching the army. He was recommended by the influential official Yan Song to take up a post in the capital, becoming a deputy in the Ministry of War. This also explains why the people at the relay station were so deferential and fawning over him - after all, he was recommended by the prime minister, Yan Song. Of course, Yan Song would soon regret this...

What a rare stroke of luck it was to meet the real person. Zhu Ping'an looked at Yang Jisheng, his breath quickening. Thinking about such a righteous person ending up in such a situation made one feel deeply angry.

He had to do everything in his power to prevent such a tragedy from happening.

"Brother Zhu, is there something wrong?" Yang Jisheng noticed that Zhu Ping'an was staring at him with wide eyes and asked in confusion.

"No, nothing," Zhu Ping'an smiled and shook his head.

"Oh." Yang Jisheng nodded and then said to Zhu Ping'an, "I see that Brother Zhu seems to have traveled a long way. You must be tired from your journey. If you turn left after leaving, you'll find the kitchen of the relay station. Use my name and have a simple meal. After eating, you can rest early. I still have some important matters to attend to, so I must excuse myself."

Zhu Ping'an cupped his hands in salute as he watched Yang Jisheng enter the inner room. Following Yang Jisheng's directions, he went to the kitchen, ignoring the curious looks of the relay station staff. He ordered two steamed buns and a bowl of plain porridge with some side dishes and slowly began to eat.

By the time he finished dinner, the sun had set. Zhu Ping'an returned to his room, and the room where Yang Jisheng was staying had already been lit with an oil lamp. Zhu Ping'an tidied up his bedding a little, then lit his own oil lamp and began reading by its light.

The night was quiet, with a faint moonlight. The entire relay station was covered in darkness, with only the two rooms where Zhu Ping'an and Yang Jisheng were staying still lit, the dim candlelight casting long, swaying shadows, adding to the eerie silence.

Around the time of the midnight hour, Zhu Ping'an finally closed his book, blew out the oil lamp, and fell into a deep sleep.