

Rise 254

Chapter 254: The Second Generation of the Ming Dynasty

This day is the third of February.

It is early in the morning, just as dawn is breaking. Most people are still asleep, and the inn is very quiet. Outside, a strong wind is blowing, making it feel very cold.

Zhu Ping'an packed his belongings, bid farewell to Yang Jisheng, and continued on his journey to Beijing. Yang Jisheng still had to wait for a friend here before heading to the capital, so Zhu Ping'an left first.

Tianjin is not far from the capital, and Zhu Ping'an rode his horse without resting. By around 2 p.m., he arrived in the capital.

The capital, which is modern-day Beijing, is the heart of the Ming Dynasty, the most important and vital part of the empire. All the blood and resources of the entire Ming Dynasty are directed here. Because it is the heart of the empire, the protection here is also the most stringent. The heavy city gates, tall city walls, towering watchtowers, tightly sealed inner city, prominent corner towers, and soldiers in full armor patrolling make this city heavily fortified. Just the moat outside the capital is no less than fifty meters wide, which Zhu Ping'an could see.

Before this city, the greatest city in the world, even the heavens and the earth seemed insignificant.

In the Ming Dynasty, it was Zhu Ping'an's first time in the capital. But if considering his past life, Zhu Ping'an had already visited Beijing many times. Of course, the Beijing of that time was very different from the Beijing of today. Back then, the Beijing city he saw probably only had a few preserved gates, such as the Dongbianmen and Zhengyangmen. Most of the other city gates, especially the city walls, were not visible. Unlike today, where not only the gates and city walls are visible, but even the corner towers and arrow towers can be seen clearly.

At the gates of Beijing, there is a bustling scene, with pedestrians and vehicles flowing in and out like a tide.

Indeed, under the emperor's feet, the grandeur is exceptional.

Zhu Ping'an followed the crowd to the city gate to undergo a check. When it was his turn, he took out his civil servant certificate and showed it to the guards. In this dynasty, the status of a civil servant was a pass that saved time, effort, and money and was envied by many.

This had never failed him before.

However, this time, it didn't seem to have the same effect. The city guards verified Zhu Ping'an's civil servant status, but their faces showed no extra expression. They had seen many distinguished officials and nobles at the city gates; a mere civil servant wasn't enough to earn their attention.

"Five coins," the guard handed back Zhu Ping'an's certificate and extended his hand with a blank expression.

"What?"

Zhu Ping'an was somewhat incredulous. Why are they still asking me for a fee? Although he didn't have the mindset of a privileged class, he had gotten used to the conveniences that came with being a civil servant. After showing his certificate, it was surprising that the guards still asked him for a fee.

"You don't need to pay anything. But your horse must pay to enter." The guard looked at Zhu Ping'an expressionlessly, showing no respect for his civil servant status.

What kind of logic is this?

"This is the rule in our capital. You look like you're from out of town. If you want to enter, you have to pay. If you don't, don't bother trying to enter," the guard said, looking sideways at Zhu Ping'an, extending his hand and urging.

Seeing the many people waiting behind him to enter, Zhu Ping'an didn't want to delay everyone's time over this five coins. Since the guard dared to ask for money so openly, he must have some backing. As a newcomer, it was better not to cause trouble.

So, Zhu Ping'an reached into his sleeve and pulled out five coins, just as he was about to hand them over when he heard a commotion behind him, accompanied by the crying of a child.

Turning around, Zhu Ping'an saw a group of young men wearing fur coats and jeweled hats riding horses, laughing and racing each other through the crowd. Instead of slowing down, they accelerated, weaving through people, laughing and galloping toward the city gate.

People waiting in line to enter the city saw this group of young riders in fur coats and jeweled hats, and they quickly stepped aside. Some, like the crying child, weren't quick enough to avoid them and were knocked to the ground by the horses.

The child's family merely held the child in their arms, showing no intention of pursuing any accountability with the perpetrator. The child had been knocked down, but the injury was only superficial, so the family, with the intention of avoiding further conflict, chose not to make a fuss. For these common folk, those young riders were not someone they could afford to provoke.

"If you don't want to die, get out of the way quickly."

The last of the group of young men in fine hats and mink furs was a plump boy, even fatter than Xue Chi, riding a tall black steed. This horse was much larger and stronger than the Shamat black horse that Zhu Ping'an was leading, but despite its strength, it couldn't handle carrying such a heavy rider, so it walked at the back.

This plump boy was irritated about being the last one and waved his whip, trying to scare off those blocking his path. He hurriedly spurred his horse forward, his chubby face drenched in sweat.

"Hahaha, Fatty Zhou, wait until it's your turn to treat us. Giddy up!"

"Fatty Zhou, today we're going to Lan Yue Tower, time to bleed you dry."

"Hehehe, stop bragging about your Persian war horse, now you won't say anything, right? Don't deal with us like last time, we'll pick out our own rouge horses tonight."

A group of young men in fine hats and mink furs laughed as they galloped toward the city gate. Along the way, countless people waiting in line to enter the city were affected.

If this were in modern times, they'd be a group of rich second-generation troublemakers—whenever something goes wrong, they'd be underage, good students, award winners, or unable to control their passion. In ancient times, none of this mattered, and there was no need to worry about taking responsibility.

"What are you still standing there for? Hurry up and get out of the way!" The soldiers guarding the city gate saw that Zhu Ping'an was still standing at the gate and anxiously shouted, quickly pulling him towards the wall. It wasn't that they were worried that Zhu Ping'an might get run over by these second-generation rich kids, but that they feared Zhu Ping'an would block their way, angering them.

The young men on horseback paid no attention to the guards and galloped past the city gate as though it was their own front door. The guards, for their part, took it as completely natural.

"Dammit, He Lao Liu, it's all your fault for blocking the city gate so tightly. Now I've lost again!"

The last plump boy passed the city gate, twisted his chubby face, and spat at the guards, cursing as he rode past.

"You're right, my apologies, Young Master Zhou," the guard said, not even wiping the spit off his face. He bowed deeply, repeatedly apologizing to the boy's retreating figure. Only after the group of young men had gone far did the guard wipe the spit off his face.

"Are you going in or not?" The guard, having wiped his face, turned around and asked Zhu Ping'an, clearly showing some irritation.

There was a stark contrast between the politeness and the dismissive attitude.

"Yes," Zhu Pingan replied with a slight smile, placing five copper coins in the guard's hand before leading the Shamat black horse into the city.