

## Rise 286

### Chapter 286: The Family of Li Shu

From Li Shu's surprised reaction, Zhu Ping'an knew that he had guessed correctly.

"Hehe, I also know that the Yongle Emperor was very fond of your great-great-grandfather."

Facing Li Shu's astonishment, Zhu Ping'an once again curled his lips slightly and added. How could he not be fond of him? This was the man who "helped" the Yongle Emperor ascend to the throne.

Li Shu's great-great-great-grandfather was Zhu Yuanzhang's brother-in-law. He had married Zhu Yuanzhang's second older sister in his early years. When Zhu Yuanzhang was young, his relatives were generally poor, but only Li Zhen's family could afford to eat their fill and often gave aid to Zhu Yuanzhang. So after Zhu Yuanzhang became emperor, among all his relatives, he gave special treatment to Li Zhen's family. Not only did he grant Li Zhen the privilege of "exemption from regular court attendance and being addressed by title rather than name," but he also allowed him to wear a five-clawed golden dragon robe. Li Zhen was the only peer relative still alive after Zhu Yuanzhang became emperor.

Li Shu's great-grandfather was Li Wenzhong, son of Li Zhen and nephew of Emperor Taizu Zhu Yuanzhang. He was also one of Zhu Yuanzhang's renowned generals and strategists, the third most meritorious founding contributor of the Ming Dynasty. When Li Wenzhong was twelve, his mother, Princess of the State of Cao, passed away. His father, Li Zhen, took him through war-torn lands, often brushing with death. Two years later, they met Zhu Yuanzhang again in Chuzhou. Zhu Yuanzhang, upon seeing Li Wenzhong, was very fond of him and adopted him as a foster son, giving him the surname Zhu. Li Wenzhong was brave and skilled in battle, earned many military merits, and was granted the title Duke of Cao. After his death, he was posthumously honored as King of Qiyang.

At that time, the Li family could be described as “resplendent in attire and honor across three generations, blessed abundantly as a whole household—no family living on state stipends could surpass ours.”

As the saying goes, “A tiger father does not beget a dog son,” but that didn’t apply to Duke of Cao, Li Wenzhong. His son, Li Jinglong—Li Shu’s great-great-grandfather—was historically famous as a “War God” general.

The name sounded grand, but his capabilities were inversely proportional to the grandeur of his name. He was practically an upgraded and enhanced version of Zhao Kuo—Zhao Kuo 2.0. Li Jinglong especially loved reading military books, memorized them even better than Zhao Kuo, and often recited them backward. He was a boastful man, fond of social gatherings and drinking, and thus quite well known among the nobility of the time.

Of course, Li Jinglong made his name during the Jingnan Campaign. The Jingnan Campaign was a civil war within the Ming royal family over succession, and the most dazzling figure who influenced this war was none other than the “War God” Li Jinglong.

When Zhu Di’s campaign faltered and his subordinates were ready to pack up and return home—just as the Jingnan Campaign seemed doomed to fail—who stepped forward? That’s right, it was him, our “War God” Li Jinglong. Gallant and dashing, in a moment of jest, he turned Emperor Jianwen’s million-strong army into dust.

When Zhu Di reached the gates of Nanjing and was at a loss, staring helplessly at the towering city walls, who stepped forward again? It was him, him, and still him—our “hero” Li Jinglong.

General Li, the “War God,” could almost be considered the number one contributor in the Jingnan Campaign. How could our Yongle Emperor not like him?

However, the only issue was... our comrade Li Jinglong was a general under Emperor Jianwen Zhu Yunwen. He wasn't on the same side as Zhu Di.

When Zhu Ping'an said that the Yongle Emperor was fond of Li Shu's great-grandfather, the corner of his lips curved slightly. Li Shu wasn't blind—she saw that little smile clearly and understood very well what Zhu Ping'an was thinking.

“You think reading a few history books means you know the truth of history?”

Li Shu wasn't the least bit angry at Zhu Ping'an's sarcasm. She twirled a strand of her hair with her delicate fingers and gently asked.

“So, I was wrong?” Zhu Ping'an leaned against the carriage wall and replied leisurely.

“No, you're quite right. The Yongle Emperor really did like my great-grandfather. But not in the way you were smirking about—he genuinely liked him. The Emperor was a few years older than my great-grandfather, and they were related. They grew up together, childhood friends with a deep bond. They once trained soldiers together in the provinces. Later, when the Emperor was assigned to guard the Yan region, they exchanged letters frequently and kept close contact.”

Li Shu played with her hair with her delicate fingers. Her large watery eyes gazed at Zhu Ping'an, shining with a gleam, and her cherry lips curled into a gentle smile.

Hearing her words, Zhu Ping'an was slightly stunned. He hadn't expected that Zhu Di and Li Jinglong had grown up together. But it wasn't impossible—after all, Li Jinglong's father was Zhu Yuanzhang's adopted son, which made Zhu Di and Li Jinglong relatively close in status. Their ages weren't far apart either. When Zhu Yuanzhang and Li Wenzhong went off to war, it was likely they left their children together in care. So being childhood friends wasn't out of the question.

"In the Jingnan Campaign, my great-grandfather led the attack on Beiping's Zhangyi Gate—why didn't he enter the city? In the Battle of Baigou River, the Emperor was nearly captured—how did he escape alone on horseback? My great-grandfather lost a 500,000-man army—why did Emperor Jianwen still trust him enough to give him another 600,000? As a defeated general, why was he, after the Emperor's enthronement, granted titles like 'Supporter of Heaven and Executor of Sincere Service,' 'Grand Master of Glorious Emolument,' and 'Left Pillar of the State'? Why was he placed above other meritorious officials in the Emperor's administration and often consulted for major court decisions? If Emperor Jianwen misjudged people, did the Yongle Emperor misjudge as well?"

"Do you think a useless general could achieve all that?"

"History books are written by the victors—that's not quite precise. More accurately, they're written by victorious rulers."

"The Yongle Emperor, who seized the throne through the Jingnan Campaign, needed a strawman general to highlight his own achievements, to shock the world, and stabilize his rule. He didn't need a general who had endured humiliation and shouldered great burdens, a true 'War God,' who might dilute his glory and legacy."

Li Shu's voice was soft, but to Zhu Ping'an, it rang loud and clear.

As Zhu Ping'an pondered over her words, weighing their truth, a fair and beautiful face suddenly appeared in front of him. Her brows and eyes were filled with laughter, and her large watery eyes seemed to glisten with mischief. A playful smile danced on her lips.

"Giggle... Silly toad, you actually believed it? Giggle..."

Li Shu narrowed her watery eyes at Zhu Ping'an, laughing like a playful little fox.

"My great-grandfather was stripped of his Duke of Cao title, then had it reinstated, and later it was downgraded. Right now, our family holds the hereditary Marquis title of Linhuai."

After laughing, Li Shu continued to introduce her family situation to Zhu Ping'an, simply summarizing the changes in their noble title.

Duke, marquis, count, viscount, and baron—being a marquis was already a very high rank. Among the noble descendants, it was still considered top-tier. There weren't many current dukes in the Ming dynasty. Aside from Xu Da's descendants who still held the title of Duke of Wei, and Chang Yuchun's descendants who held the title of Duke of the Founding Nation, only Jingnan Campaign merit-holders like Zhu Neng still held the title of Duke of Cheng. Most founding contributors from Zhu Yuanzhang's era, like Tang He, had their titles

downgraded. A marquis, especially a hereditary one, still meant Li Shu's family was a prominent noble house in the capital.

"The current Marquis of Linhuai is my uncle, but the one who runs the household is my grandmother. I have quite a few uncles, and lots of brothers and sisters. Oh—we're almost home. I'll tell you more later."

As Li Shu spoke, she heard movement outside. She reached out her delicate hand to lift the curtain and glanced out. Then she let it drop and gave Zhu Ping'an a concluding remark, followed by a warning.

"People in the marquis' household aren't easy to deal with. You better be careful."