

Es. Benefits 101

Chapter 101: Wu Yuan: I've Been Discovered? _1

Xiao Pengthian's suggested method of avoiding marriage to the North Fre King did seem to have some feasibility to Xiao Wenyao.

However, there was a significant problem.

That was the fact she had grown up on the grasslands and had never been to Great Sum, nor had she lived there. If she went to Great Sum alone, how would she survive?

Although she wasn't a weak woman—her realm had reached the sixth rank, giving her a certain ability to protect herself...

...she was after all a person of the Barbarian Tribe, with significant differences from the people of Great Sum.

It was possible that upon her arrival in Great Sum, she would be quickly recognized as part of the Barbarian Tribe.

At that time, living in Great Sum might not be so easy.

Seeing that Xiao Wenyao had not spoken, Xiao Pengthian continued, "Once you get to North City, entering Great Sum will be much easier. Then, you can escape to Great Sum with Wu Yuan's merchant caravan."

"But once you're in Great Sum, you'll need to change your behavior and tone of speech. You must not let anyone recognize that you come from the grasslands; otherwise, they will treat you as a spy of the Barbarian Tribe."

Xiao Pengthian was also worried that Xiao Wenyao might not survive after going to Great Sum.

Although Xiao Wenyao had lived on the grasslands since childhood, her life wasn't much inferior to those daughters of noble families in Great Sum.

Moreover, she had plenty of slaves to do everything for her.

Once she got to Great Sum, she certainly wouldn't have it as good as she did now.

Not only would she not have such treatment, but she would also have to be constantly on guard for Great Sum people discovering her identity. Perhaps after going to Great Sum, she would need to dodge and hide here and there.

Of course, if she was set on not marrying the North Fre King, then fleeing to Great Sum was her only option.

Now it was up to Xiao Wenyao to make her own choice.

At this moment, Xiao Pengthian looked at Xiao Wenyao and asked, "Yaoyao, you have about a month to think this over. If you have made up your mind, you can tell me, and I will find a way to arrange it for you."

"But you must think it over carefully. Once you choose to go to Great Sum, there's no turning back."

Xiao Pengthian knew in his heart that if he helped Xiao Wenyao escape to Great Sum, he would be taking a huge risk.

If Xiao Hongbo found out about it, he could be punished, or he might even be killed.

After all, Xiao Hongbo would have to explain things to the North Fre King at that point.

But Xiao Pengthian did not want to see his niece married off to a decrepit old man. He knew what kind of man the North Fre King was. If Xiao Wenyao married the North Fre King, she might as well be living a life worse than death.

After hearing Xiao Pengthian's words, Xiao Wenyao bit down on her silver teeth and then said, "Uncle, I don't need a month. I've decided—I want to go to Great Sum. It's better for me to die than to marry the North Fre King!"

Determination shone in Xiao Wenyao's eyes. Though she didn't know what difficulties she would face in Great Sum, she believed that no matter how many hardships, they'd be better than marrying that filthy old man who never bathed and was a cannibal.

Hearing Xiao Wenyao's words, Xiao Pengthian sighed again and said, "Alright, I will find a way to arrange it, and have someone take you to Great Sum."

Xiao Wenyao did not ask Xiao Pengthian how he would manage to get her to Great Sum. She believed in her uncle's capabilities; after all, he was a general of the Barbarian Tribe. He could certainly handle this.

An hour later.

Wu Yuan's caravan was unloading cargo when Xiao Pengthian appeared behind Wu Yuan.

"Wu Yuan, come with me for a moment. I have something to discuss with you."

Upon hearing someone call his name, Wu Yuan stopped what he was doing and turned around.

Realizing the person seeking him was Xiao Pengthian, Wu Yuan felt puzzled; what did Xiao Pengthian want with him? They didn't seem to have any connection, did they?

Wu Yuan then asked, "General Xiao, what do you want to see me for?"

Xiao Pengthian glanced at the people unloading cargo, then said, "This isn't the place to talk. Let's go somewhere else."

As his voice fell, Xiao Pengthian turned and walked toward a high slope on the grasslands.

Driven by curiosity, Wu Yuan hurriedly followed.

Soon they reached the top of the slope, and seeing that there was no one around, Wu Yuan asked again, "General Xiao, do you perhaps have some goods you need me to transport for you?"

At that moment, Xiao Pengthian turned his head to look at Wu Yuan and said coldly, "Wu Yuan, I've discovered your activities."

Upon hearing this abrupt statement from Xiao Pengthian, Wu Yuan's heart skipped a beat.

However, his face showed no change.

Wu Yuan couldn't help but think, could it be that Xiao Pengthian had discovered his involvement in passing intelligence to the North Prince Mansion?

If that was the case, then shouldn't Xiao Pengthian simply kill him on the spot, instead of bringing him here?

Wu Yuan, with his expression unchanged, replied, "General Xiao, what are you referring to?"

Xiao Pengthian let out a cold laugh and then said, "So calm? It seems you really believe your actions were foolproof."

Wu Yuan continued, "General Xiao, I don't understand what you're talking about."

Xiao Pengthian cut to the chase, "Wu Yuan, you don't think that the silver you've been hiding has gone unnoticed, do you?"

At these words, Wu Yuan furrowed his brows.

Hiding silver?

He wasn't hiding silver; when he passed intelligence, he usually placed the information inside a box filled with silver and then buried the box in a predetermined spot, waiting for his contacts to retrieve it.

If Xiao Pengthian discovered the hidden silver, it's very likely he discovered the espionage as well.

Of course, it's possible that Xiao Pengthian only found the box and not the intelligence within, since the box containing the intelligence had a secret compartment.

The reason he put silver in the box was to ensure that those who stumbled upon the box by accident would focus on the silver and overlook the secret compartment within.

To gauge how much Xiao Pengthian knew, Wu Yuan suddenly changed expression, appearing shocked and disbelieving, "How... how did you find out..."

Seeing Wu Yuan's drastic change in expression and his body trembling, Xiao Pengthian huffed and said, "The night before last, while I was on patrol, I caught you sneaking out of the Prince's Mansion with a box, and you buried it here under the slope."

"I was curious about the contents of the box, and when I opened it, it was filled with shiny silver."

"It seems that the silver the Princess Consort gave you for the merchant convoy has been significantly pocketed by you!"

Wu Yuan fell to his knees with a thud and hastily said, "General Xiao, please don't tell the Princess Consort about this. I am willing to hand over all the silver I've embezzled to honor you!"

Seeing that he had intimidated Wu Yuan, Xiao Pengthian indifferently said, “I don’t need your silver, just do one thing for me. Not only will I keep your embezzlement of silver a secret from the Princess Consort, but I will also return the box of silver I found to you.”

Wu Yuan quickly said, “General Xiao, what do you need done? As long as you don’t disclose my embezzlement to the Princess Consort, I am willing to do anything.”

Xiao Pengthian instructed, “I need you to take someone to Great Sum in a month’s time. If you handle this matter well, I’ll give you a hundred thousand taels of silver.”

Xiao Pengthian surely didn’t have a hundred thousand taels at the moment, but that might change after conquering North City. However, he had no intention of really giving Wu Yuan a hundred thousand taels, as such affairs often necessitated silencing witnesses post-success.

Curiously, Wu Yuan inquired, “Who is this person?”

Xiao Pengthian said, “You’ll find out in a month.”

Wu Yuan immediately responded, “I will make sure your task is accomplished, General.”

Xiao Pengthian glanced at Wu Yuan, still kneeling on the ground, and declared, “Your silver is still buried beneath the slope; I didn’t touch it.”

“They say you Great Sum people are greedy for money, and now I’ve seen it for myself.”

Just as Wu Yuan was about to speak, Xiao Pengthian turned and began walking down the slope, saying over his shoulder, “Try to be less greedy in the future.”

Eagerly, Wu Yuan said, “Yes, yes, I will definitely mend my ways.”

Once Xiao Pengthian had left, Wu Yuan immediately went to the spot where he had buried the silver and opened the box to check.

Fortunately, the encrypted letter was still there, and the secret compartment hadn't been tampered with—the multiple seals on the confidential letter were intact. Wu Yuan sighed with relief and thought to himself that he couldn't use this method to pass intelligence anymore..

Chapter 102: The Barbarian Tribe is Coming? _1

The atmosphere in North City became increasingly oppressive as the dark clouds of war hung over its skies.

After the North Prince Mansion issued the notice of “clearing the countryside and strengthening the walls”, the people of Great Xia gained a new understanding of the North Prince.

Nobody had expected the North Prince to actually consider leading thirty thousand soldiers to a decisive death battle against the three hundred thousand cavalry of the Barbarian Tribe in Yan County.

The North Prince, once considered uneducated, lecherous, and incompetent, suddenly stood up, a fact that astonished the people of Great Xia, especially those officials at court.

People could not help but wonder if the North Prince truly was prepared to fight to the death for North City.

That's three hundred thousand cavalry!

How could thirty thousand possibly hold them off?

Could it be that the uneducated, lecherous, and incompetent North Prince actually possessed great integrity?

Although he indulged in wine and pleasure, could he actually be a good Prince?

Meanwhile, the assassination of Prince Lu Shuyun was quickly overshadowed by the North Prince's declaration of life-and-death struggle, to the point where people seemed to think it no longer mattered who had attempted to assassinate the Prince.

What the people of Great Xia now wanted to know was whether the North Prince could hold off the Barbarian Tribe's army of three hundred thousand until the Imperial Army could send support from the north.

As for the struggle for succession in the Capital city, most commoners did not really care; it could be said that Lu Chen's announcement had drawn everyone's attention to North City, and particularly to him.

This was the first time since the founding of the Great Xia Dynasty that a Prince dared to lead thirty thousand soldiers into a decisive death battle with the Barbarian Tribe, and he was a Prince once deemed useless by the people.

This made Prince Lu Shuyun exceedingly angry, for the North Prince had attracted all the attention to North City, leaving almost no one concerned about his own plight.

His own mansion had been bloodbathed, yet people were indifferent; what was key was the Ministry of Criminal Justice had been investigating for so long and yet had found not a single clue about the assassins, as if they had vanished into thin air.

Rumors even circulated that the whole affair was a stunt he had performed himself, merely to draw the Sum Emperor's attention — a pure act of self-mutilation.

Upon hearing these rumors, Lu Shuyun was so furious he was nearly exploding; his own mansion had been bloodbathed, and even the Grandmaster sent by the Wang Family to protect him had been killed, yet there were those who claimed it was all an act of self-mutilation.

Who would kill their own Grandmaster in an act of self-mutilation? A single Grandmaster was worth thousands of Martial Artists; only someone with a sickness in the head would sacrifice a Grandmaster to put on such an act.

Great Xia Dynasty.

Qi Prince's territory.

An army in red armor was marching rapidly, drawing closer to Yan County.

Having been delayed by the provision of supplies in the Capital city for so long, Lin Xiuming finally led the Imperial Army's seventy thousand elite troops to head north to resist the Barbarian Tribe.

He had ordered his soldiers to march as quickly as possible, all to meet up with the North Prince before the Barbarian Tribe reached Yan County.

With their seventy thousand soldiers and the several tens of thousands from North City, they would have at least a hundred thousand soldiers.

Though they were no match for the Barbarian Tribe in open battle, they would have no problem defending a few key cities; as long as they held on, they could buy time for the armies of the various Seigniors from Great Xia to mobilize.

Especially the Qi Prince, who was closest to North City.

If the Qi Prince did not dispatch troops, then the Barbarian Tribe could directly enter his territory; thus, the Qi Prince was certain to be the first among the Seigniors to mobilize. With the Qi Prince's army, their chances of victory would be much greater.

Lin Xiuming, riding on horseback, saw the distant mountain peaks getting closer and knew they were not far from North City. He felt some concern; he did not know what the situation was like in North City at the moment.

Had the Barbarian Tribe already entered North City? Had the North Prince's soldiers held the cities? Had the North Prince been scared into fleeing? He was unclear of it all.

Since departing from the Capital city, they had received no intelligence from North City, and so he was worried.

If the North Prince had abandoned his people and fled south, and if the North Prince's soldiers had not held the cities, losing those key cities that were critical to stopping the southward advance of the Barbarian Tribe, then it was fantastical to think that their seventy thousand soldiers could still hold North City.

Especially Yan County.

X

Yan County lay below Wanning Valley, and it was highly likely that the Barbarian Cavalry would pass through Wanning Valley if they headed south.

If Yan County stood strong, they could defend it, preventing the Barbarians from heading south quickly, as taking a detour would require time.

Should Yan County be lost, the Barbarians would be able to push forward unopposed, directly entering the domain of the Qi Prince.

By that time, if Great Xia didn't assemble an army of hundreds of thousands, they simply wouldn't be able to drive the Barbarians out of North City.

As Lin Xiuming worried over the situation in North City, a mounted soldier arrived before him with a bamboo tube containing intelligence reports.

"General, intelligence from North City."

Upon hearing this, Lin Xiuming's mind went blank for a moment, and he snatched the bamboo tube from the soldier's hand, took out the intelligence reports, and read them carefully.

Seeing that the North Prince had withdrawn all defenses north of Yan County, Lin Xiuming's face instantly turned pale.

Had the North Prince lost his mind?

To withdraw all defenses north of Yan County, with no cities to buffer them, meant that the Barbarians' spearhead would be pointed directly at Yan County.

How could Yan County's mere garrison hold back the Barbarian's three – hundred – thousand – strong army!

That's not how you consolidate a defensive line.

The Barbarian Cavalry is much faster than their march, and if the Barbarians reached Yan County without any resistance...

I'm afraid by the time the Imperial Army arrives at Yan County, it won't be them defending the city, but the Barbarians.

At this moment, Lin Xiuming felt as though he already witnessed the defeat in the North Land and his own ensuing punishment.

Although he was the son of the Prime Minister, he couldn't shirk responsibility for the defeat in the battle, even if it wasn't his fault; the Sum Emperor would inevitably find someone to blame.

The North Prince was royalty, representing the royal family's dignity; surely, they couldn't make him take the blame.

In the end, the only one who could possibly be held responsible was himself, the General who led the troops north.

Lin Xiuming was seething with anger at this point, truly wishing he could punch the North Prince upon seeing him.

However, when Lin Xiuming saw in the intelligence that the North Prince was leading the soldiers of Yan County to fight a decisive battle to the death against the Barbarians, his resentment towards the North Prince vanished almost entirely in an instant.

He furrowed his brow, his gaze repeatedly scanning over the intelligence report before him.

A worthless Prince suddenly showing such determination was unbelievable to Lin Xiuming.

If the North Prince truly fought to the death, perhaps when they arrived at Yan County, there might still be hope for him.

If the North Prince's resolve faltered, shaking the army's morale, then his fate would be either death or capture by the Barbarians.

After a while, Lin Xiuming snapped back to reality and then exclaimed loudly, "Increase our march speed! We must meet with the North Prince before the Barbarians reach Yan County!"

North City.

Yan County, North Prince Mansion.

Lu Chen was in his study, seriously reviewing the intelligence reports sent by Wu Yuan regarding Yelv Nanyan and Xiao Wen Yao.

The intelligence on Yelv Nanyan was of utmost interest to Lu Chen; a woman who could achieve such a high status in the Sky Wolf King's tribe and have the Sky Wolf King heed her advice was clearly no ordinary woman.

Just then, a soldier's voice suddenly rang out at the door of the study, "Prince, there is terrible news!"

Hearing Mu Changtian's urgent voice, Lu Chen immediately responded, "Come in."

The soldier then pushed the door open and entered.. Before Lu Chen could even ask, the soldier voluntarily said, "Prince, a troop of Cavalry from Wanning Valley is quickly approaching Yan County! They are suspected to be the vanguard of the Barbarian Cavalry!"

Chapter 103: Black Cavalry i

Upon hearing the soldier's words, Lu Chen did not show much reaction.

At this time, Lu Chen asked the system in his mind, "System, are my fifty thousand Black Cavalry almost here?"

Counting the days, his Black Cavalry should have arrived, so Lu Chen did not believe that the cavalry mentioned by the soldier was the vanguard of the Barbarian Tribe.

"The host's fifty thousand Black Cavalry have arrived at Wanning Valley. To avoid misunderstanding with the Yan County garrison, the Black Cavalry have halted their advance. Please proceed to inspect them," responded the system.

After seeing the system's answer, Lu Chen thought to himself that they were indeed his Black Cavalry.

He then instructed the soldier, "Immediately transmit my command to all three armies, do not attack the cavalry at Wanning Valley. Wait for this prince's arrival before any further action."

Although the soldier did not understand why Lu Chen would issue such an order, he immediately complied.

When Lu Chen's order reached the ears of generals like Mu Changtian, they were all very puzzled.

They were already prepared for battle, and they had even rolled out the artillery camp's grenade cannons. But now the North Prince was asking them not to attack?

Mu Changtian, originally the Great General of Great Xia, was very familiar with the armor of the Great Xia army.

Mu Changtian knew that those cavalymen in Wanning Valley were not from Great Xia's forces, as Great Xia's cavalry did not wear such full-body black armor.

Not only were these cavalymen clad in black armor, but even their warhorses were covered in black armor.

Great Xia had never established a Heavy Cavalry force; it was highly likely that such heavy cavalry belonged to the Barbarian Tribe.

But since the North Prince had already ordered them not to attack, he must have had his own strategy. Thus, Mu Changtian and the others could only stay with their soldiers in Wanning Valley and did not initiate any attack.

To the surprise of Mu Changtian and the others, they did not initiate an attack, and neither did their adversaries. The cavalymen in black armor stopped on a flat area of Wanning Valley, seemingly waiting for something.

This led Mu Changtian and his men to suspect that the Barbarian Tribe's cavalry was waiting for a larger force to arrive, and that Lu Chen's order to hold their attack was actually to let the entire Barbarian cavalry force enter Wanning Valley.

Not long after, Lu Chen arrived on horseback before Mu Changtian and the others.

Upon seeing Lu Chen, all the generals immediately said, "We pay our respects to the Prince."

Lu Chen nodded slightly.

At that moment, Mu Changtian said, "Your Highness, that cavalry force must be the Barbarian Tribe's Heavy Cavalry. Shall we not attack them? If we let them charge through, I fear the consequences will be unimaginable."

The charge of Heavy Cavalry, after all, could not be withstood by the infantry of North City,

Hearing this, Lu Chen said with a smile, "General Mu, you worry too much."

“They are not the Barbarian Tribe’s cavalry, but my Black Cavalry.”

Upon these words, the generals present were stunned.

The North Prince’s Black Cavalry?

Since when did the North Prince have such a massive force of Heavy Cavalry?

Mu Changtian couldn’t help but think, wasn’t the North Prince still discussing the training of a cavalry force for North City with him during their first meeting? Yet the North Prince already possessed his cavalry force?

And it was not just any cavalry, but Heavy Cavalry.

Even from a distance, a rough estimate would suggest there were indeed fifty thousand Heavy Cavalry.

With North City being so impoverished and the North Prince not having been there for very long, how could he possibly have established a force of Heavy Cavalry?

To train a cavalry force takes several months at the very least, not to mention the time required to forge armor—producing so many sets of cavalry armor would be difficult to accomplish in less than a year.

Yet there stood the Heavy Cavalry right before everyone. If these cavalymen truly belonged to the North Prince, then it only meant one thing: the North Prince had already been clandestinely forming a force of Heavy Cavalry long before his arrival at North City.

Thinking this, the generals had an even greater admiration for Lu Chen’s foresight and were more convinced of what they believed to be the North Prince’s grander ambitions.

A prince without ambition wouldn't consistently act like a wastrel, all the while secretly training thousands of Brocade Guards and tens of thousands of Heavy Cavalrymen.

The key point was that the court apparently had not a single official aware of the North Prince's actions. If the court knew that the North Prince was secretly building a Heavy Cavalry, they would likely have already deemed him as plotting a rebellion.

Lu Chen ignored the shocked gazes of Mu Changtian and the others as he made his way directly towards the Black Cavalry.

Seeing this scene, Mu Changtian and the others couldn't help but grow tense. Although Lu Chen had already said that these were his own heavy cavalry, Mu Changtian and his men had never seen this army before, and they were still worried that the army might disadvantage Lu Chen.

At that moment, two burly men at the front of the Black Cavalry sped towards Lu Chen on horseback. As they approached him, the two sturdy men dismounted.

They bent halfway toward Lu Chen and saluted, saying, "General Wenren Lie and General Xuanyuan Chen pay their respects to Prince, long live the Prince for thousands and thousands of years!"

Seeing that the leaders of the Black Cavalry actually saluted Lu Chen, Mu Changtian and the others stood dumbfounded in their place.

Then they remembered that half a month ago, Lu Chen talked about giving them a surprise after half a month.

Could this be the surprise from the North Prince?

Originally, they thought that although they had the deadly weapon of the grenade cannon, once it was used, the Barbarian Tribe's cavalry would surely be thrown into chaos. If the Barbarian Tribe cavalry decided to flee at that point, the few soldiers of North City wouldn't be able to stop them.

But now things were different.

With fifty thousand heavy cavalry, if those barbarians wanted to escape, this heavy cavalry could directly emerge from behind Wanning Valley and cut off their retreat in an instant, preventing them from fleeing Wanning Valley.

Lu Chen glanced over the data of the two men.

[Name: Wenren Lie]

[Status: Great Yu Remnant, Black Cavalry Leader]

[Strength: Master Realm]

[Loyalty: 100]

[Name: Xuanyuan Chen]

[Status: Great Yu Remnant, Black Cavalry Leader]

[Strength: Grandmaster Realm]

[Loyalty: 100]

Lu Chen then dismounted and, lending a hand to Xuanyuan Chen and resting a hand on Wenren Lie's shoulder, said, "Generals, please rise. This Prince has been awaiting your arrival in Yan County for a long time."

At this moment, Mu Changtian and others came to stand behind Lu Chen.

When Mu Changtian felt the aura emanating from Xuanyuan Chen and Wenren Lie, he couldn't help but be surprised.

Two more Grandmasters!

Did the North Prince already have so many Grandmasters at his disposal?

Just the ones he knew of, including these two, there were already four Grandmasters, and at that time, Mu Changtian was unaware that there was actually another Grandmaster in the North Prince Mansion.

If Mu Changtian knew that even Lu Chen's concubine maid was a Grandmaster, he would be even more astonished.

The whole Great Sum had so few Grandmasters, and now, including Mu Changtian and Commander of the Brocade Guard Liang Zong who was still in the Capital city, North City already had six Grandmasters.

Some small countries might not even have that many Grandmasters.

Lu Chen then said with a smile, "With the help of the two Generals, the cavalry of the Barbarian Tribe will surely have a one-way trip."

"Let's return to the city. This Prince wants to personally give a feast to welcome and refresh the two Generals."

In order not to attract the attention of the city's residents and prevent news from leaking out prematurely, Lu Chen had the heavy cavalry stationed in a military camp outside the city which had been prepared in advance.

He then only brought Wenren Lie and Xuanyuan Chen along with a few other important generals into Yan County.

Of course, Lu Chen also provided good wine and meat to treat those Black Cavalrymen.

After all, they had come from afar, braving the wind and rain, and it was proper to treat them to a good meal and drink..

Chapter 104: The Barbarian Tribe Moves South

After Lu Chen hosted Xuanyuan Chen, Wenren Lie, and a group of generals at the Prince's Mansion, he inquired about matters concerning the Great Yu Remnants.

After the war, Lu Chen planned to relocate all Great Yu Remnants to North City, as the construction of North City required a vast population.

With just the current population of North City, there was not enough support for his plans to build the city.

Although there were only five hundred thousand Great Yu Remnants, their relocation to North City would be a significant boost to the population.

North City was vast with sparse population; many wilderness areas were still empty. It wouldn't be a problem to settle five hundred thousand people, even an additional three million could be accommodated.

At the welcome feast, listening to Lu Chen and the Black Cavalry generals discussing, Mu Changtian and the others finally understood why they knew nothing about Lu Chen training such a large cavalry force.

It turned out these Black Cavalry weren't even in North City but were stationed much further in North Land, a place that even had a population of five hundred thousand.

North Land was home to Barbarian Tribes, and Great Sum's army rarely ventured into North Land, so few knew that North Land actually harbored half a million Great Yu Remnants.

Mu Changtian and the others couldn't help but admire Lu Chen, who not only found these five hundred thousand Great Yu Remnants but also subdued these fifty thousand Black Cavalry.

Indeed, Lu Chen was blessed by the gods; the allegiance of the Great Yu Remnants further convinced Mu Changtian and the others that Lu Chen truly was the Son of Destiny.

Now the loyalty of these generals and soldiers, who were not summoned by the system, toward Lu Chen had basically reached 100. The North Prince's demonstrated strength and ambition genuinely made them see the possibility of unifying the world. They believed that by following the North Prince, one day they would become his honored subjects.

After the welcome banquet, Lu Chen immediately took the generals to his study and then began to plan the war against the Barbarian Tribes.

Several days later.

North City, Tianguang City.

A massive cavalry force surrounded Tianguang City. Mounted on his horse, Xiao Hongbo was spirited as he looked at the dilapidated city before him and proclaimed, "North City, I have arrived!"

"From now on, North City will be my land!"

If one could look from Tianguang City at that moment, just a short distance away, one would see a vast, endless sea of cavalry.

However, it was a pity that Tianguang City was now deserted, and no one could behold this magnificent scene.

Tianguang City was the closest city to North Land in North City, making it the first target for the Barbarian Tribe's assault.

Currently, Xiao Hongbo's three hundred thousand strong army had not split up and was all outside of Tianguang City.

Xiao Hongbo did not believe Tianguang City could withstand the iron cavalry of the Barbarian Tribe. He directly told the soldiers beside him, "Immediately call out to the Great Sum defenders of Tianguang City; as long as they surrender, the North Prince

will not only spare their lives but will also let them join my army. In the future, they will share in wealth and honor with me!”

Before setting out, Yelv Nanyan had cautioned Xiao Hongbo that this military campaign should not always be about killing. Instead, they must try to reduce the local population’s fear of the Barbarian Tribe as much as possible.

The country they planned to establish would be difficult to build without the people of Great Sum. The Barbarian Tribe had always been nomadic tribes roaming the grasslands, with no experience in founding a nation. The people of Great Sum in North City were important to the Barbarian Tribe, so they must not overly aggravate the conflict between the people of Great Sum and the Barbarian Tribes.

Of course, if the defenders of North City chose to resist to the end, they would still face a bloody suppression.

At that moment, soldiers from the Barbarian Tribe rode up to Tianguang City and directly called out to the city’s defenders to surrender.

However, despite shouting with all their might, the soldiers received no response from the defenders of Tianguang City, and they did not even see any soldiers from the city appearing.

Seeing this, Xiao Hongbo couldn’t help but wonder if the soldiers of Tianguang City were planning to wait for their army to approach and then suddenly launch a surprise attack.

In past raids to the south for food and women, this was a tactic of the Great Sum defenders—act as though the city was uninhabited and when the Barbarian Tribe’s soldiers approached, they would unleash a barrage of arrows, often catching them off guard.

Xiao Hongbo then sent a few more soldiers to call out at the foot of Tianguang City, and this time they were to get even closer, already less than twenty meters from the city gates.

But still, no one replied; Tianguang City seemed truly devoid of defenders.

Xiao Hongbo furrowed his brow.

He did not believe that the people of Great Sum had directly abandoned Tianguang City; in his view, the soldiers of Tianguang City had hidden themselves, waiting for the Barbarian Army to draw near then launch a sudden attack.

At that thought, Xiao Hongbo felt a surge of anger.

These Great Sum people really were bent on defiance!

If they insisted on defending the city and refused to surrender, then death would be their only path.

Immediately after, Xiao Hongbo picked up his massive axe and yelled towards Tianguang City, “Attack!”

The next moment, a dozen soldiers carrying horns sounded their horns, and the blare echoed across the entire grassland.

Before long, the soldiers tasked with breaching the city used a siege vehicle to break through the gates of Tianguang City. For this operation to claim North City, the Sky Wolf King’s tribe had made ample preparations.

They hadn’t just brought an army of three hundred thousand cavalry; they were also fully equipped with siege machinery prepared in advance.

This time it wasn’t about plundering food or women, but a campaign of occupation, so having siege machinery was essential.

Xiao Hongbo was utterly baffled to see the gates of Tianguang City so easily breached by the Barbarian soldiers, who also stood dumbfounded.

Normally, it would take dozens of strikes from a siege vehicle to breach city gates, yet the gates of Tianguang City had been broken in an instant.

How was this possible?

Could it be that Tianguang City's soldiers planned to let the Barbarian Cavalry enter the city, to then fight them to the death?

Considering this possibility, the Barbarian soldiers cautiously charged into Tianguang City.

Xiao Hongbo, mounted on his horse, stood amidst the great army, silently waiting for news from inside Tianguang City.

After a while, Xiao Pengthian emerged from Tianguang City on horseback, riding directly to Xiao Hongbo.

"My King! Tianguang City is empty!"

"There's not only a lack of Great Sum's defenders, but also not a single civilian has been found."

Hearing this, Xiao Hongbo paused for a moment, then laughed loudly, "Hahaha, this king understands now. It must be the young North Prince, scared out of his wits at the news of my arrival, who hastily fled North City with all the civilians in tow!"

At this moment, Xiao Pengthian reminded him, "My King, the Queen ordered us to capture as many Great Sum civilians as possible when we took North City. If the civilians of Great Sum have all fled, we will have no one to work for us once we establish our nation."

Upon hearing this, the smile on Xiao Hongbo's face instantly froze, as he had forgotten about this detail.

Immediately, Xiao Hongbo ordered, "Xiao Pengthian, take a hundred thousand soldiers to Curve City in North City. Barbarian Iron, take fifty thousand soldiers to Desolate City."

Xiao Pengthian and another Barbarian General responded immediately, “Yes, my King!”

Quickly, the Barbarians split into three groups and continued their advance southward.

However, they soon discovered that as they moved further south within North City, they encountered no Great Sum defenders and almost no civilians.

Even the few civilians they did capture were the old, weak, sick, and disabled who refused to leave North City.

This displeased Xiao Hongbo. He had marched south to conquer North City, seeking not only the land but also its people.

But now that the civilians had all fled, even if they took over North City, they did not know how they would run it.

Chapter 105: Xiao Pengthian’s Intuition i

The Barbarian Tribe has always been nomadic, with no permanent residence; they migrate with the water and grass, living pastoral lives.

Now they’re suddenly supposed to find a place to settle down, establish a country, and even farm the land—how could they possibly get used to that?

Therefore, the common folk of Great Sum are crucial. Yelv Nanyan’s idea is to ease the relationship between the Great Sum commoners and the Barbarian Tribe, then integrate the tribe into the agricultural culture of Great Sum.

But as soon as the Great Sum commoners heard that the Barbarian Tribe was coming, they all fled. What use is it for the Barbarian Tribe to occupy North City if there are none of them left?

Without the Great Sum commoners, could it be expected for these people, who are used to herding all year round, to farm the land?

How can they, inexperienced, farm the land effectively? If they can't integrate into the farming culture, eventually, even if they occupy North City, they will still head south to plunder.

Heading south to plunder will directly conflict with the core interests of Great Sum. Those Seigniors and Aristocratic Families who initially cooperated with the Barbarian Tribe will surely band together and send a large army north. By then, whether the Barbarian Tribe can hold North City remains uncertain.

The Barbarian Tribe excels in Cavalry, with high mobility. If it comes to attacking a city, fine, but defending a city is something they have no experience in.

This is very disadvantageous for them.

At this moment, Xiao Hongbo was riding on horseback, standing on a grassy knoll, gazing in the direction of Yan County.

After a while, a cavalry unit approached rapidly towards their main forces.

It was Xiao Pengthian and his men returning.

Xiao Hongbo quickly turned to look at the army led by Xiao Pengthian. Xiao Pengthian arrived in front of Xiao Hongbo with a rather solemn face.

"My King, all the cities we visited are deserted. The majority of the Great Sum commoners have already migrated southward," he said.

"We've captured some Great Sum commoners. According to them, the North Prince issued an order a while ago, instructing all commoners to move south. He plans to lead thirty thousand soldiers from North City to fight us to the death in Yan County."

Upon hearing this, Xiao Hongbo was stunned for a moment.

Then he asked incredulously, “North Prince wants to fight us to the death in Yan County?”

Although Xiao Hongbo had never seen the North Prince, he had heard from the Great Sum merchants about what kind of person the North Prince was—a Prince who was ignorant and indulgent, a wastrel.

After the North Prince came to North City, he spent every day in the Prince’s Mansion indulging in pleasure, never bothering about the affairs of North City.

Moreover, it seems that the North Prince was only about 17 years old this year. Although 17 is considered an adult in these times, most 17-year-olds are still seen as children in other people’s eyes.

The North Prince was no exception in Xiao Hongbo’s view. To him, the North Prince was just a bratty kid.

He always thought that as soon as the North Prince heard of his march south, that young scoundrel would be so frightened that he would scamper away with his tail between his legs.

Now Xiao Pengthian was telling him that the North Prince hadn’t run away but instead was waiting in Yan County to fight them to the death.

This worthless Prince actually dares to fight me to the death?

To the iron cavalry of the Barbarian Tribe, what are thirty thousand soldiers? Nothing more than a herd of two-legged sheep with weapons.

Xiao Pengthian then said, “My King, this is what the commoners we captured said, and it was reportedly an imperial edict to the North Prince, ordering him to hold North City to the death and not to flee.”

Of course, the commoners had no idea about any imperial edict ordering the North Prince to hold North City to the death—it was all their own speculation.

After all, the North Prince gave the impression of being nothing more than a wastrel Prince, and his sudden declaration of a decisive battle against the Barbarian Tribe in North City seemed utterly implausible. Therefore, the commoners believed that it must be an imperial command forcing the North Prince to stay in Yan County.

After hearing what Xiao Pengthian said, Xiao Hongbo laughed and said, “Hahaha, indeed, how could that young scoundrel possibly dare to confront my iron cavalry.”

“So the Sum Emperor is planning to completely abandon that useless Prince of his,”

Xiao Hongbo accepted Xiao Pengthian’s reasoning, and he, too, believed that it was a strict order from the Great Sum court to North Prince not to retreat, which was why North Prince was left with no choice but to stubbornly hold his ground at Yan County.

To take the entire North City in a short amount of time, one must pass through Wanning Valley, and Yan County sat right below it, making it imperative for them to capture.

Perhaps to Great Sum, the strategic location of Yan County was advantageous, and by having North Prince defend Yan County, they could block the Barbarian Tribe to the north of Yan County.

In truth, this idea wasn’t wrong, as in the past, it was highly unlikely that the Barbarian Tribe would directly attack Yan County.

Because previously, the Barbarian Tribe mainly raided to the south for food and to abduct women, and the other cities north of Yan County could satisfy their needs.

Moreover, in the past, they mainly deployed Cavalry without siege equipment; taking a city like Yan County with tens of thousands of soldiers would have been impossible without several months.

But this time was different, as they were resolute in capturing the entire North City, and they had prepared siege equipment from the onset.

Taking Yan County wouldn’t be difficult at all.

Xiao Hongbo then loudly ordered, “Immediately send out the command, march to Yan County with utmost speed, I must capture that greenhorn North Prince! We can’t let him escape!”

Upon hearing Xiao Hongbo’s words, the soldiers behind him immediately sounded the trumpets.

At that moment, Xiao Pengthian cautioned, “My king, it might be wise to exercise caution, with only thirty thousand soldiers, how could North Prince propose a decisive battle to the death with us?”

“In my view, we should first dispatch a vanguard to scout the situation, and then have the main army move south.”

Xiao Pengthian always felt something was amiss, with strangeness apparent in every aspect of the situation.

If North Prince really wanted to resist the southward invasion of the Barbarian Tribe, he wouldn’t have dismantled the entire defense to the north of Yan County.

Although the city walls north of Yan County weren’t as solid as Yan County’s, the Barbarian Tribe would still need time to conquer those cities.

If the Barbarian Tribe spent time attacking those cities, it would buy enough time for Yan County.

In turn, some Seigniors within Great Sum would have time to dispatch troops to aid North Prince against the Barbarian Tribe.

Although the court of Great Sum didn’t dare to deploy troops recklessly at this time, they would inevitably require the Seigniors to send forces, albeit those Seigniors tend to drag their feet.

Logically, the longer North City could stall, the greater the possibility of North Prince defending it.

Even if North Prince understood nothing, those generals and soldiers beside him surely must recognize the importance of those cities in the North Land, right?

Yet, North Prince had withdrawn all the soldiers and civilians from those cities.

This made Xiao Pengthian sense the scent of conspiracy.

Hearing Xiao Pengthian's words, Xiao Hongbo burst into laughter and then said, "Xiao Pengthian, you are just too cautious."

"Do you know why the Elders didn't choose you to be the Sky Wolf King? It's because you're too indecisive and not decisive enough in your actions."

With those words, Xiao Hongbo rode his horse straight towards Yan County, leaving Xiao Pengthian alone in his place.

Watching Xiao Hongbo's retreating figure, Xiao Pengthian just sighed.

For some reason, he felt a deep unease in his heart, as if something terrible was about to happen..

Chapter 106: Barbarian Tribe Arrives at Yan County

The Barbarian Tribe was rushing toward Yan County with their utmost speed, and the vast army of Great Sum, seventy thousand strong, was also marching at its swiftest pace, as if racing against time itself.

However, from the grasslands to Yan County stretches a boundless plain, and no matter how fast Lin Xiuming's forces were, they couldn't possibly catch up to the speed of the Barbarian cavalry.

In just a few days, the three hundred thousand-strong Barbarian Army had already drawn near to Wanning Valley.

Early in the morning.

Lu Chen got up amidst the gentle jade fragrance of Bai Qingqing, who took the initiative to dress Lu Chen herself. The once haughty and reserved Bai Qingqing had now transformed into a chilly young matron.

She had completely embraced her role as a concubine maid, diligently caring for Lu Chen's daily needs.

As soon as Lu Chen was dressed and left the room, a female guard hurried over and said, "Prince, urgent news from the front, the Barbarian Tribe has reached Wanning Valley!"

Upon hearing this, Lu Chen replied with some surprise, "So soon?"

The arrival time of the Barbarian Tribe was obviously much earlier than Lu Chen and his people had anticipated from spy reports, but that wasn't a major issue since they had already made their preparations.

Just the thought of the imminent decisive battle with the Barbarian Tribe made Lu Chen's blood surge with excitement.

Although he had killed before and witnessed killings, he had never seen what a real battlefield looked like.

Without even having breakfast, Lu Chen hurried to the tower of Yan County.

By this time, Mu Changtian, with thirty thousand soldiers, was ready for battle, Mu Xingping had stationed the Artillery camp on both sides of Wanning Valley, and the Black Cavalry was also on the move; everything was waiting for the Barbarian cavalry to enter Wanning Valley.

Just then, a scout soldier approached Lu Chen and said, "Prince, the Barbarian troops haven't entered Wanning Valley immediately, but have encamped on the grassland outside the valley."

Upon hearing this, the soldiers on the city tower became tense all of a sudden.

They couldn't help but wonder if the Barbarian cavalry had discovered something, or if their own deployments had been leaked.

If that was the case, then it would indeed be troublesome.

Not only might they fail to defeat the Barbarian cavalry, but the Artillery camps stationed on both sides of Wanning Valley could be stealthily eliminated by the Barbarian soldiers.

If the howitzers, these devastating weapons, fell into the hands of the Barbarian Tribe, Yan County could be breached with a single attack, leaving no capability to resist.

At this moment, Mu Changtian spoke up, "Prince, why don't 1 lead the troops out of the city to lure the Barbarian Tribe into Wanning Valley?"

After hearing Mu Changtian's suggestion, Lu Chen didn't reply immediately. After thinking for a moment, he then asked the scouting soldier, "When did the Barbarian army reach the outskirts of Wanning Valley?"

The scout replied, "This morning."

Hearing this, Lu Chen immediately commanded, "Immediately have the soldiers of the Artillery camp on both sides of Wanning Valley conceal themselves, and do not reveal themselves before the Barbarian Army has entered the valley."

"Furthermore, there is no need for us to hurry. Since the Barbarian soldiers have just arrived this morning, it is highly likely that they traveled through the night and are now resting in the camp."

"Let the frontline scouts keep an eye on their movements. If the Barbarian Tribe sends soldiers to scout, let them enter Wanning Valley; ignore them."

The reporting scout quickly replied, “Yes, Prince.”

“I shall take my leave.”

After the soldier left, Mu Changtian spoke again, “Prince, the Barbarian Tribe seems to be prepared for a long siege of Yan County.”

“Otherwise, they would not have set up camp outside Wanning Valley, but would have chosen to enter directly.”

Lu Chen pondered before speaking, “It seems Xiao Hongbo is no fool either; he knows Yan County won’t be easy to take.”

If Xiao Hongbo truly believed that the first wave of attack on Yan County could defeat the city, then why would they set up camp at all? They should just rest briefly and directly send the army into Wanning Valley.

After taking down Yan County, wouldn’t it be better to rest there?

The Barbarian Tribe setting up camp outside Wanning Valley demonstrated, on one hand, their cautiousness towards the terrain of Wanning Valley, and on the other hand, indicated that they did not believe they could capture Yan County today.

Just then, another scout soldier returned from the front line.

“Prince, the Barbarian Tribe has dispatched a scouting cavalry, which has already entered Wanning Valley and is headed straight for Yan County,” the soldier reported.

Lu Chen asked, “How many are there?”

The soldier replied, “Only a few dozen people.”

Lu Chen thought for a moment and said, “Don’t bother with them, continue monitoring.”

“Yes, Prince,” the soldier acknowledged.

Outside Wanning Valley.

Xiao Pengthian stood by the riverbank, looking at the terrain of Wanning Valley with a grave sense of crisis.

Originally, Xiao Hongbo planned to lead an army of three hundred thousand directly into Wanning Valley and then to attack Yan County, aiming to capture it before midday.

However, Xiao Pengthian, using various persuasive arguments, pointed out that the soldiers were exhausted from traveling all night and needed rest; he even brought up the Princess to strengthen his case, eventually convincing Xiao Hongbo to camp outside Wanning Valley for rest.

Xiao Pengthian was well aware that Xiao Hongbo was severely dissatisfied with him. During their campaign southward to attack North City, he said many things that Xiao Hongbo did not want to hear, and even invoked the Princess’s name several times.

In fact, Xiao Hongbo’s discontent with him was not a recent development. Back when they were with the Sky Wolf King tribe, a rift had already formed between them due to their similar strengths. Xiao Pengthian was the strongest contender against Xiao Hongbo for the title of Sky Wolf King.

Nevertheless, following the mediation by the Princess, the Elders of the Sky Wolf King tribe ultimately bestowed the kingship upon Xiao Hongbo.

Even though Xiao Hongbo had become the Sky Wolf King, having someone by his side who was a constant threat to his throne still made him uncomfortable.

Xiao Pengthian was no fool; he could clearly see Xiao Hongbo’s aversion towards him. However, to ensure that there were no issues during the Sky Wolf King tribe’s campaign to take North City, he had to speak up.

Considering the terrain of Wanning Valley, if their army of three hundred thousand charged directly in and failed to take Yan County, with the Great Sum troops potentially coming in from behind, they would all be trapped within Wanning Valley.

Just then, a servant from Wu Yuan's trading caravan approached Xiao Pengthian and said, "General Xiao, did you summon me for something?"

They were escorting Wu Yuan's trading caravan on their campaign southward; after all, the plundered treasures needed to be transported, and Wu Yuan's caravan provided a convenient means.

Xiao Pengthian inquired, "Has your caravan picked up any information about the movements of the Great Sum court, such as whether they are sending a large army to reinforce North City?"

The servant from Wu Yuan's caravan promptly replied, "Yes, General, the court has dispatched an army of seventy thousand to support North Prince."

Upon hearing this, Xiao Pengthian couldn't help but wonder, was he overthinking the situation?

Only seventy thousand troops?

It was highly probable that this force was meant to help North Prince defend Yan County and would not take the offensive, let alone encircle them from behind.

If the Barbarian Cavalry charged, the seventy thousand troops would be scattered instantly. If the encirclement failed, those soldiers would instead be marching to their deaths.

At that moment, a Barbarian soldier rode up to Xiao Pengthian and said, "General, the King summons you.."

Chapter 107: What Mortar? This is a Catapult

Upon receiving the order from Xiao Hongbo, Xiao Pengthian quickly arrived at Xiao Hongbo's tent.

At this time, Xiao Hongbo was already arranging how the Barbarian Generals would attack Yan County.

As Xiao Pengthian entered the tent, he opened with, "Great King, did you call forme?"

Seeing Xiao Pengthian, Xiao Hongbo's face instantly broke into a smile, and then he said with a laugh, "Pengthian, I've been seriously thinking about what you said to me before, and I find your words very reasonable."

"If we charge directly into the Wanning Valley, and Great Sum soldiers appear behind us, we'd be trapped in the Wanning Valley."

"Therefore, I've decided to give you a very important task. When dusk falls, I will lead twenty-five armies to directly attack Yan County, and you will stay behind with fifty thousand soldiers to guard against a surprise attack from Great Sum soldiers from behind."

As he said this, Xiao Hongbo laughed and patted Xiao Pengthian's shoulder, "Pengthian, this task is very important. The safety of our rear is all entrusted to you."

Hearing this, a half-smile appeared on Xiao Pengthian's face, and he said, "Thank you for your trust, Great King. I will certainly keep a good watch on our rear."

Xiao Pengthian was no fool; how could he not see why Xiao Hongbo had made these arrangements?

He already held a status second only to Xiao Hongbo among the Sky Wolf King's tribe, and if he made another remarkable contribution in the attack on Yan County, his achievements would overshadow his master's.

Xiao Hongbo wasn't truly thinking he made a good point, it was clearly an excuse to keep him in the rear and out of the attacking action, preventing him from earning any merits.

Xiao Pengthian didn't say much else; he would stay behind if that was the assignment. Besides, he, too, was concerned about a potential surprise attack from Great Sum soldiers.

Just then, a soldier entered the tent.

"Great King, the scouts we sent out have returned."

Immediately, Xiao Hongbo commanded, "Let him in."

No sooner had Xiao Hongbo's words faded, another soldier entered the tent, "Great King, we have scouted ahead, and the gates of Yan County are tightly shut, and their soldiers have already setup catapults on the city walls!"

With a smile, Xiao Hongbo said, "It looks like, most likely, the North Prince is indeed waiting for me in Yan County!"

"Excellent, I have heard long ago that the North Prince likes beautiful women, and has kept countless beauties in his estate. Once Yan County is taken, I must enjoy myself thoroughly and experience the joys of the North Prince!"

Yelv Nanyan wasn't there, so Xiao Hongbo openly revealed his true nature. He believed no one would dare tell Yelv Nanyan what he said and did.

Meanwhile.

Yan County, atop the city tower.

Mu Changtian, looking at the grenade launchers on the city wall, said with some concern, "Prince, displaying the grenade launchers like this – if the Barbarian scouts see them, won't they suspect something?"

Lu Chen smiled faintly, then replied, "Grenade launchers? What grenade launchers? These are catapults."

The Barbarian Cavalry have never seen grenade launchers, so how could they possibly recognize them? If the Barbarian Cavalry knew about such devastating weaponry as grenade launchers, they wouldn't dare approach Yan County. Therefore, Lu Chen was not worried about the grenade launchers being seen by the Barbarian scouts.

Before the grenade launchers came into use, it was very possible that the Barbarians would mistake them for catapults.

In fact, if viewed from a distance, the grenade launchers did bear a resemblance to catapults.

Of course, that was where the similarities ended.

Now everything was ready – it was just a matter of the Barbarian Cavalry falling into the trap.

For the rest of the day, Lu Chen stayed on the city walls, constantly watching the movements of the Barbarian Army.

As time went by and the day was about to end, the sun began to touch the horizon, with vast swathes of fiery red twilight dominating the sky, casting everyone's skin in a bronze glow reflected by the twilight.

At that moment, a scout soldier rode swiftly towards the city gate, shouting as he rode,

“The Barbarian Army has entered the Wanning Valley!”

“The Barbarian Army has entered the Wanning Valley!”

“The Barbarian Army has entered the Wanning Valley!”

Hearing the scout soldier's report, the soldiers on the city wall didn't wait for Mu Changtian's orders to spring into action, swiftly preparing for battle.

Soon the scouting soldier reached Lu Chen, "Prince, the Barbarian Army has entered the Wanning Valley. They have divided into two groups; the front seems to have about two hundred and fifty thousand soldiers, while the remaining fifty thousand seem to be on alert in the rear."

Hearing this, Lu Chen frowned.

He had not anticipated that the Barbarians would split into two groups upon entering the Wanning Valley.

If the Barbarian Tribe left fifty thousand to guard the rear, their fifty thousand Black Cavalry would find it very difficult to complete the encirclement of the Barbarian Army.

At this moment, Lu Chen asked, "Have the tens of thousands of troops from the Barbarian rear entered Wanning Valley?"

The soldier immediately answered, "They have, but they've kept a certain distance from the large force at the front."

Hearing this from the soldier, Lu Chen breathed a sigh of relief.

As long as they all entered Wanning Valley, that would be fine.

He was afraid that the Barbarian's three hundred thousand-strong army would leave a portion of their troops outside of Wanning Valley; in that case, the Black Cavalry would have to fight the Barbarian cavalry left outside to block the Barbarians' retreat.

By the time the Black Cavalry eliminated the cavalry outside Wanning Valley, the Barbarian Army at the front might have already withdrawn from the Valley, and by then they could only let the Barbarian Army go.

At this point, Lu Chen said, “Prepare for battle! Pass the order to the Artillery camp to open fire only after the Barbarian cavalry is about to reach Yan County!”

With that command from Lu Chen, the defense of Yan County began, which was simultaneously the encirclement battle against the Barbarian Army.

Under Xiao Hongbo’s leadership, the two hundred and fifty thousand-strong army was soon to arrive below the city of Yan County.

Although the people on the city walls of Yan County had not yet seen the Barbarian cavalry, they could already hear the thunderous sound of hooves.

They even had the illusion that the earth itself was trembling.

This was a three hundred thousand-strong Barbarian cavalry.

The soldiers on the city wall were extremely tense; even though they had grenade launchers, facing three hundred thousand troops still exerted an enormous pressure on them.

Together with the Black Cavalry, North City had only ninety thousand soldiers in total.

Ninety thousand against three hundred thousand, the pressure was inevitable.

Hearing the thunderous hoofbeats, Lu Chen felt his heart pounding wildly as if adrenaline was furiously secreting within his body, enlivening every cell.

As the sound of hoofbeats grew louder and closer, the flags of the Barbarian Army gradually appeared within everyone’s sight.

Lu Chen stood on the city tower and quickly surveyed the generals at the front of the Barbarian Army.

[Name: Xiao Hongbo]

[Title: Sky Wolf King of the Barbarian Tribe]

[Strength: Master Realm]

[Loyalty: -100 (Hostile)]

[Name: Barbarian Iron]

[Title: General of the Sky Wolf King's Tribe]

[Strength: Master Realm]

[Loyalty: -100 (Hostile)]

[Name: Xian Jia]

[Title: General of the North Fre King's Tribe]

[Strength: Master Realm]

[Loyalty: -100 (Hostile)]

After reviewing the data for these three individuals, Lu Chen then glanced over the other generals' information.

In the end, counting among the vanguard of the Barbarian Army of more than two hundred thousand, there were approximately only three Grandmasters, five Half-step Grandmasters, and a dozen Ninth Grade warriors.

Lu Chen still did not know whether there were any Grandmasters in the several tens of thousands of troops behind.

If he didn't have grenade launchers this time, North City would unquestionably fall to the strength of the Barbarian Army.

With a formation like the Barbarian's, let alone capturing North City, they would have no problem launching a war of destruction against some smaller nations.

Chapter 108: War Begins i

Xiao Hongbo became incredibly excited when he saw the flag of the North Prince Mansion hanging on the walls of North City.

He shouted to the soldiers behind him, "Yan County lies before our eyes! Warriors of the Barbarian Tribe, follow your prince into the charge!"

"Whoever captures North Prince will be rewarded by me with ten beautiful women and a thousand cattle and sheep!"

Hearing Xiao Hongbo's words, the Barbarian soldiers instantly became exuberant, and the Barbarian Army hastened its march.

At the same time.

When Xiao Pengthian saw that the Barbarian soldiers were marching so much faster ahead, he instantly felt a strong unease.

It was too quiet!

Wanning Valley was too quiet!

The quietness was suffocating and oppressive.

Even if North Prince was truly defending Yan County and waiting for the Barbarians' assault, there shouldn't be no obstacles at all in Wanning Valley to block the advance of the Barbarian Army.

Xiao Pengthian had previously clashed with the army of Great Sum and knew their methods; when defending a city, they would certainly construct some barriers to impede the Cavalry's advance.

In the past when they raided to the south, even the small cities they looted had obstacles constructed by the soldiers to stop the Barbarian Cavalry. It made no sense that the defenders of Yan County wouldn't do the same.

Was that normal?

Definitely not.

Xiao Pengthian suspected that the defenders of Yan County were deliberately allowing them to get close or, perhaps, purposely letting them enter Wanning Valley.

He hoped he was overthinking it, yet if the Yan County defenders were indeed allowing them into Wanning Valley intentionally, that would spell big trouble.

At this moment, the Barbarian Army was nearly upon the city.

The soldiers of Yan County had made their preparations, and the soldiers of the Artillery camp on both sides of Wanning Valley had adjusted the howitzers to the correct angle. Now, they waited only for Lu Chen to give the command.

As the black mass of Barbarian Cavalry grew closer, the thunderous sound of their horses' hooves also grew louder. Under the influence of these sounds, everyone's heartbeats involuntarily quickened.

Lu Chen personally approached one of the howitzers, then adjusted its angle, aiming it at the location of Xiao Hongbo.

Lu Chen had no intention of adhering to any code of martial honor, nor did he plan to take Xiao Hongbo alive. If he could kill him with a cannon shot, that was the best option.

Naturally, Xiao Hongbo also saw the howitzers on the city wall. However, they paid them no mind, believing them to merely be trebuchets.

To these Master Level experts, such trebuchets posed no threat; a direct charge was all that was needed.

Watching the Barbarian Army draw closer, Lu Chen felt the timing was almost right and immediately pulled the firing pin.

The next moment, a 122mm howitzer shell soared into the sky and then plummeted toward several important figures of the Barbarians, leading the way for Xiao Hongbo.

As a Grandmaster level expert, Xiao Hongbo naturally detected the shell, but to him, it was just a stone.

Just as Xiao Hongbo readied himself to smash the stone with his axe, Xian Jia, a Grandmaster General among the Barbarians beside him, pushed off from his horse, leaping up more than ten meters into the air.

Watching this scene, even Lu Chen was astonished. Was this the true power of a Grandmaster, to jump so high with just physical strength?

However, at that moment, Xian Jia swung the giant axe in his hand toward the howitzer shell.

In the following instant, the howitzer shell exploded.

Boom...

With a deafening blast, the body of Xian Jia, the Grandmaster General of the Barbarian Tribe, was blown to pieces.

As the howitzer exploded, the soldiers in front of Xiao Hongbo were instantly killed or wounded without number, and Xiao Hongbo, along with another Barbarian Grandmaster, were blown several meters away by the explosion.

The originally exuberant Barbarian Army was instantly snapped awake by the blast.

They finally realized something was amiss.

The Barbarian Army, which had been marching at full speed, suddenly halted, and the whole army descended into chaos.

“My God! What on earth was that!”

“Grandmaster... Grandmaster! Could there be a Grandmaster in Yan County!”

“The North Prince is injured!”

“We must avenge the North Prince!”

“Attack!!!”

The already chaotic Barbarian Army hesitated for a moment before launching a charge, something Lu Chen hadn’t anticipated.

But this wasn’t surprising as it had only been a single cannonball; they hadn’t yet realized the terror of the grenade cannons.

Lu Chen admired their bravery, though sometimes being too rash wasn’t a good thing.

Lu Chen then shouted loudly, “Fire!”

The next moment, the archers and artillery on the city walls initiated their attack together.

Countless arrows rained down from above.

And the grenade cannons exploded among the ranks of the Barbarian Army, shattering men and horses alike. Coupled with the narrowness of the Wanning Valley, a single blast caused widespread destruction.

In an instant, uncountable numbers of barbarian soldiers were dead or injured.

At the same time.

The artillery camp, lying in ambush on both sides of the Wanning Valley, did not attack immediately; they were waiting for Xiao Pengthian and his fifty thousand soldiers to enter their firing range.

At that moment, Xiao Pengthian realized that the Barbarian Army in front was suddenly thrown into disarray and immediately understood that something must have happened.

Without a moment's hesitation, he turned around and said to the soldiers behind him, "Be on guard at our rear! Prepare to charge!"

Xiao Pengthian's reaction was remarkably quick; he even sensed they were about to be surrounded before the Black Cavalry revealed themselves.

Seeing Xiao Pengthian's forces becoming alert, an artilleryman said to Mu Jingwu beside him, "Captain Mu, if we don't attack now, the ammunition in Yan County will have all been expended soon."

Yan County didn't have many grenade cannons, and most of the cannonballs were allocated to the artillery camps on both sides of the Wanning Valley.

Mu Jingwu glanced at Xiao Pengthian's fifty thousand soldiers and then shouted loudly, "All units, prepare! Open fire!"

At the command, dozens of shells fell into the midst of the Barbarian Army, blowing the limbs of the Barbarian Cavalry into the air. Soil flew up to heights of over a dozen meters, with some Barbarian Cavalry being buried alive by the blast-ejected earth.

The explosion was not far from Xiao Pengthian and his forces, and the sight of the army's grim condition in front prompted the fifty thousand barbarian soldiers behind Xiao Pengthian to think of retreat.

"Wolf God, what kind of weapon is that!"

"Since when did Great Xia possess such terrifying weapons!"

"General, we've been tricked!"

"General, we should retreat fast!"

Seeing the Barbarian soldiers scattered in the air, Xiao Pengthian naturally understood they had been tricked. Right now, the most critical task was to protect the retreat route at the rear to ensure that their Barbarian Cavalry could withdraw from the Wanning Valley.

Otherwise, under the bombardment of that mysterious weapon from Great Xia, their three hundred thousand Barbarian Cavalry might all meet their end in the Wanning Valley.

Seeing Xiao Pengthian preparing to retreat with his fifty thousand troops, the artillerymen on both sides of the Wanning Valley grew anxious. They had nearly tens of thousands of Barbarian soldiers in their sights; they couldn't just let them escape.

Immediately, some artillerymen adjusted the direction of the grenade cannons, targeting Xiao Pengthian's fifty thousand troops and firing away.

When a shell exploded in the crowd, in that instant, Xiao Pengthian's fifty thousand strong force was thrown into complete disarray.

Seeing this scene, Xiao Pengthian knew they had to retreat quickly, and he shouted loudly, "Retreat! The entire army, retreat!"

Following that, the Messenger Soldier took out the horn and sounded the signal for retreat.

Wuuwuuwuu—— !!!!

Chapter 109: Follow Me to Charge!

As the retreat horn sounded in Wanning Valley, the Barbarian soldiers at the front finally snapped to their senses. Immediately after, without even waiting for the severely injured Xiao Hongbo to issue a command, the few hundred thousand Barbarian Army at the vanguard also sounded the retreat horn.

In fact, Lu Chen's few hundred cannon shots were simply incapable of killing all few hundred thousand Barbarian soldiers.

But the Barbarian Cavalry was, after all, seeing such a terrifying weapon for the first time, which magnified the fear in their hearts.

People are always most afraid of the unknown, and the Barbarian soldiers also had no idea how many of those exploding "stones" Yan County actually possessed.

Wu wu wu—!!!

Wu wu wu—!!!

The urgent retreat horn echoed through Wanning Valley, with the Barbarian soldiers running crazily toward the rear. The initial formation of the Barbarian soldiers also completely disintegrated as they only focused on their own escape.

Soon a severe trampling incident occurred in Wanning Valley, and many of the Barbarian cavalry who were knocked down were stepped on by their own comrades, trampled to death.

Seeing the Barbarian soldiers in complete disarray, Lu Chen finally understood what it meant to collapse like a crumbling mountain.

If you really counted, the grenade launchers probably killed fewer than ten thousand Barbarian Cavalry, but the soldiers trampled to death by their own people were estimated by Lu Chen to be nearly ten thousand.

At this moment, Mu Changtian, mounted on his horse, had already become incredibly impatient.

The soldiers inside the city were already prepared to charge.

Lu Chen then said, “Signal the Artillery camp, fire all the cannonballs, don’t hold back a single one!”

As the flags conveyed the order, the artillerymen in Wanning Valley immediately began bombing the fleeing Barbarian soldiers.

Seeing the Barbarian cavalry being blown sky-high, even the soldiers of the Artillery camp couldn’t help but gasp in shock.

Many in the Artillery camp were archers, veterans who had participated in defending North City against the Barbarian Tribe.

But when had they ever witnessed such a scene?

The once invincible Barbarian Cavalry, in face of the grenade launchers, could only be mercilessly annihilated.

Just thinking of such a terrible weapon being used against themselves someday, the soldiers of the Artillery camp felt a chill and broke into a cold sweat.

The soldiers couldn’t help but feel fortunate that they were born in North City, were soldiers from North City, soldiers under the North Prince.

Meanwhile.

The severely injured Xiao Hongbo stood up with the help of his subordinates, his mind still foggy, having no clue about the current situation.

All he knew was that suddenly a powerful force had flung him into the air.

Seeing that Xiao Hongbo was still not dead, Lu Chen instantly took out the Barrett from his space system, loaded the bullet, and aimed at the distant Xiao Hongbo.

At that moment, Mu Changtian came up from under the city wall, wishing to get Lu Chen to order an immediate pursuit of the fleeing Barbarian cavalry.

But as soon as he approached Lu Chen, he found that Lu Chen held a black long stick in his hand, aiming at the far-off Xiao Hongbo.

Before Mu Changtian could speak, a gunshot rang out.

Bang...

Then, the still-confused Xiao Hongbo was instantly shot through the chest.

Feeling the huge wound in his chest, Xiao Hongbo looked down slightly, his pupils contracted, revealing an unbelieving expression.

Afterwards, Xiao Hongbo slowly collapsed to the ground, losing consciousness.

Seeing this, Mu Changtian was slightly stunned.

He remembered what Li Feng had told him not long ago, that the North Prince possessed a mysterious weapon capable of instantaneously killing a Grandmaster.

This black long stick must be the mysterious weapon Li Feng spoke of.

The North Prince's weapons were all too terrifying!

From one kilometer away, it directly killed a Master Realm expert, a feat that even a Grandmaster would find difficult to achieve.

Of course, no matter how terrifying the weapons in the North Prince's hands were, they were still not as horrifying as the grenade launchers.

Just now, they had witnessed with their own eyes a single cannonball blowing a Barbarian Grandmaster into dozens of pieces. In terms of power, the grenade launchers were still far more formidable.

After shooting Xiao Hongbo, Lu Chen came back to his senses and said to Mu Changtian beside him, "General Mu, the task of exterminating the Barbarian Cavalry is up to you!"

Hearing this, Mu Changtian immediately replied loudly, "Yes, Prince!"

As soon as he had spoken, Mu Changtian pushed off with his legs and jumped straight down from the city tower, landing firmly on his horse below.

With a wave of his hand, Mu Changtian flung his robe aside and bellowed.

"Open the city gates!!!"

With Mu Changtian's powerful voice, the gates of Yan County slowly opened.

The next moment, Mu Changtian, leading the charge, dashed out of the city gates!

"Soldiers, follow me to kill!"

"Kill kill kill!!!"

The morale of Yan County's soldiers was instantly rallied, and they left the city walls to pursue and kill the Barbarian cavalry.

At the same time.

After Xiao Pengthian's army of fifty thousand had been bombed, losing untold numbers, they finally managed to escape the range of the artillery.

Seeing that there were no more explosive rocks falling from the sky, the soldiers finally breathed a sigh of relief.

But very soon, they sensed something was wrong.

Suddenly, Wanning Valley became exceptionally quiet.

Even quieter than before.

So silent that they seemed to hear their own heartbeats, as if even the sound of the retreat horn had disappeared.

Xiao Pengthian frowned, sensing that something was amiss.

At that moment, a soldier beside Xiao Pengthian suddenly exclaimed, "General, quick, look!!!"

Xiao Pengthian immediately looked into the distance.

The huge setting sun was facing their direction, seemingly blocking the entire Wanning Valley.

Amidst the sunset, line after line of vast, dark shadows loomed closer to them.

And then the earth began to tremble.

It was only when the cavalry approached that Xiao Pengthian and his men could see clearly. The soldiers of that army were clad in black armor, even their warhorses covered in thick armor.

In the light of the setting sun, they appeared as though they were an army emerging from hell.

Xiao Pengthian's face turned pale in an instant.

Heavy... Cavalry!!!

And there were at least tens of thousands of them!

How was this possible!!!

The Barbarian Tribes didn't have so many heavy cavalry units!!!

Just crafting a single set of heavy cavalry armor could take an unimaginable amount of time.

Yet Great Sum actually possessed such an enormous force of heavy cavalry!!!

If on the open plains, these Great Sum heavy cavalry might not have been able to do much against them. After all, the Barbarian Tribe's light cavalry was more mobile and faster, and these heavy cavalry could be relatively clumsy and might not catch up with them.

But now it was different.

This was Wanning Valley!

Tens of thousands of heavy cavalry stationed in Wanning Valley were like an array of iron walls.

Where could they run to?

Heading towards Yan County now would mean getting blown to pieces, and if they charged straight at them, they would also get chopped down by this heavy cavalry.

Xiao Pengthian gripped the axe in his hands tightly, his muscles bulging, straining against his armor.

Finally, he made his decision.

Xiao Pengthian raised the axe in his hands toward the direction of the sun, and with all his might, he shouted, “Warriors of the Barbarian Tribe! Charge with me!!!”

As his words fell, Xiao Pengthian rode his horse straight at the Black Cavalry, and the Barbarian Tribe’s soldiers followed him like a tidal wave towards the iron walls beneath the setting sun..

Chapter 110: The Combat Power of the Black Cavalry

Under the glow of the setting sun, two fast-moving cavalry formations on the plains of Wanning Valley were charging towards each other with all their might.

As the Barbarian Cavalry was about to close in on the Black Cavalry led by Wenren Lie, the Black Cavalry immediately shifted their formation into an offensive configuration.

Soon after, Xiao Pengthian’s cavalry charged into the midst of the Heavy Cavalry formation.

The next moment, on the riverbanks of Wanning Valley, the clashing of weapons and thunderous roars of combat filled the air.

Yet, not far away, the twenty thousand Heavy Cavalry led by Xuanyuan Chen stood still, without any movement.

The Black Cavalry was divided into two parts: the front thirty thousand led by Wenren Lie, responsible for charging and killing, while the rear twenty thousand led by Xuanyuan Chen, tasked with blocking Wanning Valley to prevent any Barbarian Cavalry from breaking through.

The Black Cavalry's fighting strength was extremely formidable; each Barbarian Cavalry that plunged into their ranks was chopped down from his horse. The weapons used by the Black Cavalry were incomparably sharp; any Barbarian Cavalry struck carelessly by a Black Cavalry sword would almost certainly meet death, both rider and mount.

After a quarter of an hour of relentless combat, the Black Cavalry and the Barbarian Cavalry led by Xiao Pengthian finally parted.

Only when Xiao Pengthian emerged from the Black Cavalry's formation did he realize that there was another detachment of Black Cavalry, which had made no move, coldly observing them.

Those Black Cavalrymen were like emotionless ghosts, an army of specters from the depths of the underworld.

Xiao Pengthian glanced at the sparse Barbarian soldiers behind him; nearly all of them were wounded, with many having their arms severed.

A single charge, and fewer than ten thousand of their soldiers remained.

Is this the might of Great Xia's Heavy Cavalry!

Xiao Pengthian had never imagined that one day, Great Xia's Heavy Cavalry could crush the Barbarian cavalry.

They had encountered their true adversaries!

Xiao Pengthian observed the gash on his own armor and promptly stripped it off, casually throwing it onto the ground.

In front of this cavalry, any armor proved worthless.

At that moment, Xiao Pengthian didn't charge towards Xuanyuan Chen's unmoving Black Cavalry; instead, he turned around.

Now they were surrounded, and even if they charged towards the setting sun's direction, they could not escape.

Xiao Pengthian had already sensed his end; he was certain to die today.

Rather than attempting to break through those immobile cavalymen and escape, only to die a disgraceful death, it was better to perish on the battlefield.

Xiao Pengthian's trembling hand raised the axe, and once more he shouted, "To restore the Wolf God's glory, follow me and charge!!!"

"Kill!!!"

Leading the remaining less than ten thousand Barbarian Cavalry, Xiao Pengthian charged once again towards the Black Cavalry led by Wenren Lie.

A moment later, the two cavalries met again on the banks of Wanning River, and the sounds of battle once again echoed through Wanning Valley.

The sun gradually set, only half of it still shining over Wanning Valley.

The clanging noises became sparser, the cries of the battle grew less, and ultimately, a single man on horseback emerged from the Black Cavalry formation, his body laden with wounds.

Xiao Pengthian, facing the direction of the sun, observed the indifferent Black Cavalry in the distance. Blood slid from his head, his vision obscured by the crimson hue.

His entire world turned red, the color of blood.

Countless memories flashed through Xiao Pengthian's mind; he recalled being orphaned from a young age, growing up with his elder sister.

Amid the sunset, he perceived the vast expanse of white snow.

He saw the cattle and sheep that had frozen to death, the yurts blown away by fierce winds.

He also saw when the Barbarian Army swept south to plunder Great Xia's people, the people of Great Xia kneeling and begging for mercy only to be killed nonetheless.

Xiao Pengthian, with his disheveled hair, burst into laughter and then mumbled to himself, "Yaoyao, it looks like your uncle can't take you to Great Sum after all..."

As the words fell, Xiao Pengthian raised his ax once more, using his last bit of strength, he hoarsely roared:

"Reforge the glory of the Wolf God! Kill!!!"

Alone on his horse against the setting sun, his figure grew longer and fainter.

Wenren Lie raised his hand, signaling the soldiers not to move.

Immediately after, Wenren Lie picked up his hammer and charged directly towards Xiao Pengthian.

Soon, the two met on the corpse-strewn riverbank, with Wenren Lie striking first with a swing of his hammer.

Xiao Pengthian tried to defend, but found he had no strength left in his body.

He was then hit by the hammer, sent flying, spewing out fresh blood, and completely lost consciousness.

Seeing the fifty thousand cavalry clean up and stand still without any action or words, Xuanyuan Chen said in a tone devoid of emotion, "Continue advancing!"

It seemed as though, in Xuanyuan Chen's eyes, the battle that just occurred might as well had never happened.

Wenren Lie glanced at Xiao Pengthian on the ground and then ordered the soldiers beside him, "Take him with us, hand him over to the Prince."

"Yes, General."

The soldier immediately approached Xiao Pengthian, tied him up, and placed him on the back of a horse.

Before long, the fleeing Barbarian cavalry encountered Wenren Lie's Black Cavalry.

As the sky had already darkened, the Barbarian cavalry initially mistook the Black Cavalry up ahead for Xiao Pengthian's troops guarding the rear.

However, when the retreating Barbarian cavalry got closer, they suddenly realized that these were actually tens of thousands of Heavy Cavalry.

Without any hesitation, Wenren Lie and Xuanyuan Chen led the fifty thousand Heavy Cavalry towards Yan County, leaving nothing but the bodies of Barbarian cavalry in their wake.

The Barbarian cavalry, having been terrified by the earlier grenade cannons, had lost all will to fight. Moreover, with their king dead and no one to command them, the current Barbarian cavalry had virtually no fighting strength left.

The advancement of the Black Cavalry was incredibly fast. It didn't take long before they entered the range of the Artillery camp, but by then, the Artillery camp had nearly run out of ammunition, so they didn't need to worry about friendly fire.

Mu Jingwu stood on a protruding rock and observed the Black Cavalry's relentless push forward. He felt utterly astonished.

Was this the combat power of the Heavy Cavalry!

Wherever they passed, there were only bodies!

The Black Cavalry slaughtered the Barbarians as if they were mere chickens.

If the royal court knew about these fifty thousand Black Cavalry, Mu Jingwu believed the court would surely send troops north overnight, then station hundreds of thousands of soldiers in Qi Prince's territory.

Mu Jingwu was very clear about what the Heavy Cavalry meant in this era.

He couldn't help but wonder when the Prince would vie for that position.

The twilight in the sky gradually dissipated, and a massive moon hung in the sky, its cold moonlight spreading across the ground, enabling people to see clearly ahead even at night.

Regrettably, the Barbarian Army could not discern the direction back home.

The sounds of slaughter echoed ceaselessly in Wanning Valley. Even within Yan County, one could faintly hear the sounds of battle.

The civilians who had not left Yan County hid in their rooms, listening to the combat noises outside the city, spending the entire night without sleep..