

Es. Benefits 111

Chapter 111: Your Contributions Will Surely Go Down in History_i

Lu Chen realized that in the end, he had still underestimated the brutality of war.

Ever since Mu Changtian had led the troops out of the city, he had been waiting on the city tower for Mu Changtian's return.

But as two hours passed after another, Lu Chen could only hear the sounds of slaughter coming from Wanning Valley, but he did not see Mu Changtian and his men returning.

To be honest, at this point, Lu Chen couldn't help but start to worry.

Although the Barbarian Army of three hundred thousand had been scattered and seemed to no longer have the capacity to fight, the Barbarians were still Barbarians after all.

Caught in the pincer movement before and after Wanning Valley, it was very likely that the Barbarian Army would desperately fight back.

He was not worried about the Black Cavalry; what concerned him were the tens of thousands of soldiers led by Mu Changtian, most of whom were infantry with relatively few cavalry.

Hopefully, his tens of thousands of soldiers hadn't all been lost in combat.

With concern, Lu Chen stood silently on the city tower, gazing in the direction of Wanning Valley.

After an indeterminable amount of time, the sky gradually brightened, and before he knew it, an entire night had passed.

At this time, a soldier covered in blood returned to the city wall on horseback. Despite his exhaustion, he excitedly exclaimed, “Prince! We have won!”

“We have slain two hundred thousand Barbarians and captured a hundred thousand!”

Upon hearing this, Lu Chen immediately shouted to the soldiers inside the city, “Open the city gates!”

Following that, the soldier entered the city and came before Lu Chen, saying, “Prince, the battle has ended. General Mo invites you to inspect the aftermath!”

Lu Chen said, “You’ve worked hard; go rest now.”

“For the Prince, for North City, it isn’t hard work!”

It was evident that the soldier was still in a very excited state.

This was the most beautifully fought battle in the history of the Great Xia Dynasty, and as participants in this war, how could they not be excited.

At this time, Lu Chen came down from the city tower and rode directly towards Wanning Valley.

All along the way, Lu Chen saw countless bodies of Barbarian soldiers, and among them occasionally lay some from the North City forces.

Seeing the ground littered with bodies, even Lu Chen, who had killed before, felt quite uncomfortable.

The blood on the ground had even dyed the soil red, the air was filled with a thick scent of blood, and the sky was crowded with flocks of crows circling overhead.

Lu Chen’s expression became very solemn.

Is this war?

Lu Chen continued to advance toward the front of Wanning Valley.

After a while, he noticed the bodies of North City soldiers on the ground were becoming more and more frequent.

As he expected, after Mu Changtian had led the troops out of the city last night, the Barbarian soldiers had retaliated against Mu Changtian's forces, which was why there were so many bodies of North City soldiers.

With a heavy heart, Lu Chen quickly arrived at where Mu Changtian and his men were located.

The army led by Mu Changtian had already regrouped with the Black Cavalry. The Black Cavalry had surrounded the hundred thousand Barbarian soldiers, who were trembling and squatting on the ground, not daring to move.

Almost all the Barbarian leaders had been killed, and among these hundred thousand Barbarian soldiers, not one was above the sixth rank in the Master Realm.

Lu Chen glanced again at the North City soldiers behind Mu Changtian; there were now less than ten thousand North City soldiers remaining.

Seeing this scene, Lu Chen frowned deeply.

He had still underestimated this war.

He had thought that with the grenade cannons, North City would not suffer heavy casualties, but even with grenade cannons, about twenty thousand North City soldiers had still fallen in battle.

Lu Chen suddenly had a thought, if he had not allowed Mu Changtian to pursue those Barbarian Tribe soldiers outside North City, would those over twenty thousand North City soldiers still be alive?

If he had not ordered the Black Cavalry to cut off the Barbarian Army's escape route, the Barbarian Army would have surely fled Wanning Valley, and thus they could have defended North City without losing a single soldier.

It was precisely because he wanted to annihilate all thirty thousand soldiers of the Barbarian Army that the North City soldiers suffered casualties.

Lu Chen also realized that by capturing these thirty thousand soldiers, he had laid a solid foundation for the future stable development of North City, ensuring that the Barbarians would not dare to invade the south for a long time to come.

Whether the sacrifice of the North City soldiers was worth it would depend on how North City developed in the future.

At that moment, Lu Chen looked at Xuanyuan Chen and his Black Cavalry again.

Fortunately, the Black Cavalry seemed not to have lost many men. If the cavalry had been wiped out in this war, Lu Chen felt he would probably be filled with regret.

At this time, Mu Changtian, Wenren Lie, and Xuanyuan Chen saw Lu Chen coming and immediately rode over on their horses, then dismounted to pay their respects, saying, "Greetings, Prince."

Lu Chen nodded, "Rise."

Then, Mu Changtian excitedly said, "Prince, this is the greatest victory the Great Xia Dynasty has ever had over the Barbarian Tribe in history. Your achievements will surely go down in history!"

Hearing Mu Changtian's words, Lu Chen did not feel much stirred inside and did not show any sign of happiness.

Mu Changtian was a General; he had led troops to fight the Barbarian Army in the north several times before and was accustomed to the cruelty of war.

Hence, the dead soldiers of North City were merely numbers in his eyes. What he saw was the victory of this war, and so he was very excited.

The North City soldiers who had survived felt the same way. What they saw was the victory of this war and their roles as witnesses to the most fruitful battle in the history of the Great Xia Dynasty's foreign wars.

Therefore, they were all very excited; their faces showed no sorrow, as if those who died never existed.

Seeing the soldiers so thrilled, Lu Chen did not want to dampen their spirits with his own emotions, and so he said, "This victory is not my victory alone; it belongs to all the generals and soldiers of North City. You shall enter the annals of history with me! Immortalized forever!"

Upon hearing these words, the morale of the soldiers surged even higher, and the voices of the soldiers rang out through Wanning Valley.

"Prince is mighty!!!"

"The Prince will unify the world and command respect from all corners!"

Hearing the soldiers' cheers, Lu Chen felt a headache coming.

He didn't know when it started, but in North City, both commanders and ordinary soldiers believed that his ambition was to unify the world.

When had he ever said that he wanted to unify the world?

Announcing the unification of the world at such a time was just asking for trouble. After all, his own father, the Emperor, was still alive; even his father had not claimed he wanted to unify the world, yet a mere Prince was declaring such ambition.

Wasn't that openly inviting rebellion?

However, Lu Chen did not correct their words, as he did not wish to crush the soldiers' morale at this time.

Then, Wenren Lie said to Lu Chen, "Prince, we have captured a Barbarian Tribe general."

Upon saying that, Wenren Lie commanded the soldiers behind him, "Bring him forth."

The next moment, a soldier led a horse up to Lu Chen. A disheveled, shirtless strong man was sprawled over the horse's back, looking as if he might already be dead.

Lu Chen immediately used the system to identify him.

[Name: Xiao Pengthian]

[Identity: Grand General of the Sky Wolf King's Barbarian Tribe, uncle to the Barbarian Princess Xiao Wenyao, captive of the North Prince.]

[Strength: Master Realm (near death)]

[Loyalty: 0]

Chapter 112: The Belated Imperial Army I

Seeing Xiao Pengthian's information, Lu Chen was momentarily stunned, having not expected the existence of a Grandmaster Realm within the Barbarian Army.

Thinking back on it, the tens of thousands of people following the Barbarian Army must have been under Xiao Pengthian's command.

Wenren Lie saw that Lu Chen did not speak and took the opportunity to ask, “Prince, what do you plan to do with him? He’s still alive but severely injured and currently unconscious.”

Lu Chen said, “Have someone treat his injuries immediately and save him. Once he wakes up, this prince has some matters to inquire about with him.”

“Yes, my Prince.”

The soldiers then led the horse carrying Xiao Pengthian away for treatment.

At that moment, Mu Changtian glanced at the one hundred thousand kneeling Barbarian captives and whispered to Lu Chen, “Prince, how do you plan to handle these captives? There are quite a lot of them, and Yan County doesn’t have enough food to sustain them. Perhaps we should just...”

Mu Changtian stopped there, not finishing his sentence.

Lu Chen understood Mu Changtian’s meaning; Mu Changtian felt that the one hundred thousand Barbarian captives were a burden and should all be killed.

Hearing this, Lu Chen said with a smile, “If we were not in North City, this prince might indeed have buried them all.”

This...

Mu Changtian, hearing Lu Chen’s apparent lack of intention to kill them, continued, “Prince, are you thinking of subjugating them?”

Such practices were quite common. Despite the Barbarian Tribe being a different race, the Imperial Army of the Great Xia Dynasty still incorporated many Barbarian soldiers.

Back when Mu Changtian went north to battle the Barbarian Army, he captured many Barbarian soldiers, and after re-educating these Barbarian soldiers, he had them lead the way northward in search of the Barbarian royal courts.

Although there were often cases of one race exterminating another, more often than not, deterrence and subjugation were employed. In this era, population was precious, and unless they truly couldn't sustain so many people, they wouldn't just kill them off.

Lu Chen said, "After the war is over, this prince will need a large workforce to build up North City. These one hundred thousand Barbarian captives have just solved the problem of an insufficient workforce."

Lu Chen had already acquired cement, and he had long planned to rebuild North City. However, as he had been conserving his strength, he had not taken any action yet.

But after this war was over, he could no longer hide. Everyone would know that he commanded an extremely powerful army.

Since he could no longer keep it a secret, there was no point in trying to. As North City was his fiefdom, it was time to properly develop it.

As for the succession struggles in the Capital City, Lu Chen had no intention of meddling at all. As long as the Great Xia was not in chaos, he planned not to return to the Capital City and stay in North City instead, which was quite preferable.

Hearing Lu Chen's plan, Mu Changtian immediately understood and said, "My Prince, that is a brilliant move! If these one hundred thousand Barbarian soldiers can be re-educated in time, we will have gained one hundred thousand more Slave Soldiers. No one will dare covet North City in the future!"

Mu Changtian's thoughts were clearly different from Lu Chen's. Lu Chen intended to use these one hundred thousand Barbarian slaves to build up North City, while Mu Changtian thought Lu Chen wanted to keep these Barbarian soldiers for their strong combat capabilities, with the intention of using these one hundred thousand Barbarian Slave Soldiers to deter other forces.

Lu Chen already had fifty thousand Heavy Cavalry at his command, and with his Military Expansion Order, the soldiers of North City would soon reach one hundred and fifty thousand.

If the Barbarian Slave Soldiers were added, that would make two hundred and fifty thousand troops!

With these two hundred thousand troops, not to mention attacking a small country, even directly assaulting the Great Xia Dynasty would not be out of the question.

Of course, to win a war of conquest, it was not just about having more soldiers; logistics were also crucial.

So, Mu Changtian believed that Lu Chen was planning to continue conserving his strength, waiting for the right moment.

Just then, Mu Changtian suddenly thought of something and immediately said to Lu Chen, “My Prince, the war has ended. If the Imperial Court becomes aware that you command tens of thousands of Heavy Cavalry, some might harbor designs on your wife and children. The most urgent task is to immediately send someone to bring the Princess and the others back to North City, or to send someone to Anping City to protect them.”

Lu Chen immediately understood what Mu Changtian meant.

Heavy Cavalry in this era not only symbolized combat power but also represented a strong comprehensive strength, because creating a Heavy Cavalry required many resources, and maintaining one also cost a great deal of money.

The entire Great Xia did not have fifty thousand Heavy Cavalry, yet just North City alone had so many, which would inevitably arouse the Imperial Court’s fear.

At that time, the Imperial Court might suggest that the Sum Emperor bring Lu Chen’s wife or children to the Capital city as hostages to prevent Lu Chen from rebelling.

Using a Seignior’s children as hostages was the most common approach by the Imperial Court.

Previously, the Sum Emperor would not do so because Lu Chen seemed inept, and there was no need to take his children as hostages.

Now things were different, as the troops of North City, led by Lu Chen, not only killed two hundred thousand Barbarian soldiers but also captured another hundred thousand from the Barbarian Army.

This had reached the point where one's merits could overshadow their master.

Even if Lu Chen was the Sum Emperor's son, the Sum Emperor would now be wary, and he might, taking advantage of Lu Chen being caught off guard, directly bring Lu Chen's wife and children from Anping City to the Capital city as hostages.

Lu Chen then said to Xuanyuan Chen, "General Xuanyuan, you immediately lead five thousand Black Cavalry, together with Captain Mu, and head south to bring back all members of my family to Yan County."

People in Anping City were still unaware that he possessed Heavy Cavalry, so they would likely be vigilant about Xuanyuan Chen's identity, thus Lu Chen planned to have Mu Jingwu also go south to bring back Mu Zixuan and the others, to prevent the Imperial Court from targeting his children later on.

Upon hearing Lu Chen's order, Xuanyuan Chen and Mu Jingwu immediately responded, "Yes, Prince!"

They then mounted their horses and rode away.

At the same time.

Lin Xiuming and his troops, numbering seventy thousand, were fast approaching Wanning Valley.

In order to arrive at Yan County before the Barbarian Army did, they were traveling day and night, hardly resting at all.

The soldiers were now beginning to doze off even as they marched.

At that moment, a soldier spotting the city gates in the distance, immediately shouted, “We’ve arrived! We have finally reached Yan County!”

Lin Xiuming’s expression was stern as he frowned deeply; he did not relax despite having reached Yan County.

Entering Yan County was the most crucial step, as no one knew if the city was already occupied by the Barbarian Tribe at this time.

Lin Xiuming immediately shouted, “Stay vigilant! Scouts, go scout ahead!”

As his words echoed, several dozen Cavalry headed toward the south gate of Yan County.

To defend against the Barbarians, most of Yan County’s soldiers were at the north gate, leaving only a few at the south gate.

When the soldiers guarding the southern gate saw the Imperial Army approaching, they were immediately alarmed.

The soldiers of Yan County were not foolish; they knew very well that some things about the North Prince should not be displayed, as it could lead to serious trouble with the Imperial Court if it found out.

The squad leader guarding the gate immediately said to his men, “Quick! Go inform the Prince that the Imperial Army has arrived!”

The guard did not hesitate to mount a fast horse and rode toward the north gate.

Chapter 113: What? The War is Over?_i

Before long, Lin Xiuming’s scout cavalry arrived beneath Yan County’s city walls, where one of the soldiers shouted, “We are the reinforcement troops sent by the Imperial Court to aid the North Prince, our general is Lin Xiuming, please open the city gates immediately! Let us in!”

Upon hearing this, the soldiers of Yan County were extremely tense. At that moment, a Colonel guarding the city gate promptly replied, "The North Prince is currently holding off the Barbarian Army at the North Gate! Please wait a moment! We will go and report this!"

Hearing this, a soldier instantly became irate, "What's there to report? The Barbarian Army is already here, hurry up and let us in! If anything happens to the North Prince, can you gatekeepers take responsibility?"

The Colonel spoke again, "Don't be hasty, this is a critical period, we need to confirm that you are indeed the Imperial Army."

Hearing this, the scout could only comply with the procedure, showing them official documents to confirm their identity to the soldiers at the southern gate.

Seeing that the soldiers of Yan County seemed to be stalling, Lin Xiuming's expression grew increasingly grim.

At that time, Lin Xiuming's deputy, Zhou Yu, said beside him, "General, could it be that Yan County has already fallen to the Barbarian Tribe? I have a feeling that these soldiers guarding the city don't want to let us in."

Zhou Yu was a man from Prince Lu Shuyun's side and naturally wouldn't mind seeing the North Prince captured by the barbarians. If Yan County were to fall, Zhou Yu wouldn't feel like it was a loss for Great Sum.

After hearing Zhou Yu's words, Lin Xiuming just looked at the city in front of him expressionlessly, without saying a word.

He could tell from Zhou Yu's tone that Zhou Yu seemed quite eager to see the North Prince in trouble, and Lin Xiuming was no fool. He knew Zhou Yu was Prince Lu Shuyun's man as soon as he left the Capital city.

As a child of the Prime Minister's household, Lin Xiuming had a profound understanding of the political situation in the court.

Then Zhou Yu continued, “General, if Yan County truly has been occupied by the barbarians, then we should retreat as quickly as possible. If we wait for the Barbarian Army to catch up, I’m afraid all seventy thousand of us will be annihilated.”

Upon hearing this, Lin Xiuming coldly said, “Deputy General Zhou, you seem quite eager to see the North Prince in trouble?”

Zhou Yu hurriedly replied, “General, you misunderstand me. I just feel that if Yan County has fallen, then there is no longer any need to defend North City.”

Hearing this, Lin Xiuming turned to glance at Zhou Yu, then sternly said, “Today we surrender North City to the barbarians, tomorrow we might as well give the Qi Prince’s territory to them as well, then the day after tomorrow, should we surrender the entire Great Sum to the Barbarian Tribe?”

Seeing Lin Xiuming grow angry, Zhou Yu immediately fell silent, not saying anything more.

Lin Xiuming turned his gaze back to the city tower of Yan County; the flag of the North Prince was still displayed there. He guessed Yan County had not yet fallen and likely, as the soldiers guarding the city had said, the Barbarian Army was indeed already in the Wanning Valley.

All they needed now was the North Prince’s orders. Once the North Prince knew that the Imperial Army had arrived, he would definitely order them into Yan County immediately, to help defend the city against the barbarians.

With their seventy thousand men, holding Yan County was most likely not going to be a problem.

Lin Xiuming tried to think optimistically, and at this point, he could only think optimistically. If Yan County had indeed fallen at this time, then they would certainly not be able to recapture it, and most likely would have to retreat embarrassingly back to the Qi Prince’s territory and then to the Capital city to accept punishment.

About half an hour later, the city gates of the south finally opened.

Seeing the city gates open, Lin Xiuming finally breathed a sigh of relief. He was already prepared for battle.

At that moment, a soldier rode out from the city on horseback and then loudly said, "The battle against the Barbarian Tribe has ended. The Prince has instructed me to inform you to proceed to Wanning Valley quickly to clean up the battlefield."

Upon hearing this, Lin Xiuming and the other officers were stunned.

What?

The war is over?

How is that possible!

Could it be that Yan County really has fallen to the barbarians?

Is this a trap?

Do the barbarians want to wait for their seventy thousand men to enter the city and then annihilate them?

While they were entertaining these thoughts, Lin Xiuming still took the lead, charging towards the city gates.

"Soldiers, follow me into the city!"

However, whether Yan County had already been occupied by the Barbarian Tribe or not, Lin Xiuming needed to verify it personally, even if it meant his seventy thousand men might be attacked by the Barbarians in the process.

These seventy thousand men had come to North City to resist the Barbarian Tribe, so how could they just run away without having even seen the Barbarians? Did that make any sense?

Seeing Lin Xiuming set out, the soldiers also began to make their move, with the army slowly following Lin Xiuming into the city.

But all the soldiers were very vigilant; this army of seventy thousand elite soldiers, all battle-hardened, still had their necessary caution.

After entering the city, Lin Xiuming found that there were still sparse commoners on the streets.

However, most of the commoners were inside their rooms, opening just half of their doors, stealthily watching the outside.

The commoners naturally knew that the Barbarian Army was attacking Yan County, so they dared not go out.

Just at this moment, a Messenger Soldier shouted loudly, “Great victory in North City! Great victory in Yan County! North Prince has led the soldiers of North City, slain two hundred thousand Barbarian soldiers, and captured one hundred thousand!”

The Messenger Soldier shuttled nonstop through every street in the city, loudly announcing the outcome of the war.

Soon, the Imperial Army that had entered the city all heard the announcements from the Messenger Soldier.

Hearing the Messenger Soldier say that the North Prince had led the army of North City to kill two hundred thousand soldiers and had captured one hundred thousand Barbarian soldiers, the soldiers of the Imperial Army were astonished.

The first thing they thought of was that this must be fake news!

Most of the soldiers in the seventy thousand army that Lin Xiuming led had fought against the Barbarians before; they were well aware of the Barbarians’ combat strength.

Let alone three hundred thousand, if they were to fight fifty thousand of the Barbarian Army without the protection of a fortress, it wouldn't be an easy task for this seventy thousand to achieve victory.

And now North City's Messenger Soldier was saying that the North Prince, with his troops, had defeated the thirty thousand-strong Barbarian Army?

Not just defeated, but had also slain two hundred thousand Barbarian soldiers and captured one hundred thousand, effectively annihilating them?

Could that be possible?

What a joke!

How many soldiers did North City have? Forget beating the Barbarian Army, even defending North City itself was extremely difficult.

If they truly had that strength, the Imperial Court would not have needed to dispatch seventy thousand troops for reinforcement.

Lin Xiuming was puzzled; why would the North Prince spread such false news within the city.

This sounded completely unbelievable upon hearing it.

Anyone with a bit of sense would know that the North Prince could not possibly have defeated the thirty thousand-strong Barbarian Army.

Moreover, the North Prince's fabricated news was too far-fetched; if he had said they repelled the Barbarians' attack, perhaps the common folk might have believed it.

But claiming to have slain two hundred thousand of the Barbarian Army and captured another hundred thousand soldiers?

Who would believe that?

There's always a reason behind everything, and now Lin Xiuming really wanted to know what the North Prince was up to.

He then said to the soldiers behind him, "Pick up the pace, we must rendezvous with the North Prince as soon as possible."

About half an hour later, Lin Xiuming, leading the seventy thousand-strong Imperial Army, finally arrived at the northern gate of Yan County.

At this moment, Lu Chen was standing on the city tower, gazing toward the north.

A soldier from North City came to Lin Xiuming's side and said, "General Lin, the North Prince is waiting for you on the city tower!"

Chapter 114: Letting the Imperial Army Clean Up the Battlefield_i

Seeing the North City soldiers before him soaked in blood, with the stains on their armor not yet dry, and their body armor everywhere marked with slashes, they looked as if they'd just been through a great battle.

Lin Xiuming's heart skipped a beat. Could it be that, before they entered the city, North City was really in battle with the Barbarian Tribe?

Lin Xiuming didn't think too much about it. He immediately leaped up and landed directly on the walls of North City.

However, just as Lin Xiuming had landed on the city walls, he saw the ground beyond the walls littered with the bodies of Barbarian Tribe members, and countless pits that couldn't be assessed quickly.

Some of the Barbarian Tribe soldiers and horses had died particularly gruesome deaths, almost dismembered, with organs scattered all over. The ground outside the city was dyed red with blood.

Seeing this scene, Lin Xiuming was completely stunned.

He even forgot to walk up to Lu Chen to pay his respects.

From this, it was evident that a great battle had indeed taken place before the Imperial Army entered the city.

And judging by the many bodies the Barbarian Tribe had left behind, it seemed that the Barbarian Tribe had been repelled by the garrison of North City.

Lin Xiuming was utterly astonished. He really wanted to know how so many soldiers from the Barbarian Tribe could have died, especially since it appeared that they had died before even getting close to the walls of Yan County.

Especially those large pits on the open ground, Lin Xiuming found them very puzzling. What were those pits for?

Of course, astonished as he was, Lin Xiuming still didn't believe the earlier reports they heard of North City soldiers killing two hundred thousand Barbarian Tribe soldiers and capturing a hundred thousand were true.

Lin Xiuming took a deep breath to quickly calm himself down, then lifted his head to look into the distance.

At this moment, a young man in golden armor stood atop the walls, gazing into the distance. Lin Xiuming had seen Lu Chen, so he recognized him at a glance.

However, for some reason, Lin Xiuming always felt there was something extraordinary about the aura emanating from Lu Chen, whose entire demeanor had undergone a drastic change.

When Lu Chen had his wedding, Lin Xiuming attended his banquet, and Lu Chen did not have such a demeanor back then.

Lin Xiuming hurried towards Lu Chen, and only after getting closer did he suddenly realize why he felt different about Lu Chen.

It turned out that Lu Chen emitted the aura of a Martial Artist, and his presence bore a heavy killing intent, typical of Martial Artists who had killed a large number of people.

The North Prince is actually a Martial Artist?

How could this be possible?

Lin Xiuming was even more confused. The North Prince he saw in the Capital was an absolute waste, someone without any strength and who was not adept in martial arts. How could he possibly be a Martial Artist?

The key was that Lin Xiuming felt that Lu Chen's strength was not weak. At the very least, he had reached the realm of a Half-step Grandmaster, and even Lin Xiuming, a Grandmaster, felt some pressure in Lu Chen's presence.

Lin Xiuming immediately bowed and said, "Greetings, Prince. I failed to arrive in North City on time; please punish me, Prince."

Lu Chen didn't turn his head, his gaze fixed on the north. At that moment, he spoke indifferently, "Punish? No, no, no, General Lin, you've arrived just in time."

The previous night's battle had killed two hundred thousand Barbarian Tribe soldiers, and now Wanning Valley was strewn with the bodies of Barbarian Tribe soldiers and horses. Although Lu Chen had considered having the captured Barbarian Tribe soldiers transport the bodies and clean up the battlefield.

But since those Barbarian Tribe soldiers had just been captured, Lu Chen was worried they might harbor ulterior motives.

So he didn't have them clean up the battlefield, but the battlefield did need cleaning. With so many bodies of Barbarian Tribe soldiers and horses, if they were left in Wanning Valley, a plague could very well break out.

Moreover, there was the Wanning River in Wanning Valley. With so many corpses near the river, the entire river would be polluted. Where would Yan County get its water then?

These bodies had to be dealt with. Since they couldn't let the Barbarian Tribe soldiers handle it, Lu Chen had thought of having the soldiers of North City or mobilizing the common folk do the job. He had someone go back to the city to announce the victory because he wanted to mobilize the people.

But with the arrival of the seventy-thousand-strong Imperial Army, they did not need the common folk. It was just right to have this huge army clean up the battlefield.

They had come all this way, and it wouldn't do to return without doing anything.

At this moment, Lu Chen continued to address Lin Xiuming, "General Lin, I'll leave the task of cleaning up the battlefield to you."

Upon hearing this, Lin Xiuming was momentarily stunned.

Cleaning up the battlefield?

Had the Barbarian Army already retreated?

Lin Xiuming then asked, "Prince, has the Barbarian Army already retreated?"

Hearing this question, Lu Chen simply said, "You'll understand once you go out of the city to clean up the battlefield."

When Lu Chen heard that the Imperial Army was coming to Yan County, he only brought a few people back with him, and now the soldiers of North City are still cleaning up the battlefield outside Yan County. Lin Xiuming and his men will know the situation outside once they go there."

Telling Lin Xiuming about the outcome of the war now would probably lead to disbelief, so it's better to let them, to let the Imperial Army, see it for themselves.

Lu Chen had already ordered the artillery camp to withdraw the howitzers; now, even if Lin Xiuming and his men went out, they wouldn't see this kind of weapon.

As for the Heavy Cavalry.

It was fine for Lin Xiuming and the others to see them, after all, North City had achieved such a significant military victory and must have a reasonable explanation, otherwise, it would bring more suspicion.

The Heavy Cavalry was a very good explanation.

Once Lin Xiuming and his men saw the tens of thousands of Heavy Cavalry of North City, they would most likely believe that North City's victory was due to these Heavy Cavalry.

This would make it even easier to conceal the howitzers, and as for whether the Heavy Cavalry might cause concern from the Imperial Court, that was inevitable.

However, Lu Chen also knew that the current court and his own father, the Sum Emperor, were not focused on dealing with him, the Seignior of North City. The Sum Emperor's primary concern was still purging the court and dealing with Aristocratic Families.

Before removing the Aristocratic Families, it was unlikely he would take action against a Seignior.

Moreover, the court had just issued a Military Expansion Order. As a Seignior who could recruit up to one hundred and fifty thousand soldiers, maintaining a cavalry unit shouldn't be a problem, right? The Military Expansion Order did not prohibit the formation of cavalry troops.

At this time, Li Feng arrived at the city tower.

When he saw that the arriving general was Lin Xiuming, Li Feng was slightly startled, thinking it was fortunate that General Mu had also returned; otherwise, it would be troublesome if discovered by Lin Xiuming and his men later.

Li Feng saluted Lu Chen and said, "Greetings, Prince!"

Lu Chen turned his head towards Li Feng and said, "General Li, I will trouble you to lead General Lin and his men to clean up the battlefield."

"I am feeling a bit tired, so I'll be heading back now."

Li Feng immediately said, "Yes, Prince!"

After that, Lu Chen turned and left.

Watching the departing figure of Lu Chen, Lin Xiuming paused for a moment, then turned to Li Feng next to him and said, "General Li, has the Barbarian Army retreated?"

Lin Xiuming had some recollection of Li Feng, after all, Li Feng had been a critical support for Mu Changtian in the Hu Ben Army.

Hearing Lin Xiuming's question, Li Feng said with a smile, "General Lin, it's not just a simple matter of having repelled the Barbarians. Wait until we leave the city and you will see the great achievements our soldiers of North City have made under the leadership of the Prince."

Seeing that Li Feng was also playing coy, Lin Xiuming frowned slightly.

He couldn't help but wonder, could it be that North City truly achieved a significant victory this time?

Could they have been lucky enough to kill an important figure from the Barbarian Tribe's royal court?

Chapter 115: The Shocked Imperial Army_i

At this moment, Lin Xiuming still couldn't believe the battle report announced earlier by the Messenger Soldier in the city, after all, that was an army of three hundred thousand from the Barbarian Tribe.

Not just anyone could defeat an army of three hundred thousand Barbarians, North City simply didn't possess that capability.

He could only assume that North City had achieved some decent results while defending against the Barbarian onslaught, perhaps by luck, they had taken out an important figure from the Barbarians.

Beyond that, he really couldn't think of any other significant results the tens of thousands of soldiers from North City could have achieved.

Li Feng didn't offer much explanation to Lin Xiuming, knowing full well that until they saw the corpses of the Barbarian soldiers on the battlefield, Lin Xiuming and the others would be unable to believe the victory North City's soldiers had achieved.

Li Feng then led Lin Xiuming and the others out of the city.

After the Imperial Army exited the city, seeing the ground littered with Barbarian corpses, they were all incredibly incredulous.

The blood on the ground hadn't even dried yet, clearly indicating a battle had erupted the previous night.

Did North City really possess such terrifying combat power?

How did they achieve this?

The soldiers were having a hard time believing the scene before their eyes, especially when they saw that the bodies of the Barbarian soldiers and their horses were in pieces, they became even more curious about what kind of weapon North City had used to pulverize the bodies of men and horses alike. These seventy thousand men

were mostly veterans of many battles, but this was the first time they had ever witnessed such a bloody battlefield, more sanguinary and ghastly than any battle they had experienced before. The armor on those Barbarian soldiers was as if it had been destroyed by something.

in their previous battles, at least the soldiers had bodies that were somewhat intact, at most missing an arm or a leg or something.

But the scene before them was utterly different, the bodies of some Barbarian soldiers were likely beyond reassembly, completely annihilated into fragments by something.

A question arose in the soldiers' hearts.

Just what happened at the north gate of Yan County last night?

It wasn't just the soldiers who thought this way, Lin Xiuming and Zhou Yu were also incredibly shocked and speculating about what had happened the previous night.

At this point, Lin Xiuming couldn't hold back any longer, so he took the initiative to ask Li Feng, "General Li, why have these Barbarians' bodies become so... fragmented?"

Upon hearing this question, Li Feng replied, "Oh, maybe they were hit by rocks."

Hearing this, Lin Xiuming instantly knew Li Feng was lying.

Could rocks create a crater several meters wide? And pulverize Barbarian soldiers to such an extent? Moreover, why did some Barbarian bodies have so many bloody holes?

Obviously, North City had employed some kind of mysterious weapon they had never witnessed before.

Lin Xiuming was, after all, the commander of the Qilin Army and battle-seasoned, he was no fool.

Although he didn't know what weapon North City had used, Lin Xiuming was very clear that this weapon was definitely not a trebuchet and was far more terrifying than one.

But when he had gone up the city wall earlier, he had not seen any large-scale weapon capable of producing such lethal effects.

What did this indicate?

It showed that in the half-hour they had waited at the south gate, North City had already moved away all the weapons they had used the previous night, specifically to keep the Imperial Army from discovering them!

Lin Xiuming's expression became somewhat grim.

He had now understood that the North Prince was no longer the same North Prince he had seen in Capital city.

From the martial aura he had sensed on the North Prince earlier, he could determine that a great change had occurred with the North Prince, and likewise, a significant change had happened in North City.

A bold speculation suddenly emerged in Lin Xiuming's mind. The North Prince of the past had always been concealing his true capabilities! With this conjecture, Lin Xiuming led the Imperial Army to continue moving northwards toward Wanning Valley.

Just then, the earth began to tremble.

Distant rumbling of horse hooves approached.

Subsequently, a mass of shadows rapidly moved toward Yan County. Seeing this, Lin Xiuming thought the Barbarian Army had arrived and immediately said, "All troops on alert!"

However, just as Lin Xiuming's words fell, Li Feng spoke up, "General Lin, don't be nervous, those are North City's Cavalry."

After hearing Li Feng's words, Lin Xiuming was once again stunned.

North City's Cavalry?

Does North City actually have such a large scale of cavalry?

As Lin Xiuming spaced out, his deputy, Zhou Yu, immediately reminded him, "General, look quick! Those are heavy cavalry!"

Hearing these words, Lin Xiuming looked towards the dark mass of cavalry ahead and was instantly dumbstruck.

They were actually heavy cavalry!

And it seemed that there were at least five thousand men!

How is this possible?

When did North City acquire so many heavy cavalry!

A seignior could already be considered quite good if they could afford three thousand light cavalry, yet the North Prince actually had more than five thousand heavy cavalry!

This...

Soon, the heavy cavalry led by Xuanyuan Chen appeared in front of Li Feng and his group.

Although Lu Chen had ordered Xuanyuan Chen to immediately take his troops to Anping City to meet with the Prince's consort, they had just ended a war, and the

soldiers were all exhausted. So, Xuanyuan Chen made some brief arrangements and then happened to run into Li Feng and his group.

After giving a nod to Li Feng as a gesture, Xuanyuan Chen bypassed the Imperial Army and headed straight for Yan County.

Seeing the imposing heavy cavalry, the soldiers of the Imperial Army felt their bodies trembling, the sound of hooves resonating with their hearts.

After Xuanyuan Chen and his heavy cavalry left, Lin Xiuming turned his head and asked Li Feng, “General Li, are those really the Prince’s cavalry? If I’m not mistaken, there must be at least five thousand heavy cavalry, right? How long has the Prince been in North City, and how could he have forged so many armors in such a short period of time?”

To create a heavy cavalry force, one not only needs to forge armor for the soldiers but also battle armor for their horses and moreover, one needs to breed horses of exceptionally good quality.

Lin Xiuming did not believe that the North Prince could have created such a force of five thousand heavy cavalry in such a short period of time, especially with a Grandmaster level officer leading them.

Let alone whether the North Prince Mansion and North City had that much money, there simply wasn’t enough time.

Unless...

The North Prince had already been secretly having such a cavalry force made! To secretly construct such a force of heavy cavalry behind the Sum Emperor’s back, what was the North Prince planning to do?

It seemed to go without saying.

At this moment, a smile involuntarily appeared on Zhou Yu’s face, who stood beside Lin Xiuming.

He truly hadn't expected that his visit to North City would reveal the North Prince's secret.

If he were to report to the Imperial Court that the North Prince had privately constructed five thousand heavy cavalry, the North Prince might not be able to get away with it this time!

At that time, Li Feng replied with a smile, "The Prince's Mansion has many ? craftsmen, so the speed of crafting armors is quite fast, nothing surprising." Having said that, Li Feng continued onward with Lin Xiuming and their group. Lin Xiuming also realized that Li Feng was not going to tell him about the North Prince, so he didn't ask further and followed Li Feng to continue northward.

Gradually, Lin Xiuming and his men discovered more and more corpses of Barbarian Tribe soldiers and soon they came upon the Wanning River, dyed red with blood.

At this moment, the Wanning River was like the River of Netherworld flowing out from the underworld!

Seeing the pile of corpses on the river bank, the soldiers couldn't help but feel their scalps tingle.

They had originally thought that the news of twenty thousand Barbarian Tribe soldiers being slain, announced by the messenger soldier in the city, was false. But having seen the Wanning River turned red with blood, they realized that there were probably even more corpses of Barbarian Tribe soldiers upstream in the Wanning Valley.

Perhaps the military achievement of slaying twenty thousand Barbarian Tribe soldiers was real!

Thinking that the North Prince, along with the soldiers of North City, had slain two hundred thousand Barbarian soldiers, the Imperial Army soldiers felt a chill down their spines.

How many people were there in North City...

To have slain two hundred thousand Barbarian Tribe soldiers!!!

This meant that the soldiers from North City had reached the strength of Eighth Grade, or even Ninth Grade, each!!!

But was that possible?

At that moment, the ground began to tremble again.

More dark figures appeared in the distance once more.

Chapter 116: The North Prince is Going to Rebel !_1

Seeing the black figures in the distance, Li Feng frowned and shouted again, “All troops, to arms!”

The cavalry that had just passed by were from the North Prince, so surely these weren’t his men, right?

Therefore, Lin Xiuming believed that there was a high probability that the Barbarian Tribe’s army had come for revenge.

However, just as the soldiers braced themselves for an imminent battle, Li Feng spoke up, “General Lin, no need to panic, these are also the Prince’s cavalry!” Upon hearing this, Lin Xiuming and Zhou Yu were taken aback.

How could that be?

North City was such a poor place that it was already unbelievable that they could maintain five thousand Heavy Cavalry, and now Li Feng was actually telling them that the North Prince had another cavalry force!

Just as Lin Xiuming felt his entire worldview being overturned, the cavalry led by Wenren Lie had already arrived before them.

This time the cavalry formation led by Wenren Lie was even more astonishing because this time it wasn't just five thousand cavalymen.

Seeing such a vast number of Heavy Cavalry, Lin Xiuming, Zhou Yu, and the seventy thousand imperial soldiers stood frozen in place.

By the time this force, consisting of tens of thousands of Heavy Cavalry, drew closer, the imperial soldiers could not help but grip their weapons tighter.

How intimidating could a force of Heavy Cavalry be?

To put it this way, in the history of Great Sum, there had been an instance where three thousand Heavy Cavalry defeated a hundred thousand peasant soldiers, and they did so by chasing them down.

The soldiers' fear of Heavy Cavalry was ingrained in their very bones, especially on such open ground.

If it were a siege, even the mightiest Heavy Cavalry would have a hard time being effective, but once it came to open battle, that was a different matter altogether.

The charge of Heavy Cavalry could quickly break the infantry formations. Once the infantry lines were disordered, their morale would plummet.

In battle between two armies, morale is very important, especially during hand-to-hand combat where the braver force wins when encountering the enemy in a narrow path.

Lin Xiuming watched the ten thousand Heavy Cavalry before him, dumbfounded. As a general, he could roughly estimate the number of soldiers in a formation.

Even without Li Feng telling him how many men made up this force of Heavy Cavalry, Lin Xiuming suspected that there were at least twenty thousand men.

If one included the Heavy Cavalry that had previously departed, North City would have nearly thirty thousand Heavy Cavalrymen!

This...

How did North City sustain thirty thousand Heavy Cavalry?

How much silver would that require?

Lin Xiuming also knew about the North Prince Mansion's soap sales, the perfume business, and he understood these were lucrative, but even so, how could so many Heavy Cavalrymen have been raised so quickly?

The entire imperial court of Great Sum had only slightly over twenty thousand Heavy Cavalrymen!

Yet now, just North City alone had nearly thirty thousand Heavy Cavalrymen! Could anyone really believe that the North Prince harbored no other intentions? Probably as soon as news of North City reached the court, the court would station troops in Qi Prince's domain overnight to prevent the North Prince from moving south, or they would immediately bring the North Prince's wives and children from Anping City to the capital city as hostages to keep them under surveillance.

The North Prince's Heavy Cavalry were much more intimidating than the Barbarian Tribe's three hundred thousand warriors.

With the Barbarian Tribe's three hundred thousand moving southward, for now, it seemed that, at most, they would occupy North City. Perhaps in private, they even struck some deals with certain Aristocratic Families or Princes, and they wouldn't directly attack Great Sum's heartland.

But if the North Prince's tens of thousands of Heavy Cavalry moved south, their goal would likely not be just a single county, but the entirety of Great Sum!

Zhou Yu, as Prince Lu Shuyun, felt cold sweat streaming down. He felt as though he had walked into a dangerous place.

Having discovered the North Prince's secret today, he wondered if he would be able to leave North City.

At that moment, one of Lin Xiuming's soldiers stammered, "Gener... General, look... look over there! There's...there's so many Barbarian Tribe soldiers!"

Lin Xiuming quickly raised his eyes toward the distance.

That was when they noticed the hands of the Barbarian Tribe soldiers, bound as they were being escorted in groups by the soldiers of North City toward them.

At a glance, it seemed endless.

People once again recalled the battle reports they had heard from the Messenger Soldier in Yan County.

Twenty thousand Barbarian Tribe members slain...

Ten thousand Barbarian Tribe soldiers captured...

This...

Could this be...

True?

Good heavens!

What kind of victory is this!

North City is going to turn upside down!

No, it should be said that the North Prince is going to turn everything upside down!

Since the establishment of Great Sum, there has never been such a victory in foreign wars. When they exterminated the Chen Nation, and in the largest battle against Chen Nation, the Chen Nation's soldiers only totaled two hundred thousand!

And the Barbarian Tribe is not the same as the Chen Nation's soldiers!

The fighting power of the Barbarian Tribe is even more ferocious!

In the wars against the Barbarian Tribe, it was almost always the Barbarians who were the aggressors, while Great Sum was the defender, and each time, Great Sum suffered heavy losses.

Heavy losses aside, at the end of each war, just when Great Sum was about to counterattack, the Barbarian Tribe would take their troops and leave without a trace, never giving Great Sum's army any opportunity to counterattack.

Now, not only has North City defeated the Barbarian Tribe's army of three hundred thousand, they have even captured a hundred thousand of their soldiers!

Once this news is sent back to the court, I'm afraid the Capital city will see a change of heaven!

At this moment, the seventy thousand soldiers of the court hardly dared to breathe, all watching those captured Barbarian prisoners being escorted.

Ten thousand Barbarian prisoners took half an hour just to walk past them, of course, mainly because the soldiers from North City, fearing they would cause trouble, had separated them, and this wasted some time.

Watching the soldiers finally finish passing by after half an hour, Lin Xiuming and the seventy thousand soldiers from the court understood that the outcome they had heard in the city was true!

As citizens of Great Sum, they should feel joyful.

After all, this was the greatest victory in the history of wars against the Barbarian Tribe.

But from general to colonel, down to the soldiers below, no one showed a smile.

While Lin Xiuming and the court's soldiers were still dazed, urgent hoofbeats could be heard again in the distance.

They saw yet another line of dark shadows approaching.

Lin Xiuming felt completely numbed.

Another several tens of thousands of Heavy Cavalry!!!

Where did North City get so many Heavy Cavalry!

What is the North Prince trying to do!

Is he trying to rebel???

After a rough estimate by Lin Xiuming, North City must have at least close to fifty thousand Heavy Cavalry. With this fifty thousand Heavy Cavalry, plus the hundred thousand Slave Soldiers from North City, and then recruiting some regular soldiers, North City would have the strength to attack any dynasty.

As of now, the most a dynasty could mobilize is about one million soldiers, but a considerable number of them are not combat-ready.

Those that can actually fight would definitely not reach one million, whereas North City's soldiers are all genuine, especially these Barbarian Slave Soldiers, who are practically perfect cannon fodder.

The only thought in Lin Xiuming's mind at this moment was three words

— “Write a petition!”

He had to write a petition and report it tonight!

The power of North City is too immense, there is a risk of losing control, and the court must be informed of what happened in North City as soon as possible. Of course, the victory won by North City must also be made known to the court. So Lin Xiuming will use the opportunity to convey the victory to send the news of what happened in North City to the court using the Red Ribbon Messenger.

As for whether the North Prince would allow the Red Ribbon Messenger to return to the court, that’s another matter.

The North Prince had always pretended to be useless, but now he suddenly revealed his true capabilities and stopped pretending.

What does this indicate?

It means that his wings are fully grown and he no longer needs to pretend. Intercepting the court’s Red Ribbon Messenger would be a piece of cake for him.

Lin Xiuming even suspects whether the North Prince would take this opportunity to collude with the Chu Family and directly usurp power.

Chapter 117: Showing Cards i

After the soldiers from North City had taken the Barbarian Tribe away from their sight, Li Feng said with a smile to Lin Xiuming, “General Lin, let us continue moving forward. Soon we will arrive at the battlefield where last night’s fighting was most intense.”

Startled by Li Feng’s voice, a dazed Lin Xiuming snapped back to reality.

His mind had been entirely consumed with drafting the military report.

“Oh, right, okay.”

With that, Lin Xiuming called out loudly to the soldiers behind him, “Advance!”

At the sound of Lin Xiuming’s voice, the Imperial soldiers, whose minds had been a blank, were jolted back to their senses.

The scene that had just unfolded before their eyes still seemed so surreal to them.

They even wondered if they were, in fact, still en route to North City and if everything they had seen was just a dream they had on the way due to the exhaustion from the march, and in reality, perhaps Yan County might have already fallen to the Barbarian Tribe.

Of course, they were aware that this was reality.

In a short while, under Li Feng’s lead, the Imperial Army of seventy thousand soldiers arrived at the place where Mu Changtian and the Black Cavalry had joined forces the previous night, which was also where the most Barbarian soldiers had died.

The entire riverbank was covered with the bodies of Barbarian soldiers, as far as the eye could see.

Even the Imperial soldiers, who had been mentally prepared just a short time ago, were stunned at the sight of so many Barbarian corpses.

Compared to the horrific state of the corpses they had seen before, the bodies of the Barbarian soldiers here were in a more complete state, not so fragmented.

But the scene of corpses stretching across the field was just as shocking as the bloody battlefield they had witnessed earlier.

The bodies of the Barbarian soldiers had been piled up, and the water of the Wanning River was dyed very red, as if the entire river had turned into fresh blood.

Two hundred thousand Barbarian soldiers, the combat prowess of North City was truly terrifying!

Lin Xiuming and the soldiers couldn't help but gasp in astonishment.

It had been a long time since Great Sum had seen an army with such fierce combat ability!

No, it should be said that Great Sum had never before seen a Seignior with this level of strength!

Whether the Sum Emperor's decision to place the North Prince in North City was good or bad, Lin Xiuming couldn't tell.

At this time, Li Feng said to Lin Xiuming, "General Lin, I'll leave the cleanup of the battlefield to you. The soldiers of North City fought heroically through the night, covered in blood, and are now too exhausted to handle the cleanup." Upon hearing Li Feng's words, Lin Xiuming once again came to his senses and immediately replied, "Of course, General Li, you go and rest. We will take care of everything from here on."

Li Feng said, "Alright, then I'll leave you to it."

Lin Xiuming politely responded, "It's no trouble at all, this is our duty."

As soon as Lin Xiuming finished speaking, Li Feng turned his horse and left the battlefield.

Watching Li Feng's retreating figure, Lin Xiuming fell into deep thought.

It was a long time before Zhou Yu's voice sounded beside Lin Xiuming, "General, how should we report the situation in North City?"

The military achievements in North City were so astounding that even if they reported them, the Imperial Court might not believe it.

After pondering for a moment, Lin Xiuming then said, "Report it as it is."

Upon hearing this, Zhou Yu paused, then tentatively asked, "General, are you sure we should report it exactly as it is?"

Hearing Zhou Yu's question, Lin Xiuming turned to look at him and asked sternly, "What, do you intend to take credit for something you did not do?"

Zhou Yu hurriedly replied, "General, I didn't mean it that way. I'm just concerned that if we report truthfully, we might offend the North Prince."

Zhou Yu thought to himself that he wouldn't dare claim such military achievements.

If North City had merely repelled the Barbarian Tribe's invasion, perhaps they could've exaggerated their own impact in the report, claiming how the Imperial Army of seventy thousand had played a significant role.

But the situation now was different. The war between North City and the Barbarian Tribe had ended even before the Imperial Army arrived at Yan County.

Not only had it ended, but it had ended with a crushing victory for North City.

If they were to claim such military achievements, an investigation from above would surely lead to their exile or the execution of their entire families.

Besides, after seeing the tens of thousands of North City's Heavy Cavalry and the mountainous bodies of the Barbarian soldiers on the battlefield, who would dare to think of usurping military credits?

The North Prince was clearly no ordinary individual. If one dared to usurp his military achievements, the North Prince might deal with them even before the Imperial Court could investigate.

Although Zhou Yu was from Prince Lu Shuyun's faction, after witnessing the might of North City's Heavy Cavalry and the stacked bodies of Barbarian soldiers, he had no inclination to play any tricks.

He wanted to stay alive and return to the Capital city.

With the North Prince Mansion's power being so formidable, who would dare to engage in trickery under the North Prince's watch?

After hearing Zhou Yu's words, Lin Xiuming thought for a while and then said, "Let's not worry about the North Prince for now. Tonight, we'll send the battle report to the Imperial Court using a Red Ribbon Messenger. If the North Prince doesn't send anyone to intercept it, that's for the best. But if he does send someone to stop it, then I will personally go to the North Prince Mansion and discuss how to report to the Imperial Court."

Lin Xiuming was concerned that the North Prince might intercept their Red Ribbon Messenger since, once the military achievements of North City were reported to the Imperial Court, the North Prince's strength could no longer be concealed.

"Enough about that. Order the soldiers to begin cleaning up the battlefield!"

As soon as Lin Xiuming gave his command, the Imperial Army of seventy thousand began the cleanup of the battlefield.

Originally, these seventy thousand soldiers were the elite of the imperial court, all of them battle-hardened warriors, yet now they had been reduced to the men specifically responsible for cleaning up the battlefield.

However, most soldiers harbored no complaints; compared to directly battling with the Barbarian Tribe soldiers, carrying their bodies was a more relaxed activity, and, what's more, it posed no threat to their lives.

And, after witnessing the terrifying strength of North City, they were willing to clean up the battlefield for North City's soldiers.

At dusk.

Inside the tent.

Lin Xiuming was leaning over the table, writing a military report, when a red- robed eunuch walked in; this eunuch was the Military Supervisor for this imperial army.

He, just like Lin Xiuming and the others, was deeply shaken by the strength displayed by North City.

At the same time, he harbored a worry in his heart, whether his military report could even be sent out of North City.

The Military Supervisor and the Generals involved in combat each had to write a military report, and they were not allowed to communicate with one another, to prevent the Generals in charge of troops from inflating their military achievements.

Originally, Wang had no need to seek out Lin Xiuming; he could directly send his report with a Red Ribbon Messenger. But the thought that his report might not be able to be dispatched had led Wang to Lin Xiuming's tent.

Seeing the Military Supervisor enter his tent, Lin Xiuming asked, "Eunuch Wang, do you have something on your mind?"

With a worried face, Eunuch Wang asked, "General Lin, have you finished writing your military report?"

Lin Xiuming answered, "I'm in the process of writing it, Eunuch Wang. Surely you aren't here to collude with me regarding the report? That simply wouldn't be proper."

Eunuch Wang exclaimed, "Aiyo, General Lin, at a time like this, you still have the mood to joke around."

"General Lin, you can't possibly be unaware of our current predicament, right?"

“The North Prince hasn’t even allowed us to enter the city but has had us camp in Wanning Valley. This shows he’s guarding against us. Whether our military reports can be dispatched is an issue!”

Lin Xiuming calmly inquired, “So what are you suggesting, Eunuch Wang?”

Eunuch Wang replied, “My thought is to first approach the North Prince to discuss this, to see what his stance is on what can and cannot be written, so we can have a clear idea in our minds.”

Lin Xiuming commented, “Eunuch Wang, do you intend to conceal North City’s military achievements?”

Eunuch Wang responded, “It’s not a question of whether we want to hide them; the key is whether the North Prince is willing to let the court know.”

Lin Xiuming continued to focus on writing his report, while saying, “Eunuch Wang, do you think that such astonishing military achievements can be kept from the court by the North Prince? Even if we inflate the reports, the court will soon learn of the events in North City.”

“The North Prince is not a fool. Slaying two hundred thousand of the Barbarian Tribe and capturing another one hundred thousand, this news has already spread through Yan County. It won’t be long before His Majesty’s Shadow Guards will know, and the events in North City will reach His Majesty’s ears.”

“What the North Prince intends to let the imperial court know, he will let them know. We only need to write. If the North Prince does indeed intercept our reports, we can always go to North Prince Mansion to see him just the same.” After hearing what Lin Xiuming said, Eunuch Wang felt there was some sense to it and then said, “Well then, I’ll heed General Lin’s opinion. General Lin, once your report is sent out, inform me so I can dispatch my Red Ribbon Messenger afterward.”

Eunuch Wang wanted to first see if Lin Xiuming’s report could be sent out. If Lin Xiuming’s report could be dispatched, then he would send his own. But if Lin Xiuming’s report was intercepted by North Prince Mansion, he would immediately seek out the North Prince, so as to avoid offending him.

In the silence of the deep night.

Prince's Mansion.

Lu Chen had just finished bathing and was planning to visit Bai Qingqing's room to "exercise."

At this moment, a female guard approached Lu Chen.

"Prince, Commander Qin has stopped the court's Red Ribbon Messenger. He instructs me to ask whether you wish to review their reports before letting them depart?"

Lu Chen immediately replied, "No need. If I were to do that and the court found out, I would simply be branded a traitor."

The Red Ribbon Messenger's reports went directly from the hands of the frontline Generals to the Emperor; the first person to open and examine them must be the Emperor.

If a Seignior like him were to open and inspect the Red Ribbon Messenger's reports, and if it came to light, he would certainly be labeled a traitor, a thought not even worth contemplating.

Besides, the military achievements of North City were too great to be concealed from the court, and Lu Chen had no intention of doing so. Playing the cards openly was his plan now; what was there to hide?

With several tens of thousands of Heavy Cavalry and one hundred thousand captured Barbarians, was there a need to be as timid as before?

Not at all!

Moreover, his father, the Emperor, was focused on the Aristocratic Families; he hardly had the mind to weaken his vassals.

Upon hearing Lu Chen's words, the guard said, "I understand your will, my Prince. I will let Commander Qin know to release the Red Ribbon Messenger immediately."

With that said, the female guard promptly turned and exited the courtyard.

A few days later.

Anping City.

After arriving at Anping City, Mu Zixuan and her group were constantly worried about the situation in Yan County, frequently sending people from the Prince's Mansion to gather news.

Chu Yuqin sat listlessly in the courtyard at that moment. She suddenly realized that without her Chen'er, her entire being seemed devoid of spirit.

Before, she always thought of maintaining a distance from Lu Chen to avoid unintended consequences, yet when they truly parted, she found herself deeply missing him.

Chu Yuqin sighed deeply, "Ah, when will I be able to see Chen'er again?"

Just then, a young maidservant entered the courtyard, "Madam Chu, a lady outside is asking for you. She says she's your sister!"

Chapter 118: So, you've already climbed into the North Prince's bed, haven't you?_i

After hearing the maid's words, Chu Yuqin, seated on the stone stool, lapsed momentarily into a daze, her face revealing a look of puzzlement.

Sister?

Chu Yuqin immediately snapped back to reality.

“Qing Li? Could it be Qing Li who has arrived?”

She then rose from the stone stool and, with graceful strides, quickly made her way toward the mansion’s entrance.

By the time Chu Yuqin reached the entrance, she saw Chu Qingli, dressed in a green Cloud Attire, tall and poised, with an expression of cool detachment, standing outside with a sword in hand.

Chu Yuqin, curious, asked, “Qing Li, what brings you here?”

Though Chu Qingli, like Chu Yuqin, was raised by the Chu Family, their upbringing within the family differed.

Chu Yuqin’s upbringing was geared towards being the personal maid of Chu Yue, and then, as she grew up, to protect Chu Yue, serving as a tool to take a hit for her.

Chu Qingli’s upbringing, on the other hand, was to be the family’s assassin, a tool to do the family’s dirty work.

Unlike Chu Yuqin, Chu Yuqin had now completely left the Chu Family, and neither would she return to the Chu Family nor would they say anything about it.

But Chu Qingli was different.

In theory, Chu Qingli could not leave the Chu Family without a mission.

Chu Yuqin felt a momentary pause in her heart.

That’s right, Chu Qingli wouldn’t leave the Chu Family without a mission.

Could it be that she had some mission?

Chu Qingli's presence here meant that her mission was very likely related to the North Prince Mansion.

As Chu Yuqin's thoughts were running wild, Chu Qingli asked impassively, "Sister, why haven't you returned to the Chu Family?"

Hearing this, Chu Yuqin came back to her senses, then said, "Sister is now married and no longer considered part of the Chu Family."

Chu Qingli continued to inquire, "Since you are already married, why do you still follow the North Prince? Why do you stay in the North Prince Mansion?" "What can you gain by following that incompetent man?"

An assassin like Chu Qingli was trained to suppress emotions, and all her emotions were entrusted to Chu Yuqin, the person she had been closest to since childhood.

Thus, in Chu Qingli's eyes, Chu Yuqin's happiness was her own happiness.

Now that Chu Yuqin no longer had to stay in the Chu Family, she was free to pursue whatever she desired, yet she still chose to follow the child of Chu Yue.

In Chu Qingli's eyes, Chu Yuqin had become a maid to the North Prince.

Back when she was the maid to Chu Yue, and now, with Chu Yue gone, she continued to serve Chu Yue's son as her master. This was a sign of servility.

Chu Yuqin's servility deeply disgusted Chu Qingli!

In truth, Chu Qingli was also disgusted with her own lack of will to rebel, projecting her own feelings onto Chu Yuqin instead.

Upon hearing Chu Qingli call Lu Chen an incompetent man, Chu Yuqin was taken aback, then responded with slight displeasure, "Qing Li, have you come to North City just to tell Sister these things?"

Chu Qingli said coldly, “You are still the same as before, loyally devoted to your master.”

Chu Yuqin then spoke up, “Given the current instability in North City, if Sister has nothing important, you should leave North City immediately.”

Chu Yuqin didn’t want to argue with Chu Qingli. She was well aware that Chu Qingli had always looked down on Lu Chen, considering him nothing but a worthless man.

When Chu Yuqin had previously returned to the Chu Family, Chu Qingli had urged her to leave Lu Chen to seek her own happiness.

But she hadn’t done so, which had caused a rift between the sisters.

Chu Qingli, with an impassive face, asked, “Sister, are you going to abandon me too?”

This...

Stunned by the question, Chu Yuqin asked in confusion, “What do you mean by that?”

Chu Qingli replied directly, “The Family Head thinks I’m useless and sent me to find you. I thought you would remember our bond and leave North City with me. Now it seems you’ve completely submitted to that incompetent man.”

Once Chu Qingli made this clear, Chu Yuqin instantly understood what was happening.

Chu Xiong had given Chu Qingli freedom to come to North City, probably intending for her to stay by Lu Chen’s side to protect him—as after all, Lu Chen was his grandson, related by blood.

Chu Xiong was not like most men; he didn’t care as deeply about the patriarchal preference for sons, and he had always cherished Chu Yue.

Perhaps because of his own son's failures, Chu Xiong had come to favor Chu Yue more, and he had many regrets about marrying her to the Sum Queen, believing he had destroyed his daughter's happiness.

After Chu Yue's death, it was also Chu Xiong who had Chu Yuqin go to Lu Chen's side to look after and protect him.

Even though Lu Chen had no hope of contending for the throne anymore, Chu Xiong instructed Chu Yuqin not to leave him.

In Chu Yuqin's view, Chu Xiong's concern for Lu Chen stemmed from the love for his daughter having transferred to Lu Chen, his grandson, after her passing.

Chu Yuqin sighed and then said, "Qing Li, have you ever considered that the Family Head sent you to North City because he wants you to protect the North Prince?"

Chu Qingli asked in a tone devoid of emotion, "Why should I protect that useless man?"

"The Family Head has already given me freedom, and from now on, I'm free to do whatever I want."

Chu Yuqin understood why Chu Qingli thought this way; having been trapped in a "cage" for too long, now that she had suddenly gained her freedom, she naturally wouldn't carry out any more tasks given by the Chu Family.

Then Chu Qingli said, "Sister, let's leave North City together. Away from that man, the world is vast; there will always be a place for us sisters to seek refuge. We don't have to be bound by anyone, nor serve as any man's maid anymore. We are free now."

Chapter 119: So, you've already climbed into the North Prince's bed, haven't you?_2

Hearing Chu Qingli's words, Chu Yuqin sighed again and then spoke with deep meaning, "Qingli, I cannot leave North City with you. I have found my place of refuge."

Chu Qingli questioned, "Is the North Prince Mansion what you call your place of refuge? Do you enjoy being a maid to others that much?"

"You are now a married woman, constantly staying at the North Prince Mansion. Do you know how others view you, what they say about you?"

"There are already rumors in the martial world that you are the North Prince's pet, a shameless and unfilial woman."

Hearing this from Chu Qingli, Chu Yuqin was stunned again; she had indeed thought that such a day might come.

After all, the North Prince was no longer a child, and she was no longer Chu Yue's maid. She had married into the Wang Family, and her presence at the North Prince's side was always somewhat illegitimate.

It was normal for people to suspect that there was something between her and the North Prince.

Seeing Chu Yuqin fall silent, Chu Qingli thought she was wavering and took the opportunity to press on, "Sister, come with me. The Barbarian Tribe's three hundred thousand cavalry are moving southward, and staying by the North Prince's side is a dead end for you."

Chu Yuqin then snapped back to reality, her previously serious expression instantly vanished, replaced by a slight smile.

"Qingli, I am happy that the Family Head has given you freedom, but I cannot leave with you. I have decided to stay in the North Prince Mansion for life, no matter what outsiders say about me. I will accept it."

"I promised Sister Chu Yue that I would take good care of Chen'er. Chen'er is now everything to me, and I will never leave him."

"Qingli, go!"

Seeing that Chu Yuqin still refused to leave with her, Chu Qingli's expression remained unchanged, and she said indifferently, "So, the rumors outside are true after all. You have indeed climbed into the North Prince's bed, haven't you?"

Chu Yuqin still did not get angry; she simply said, "The innocent cleanse themselves, the corrupt taint themselves. There's no point in me saying more."

"Qingli, live well from now on. Pretend you don't have a sister like me."

At this point, Chu Yuqin was about to turn around and head back to the mansion, but just then, Chu Qingli suddenly said, "Since you refuse to leave with me, then I won't go either. I want to see what's so great about that man that has you so utterly bewitched."

This...

Chu Yuqin was instantly stunned.

Honestly, if this were before, Chu Yuqin would definitely be very happy to have another Ninth Grade master protecting Lu Chen.

But now things were different.

Lu Chen was already surrounded by many experts, not only Ninth Grade masters but even those at the Master Level.

One more or one less Ninth Grade made no real difference to Lu Chen.

Moreover, Chu Qingli had a prejudice against Lu Chen, and Chu Yuqin was afraid that one day Chu Qingli would impulsively attack Lu Chen.

With these thoughts, Chu Yuqin said, "Qingli, everyone has their own life. You have gained your freedom and should cherish this hard-won liberty. You don't need to follow your sister."

Chu Qingli still spoke expressionlessly, “You seem so reluctant to have me follow you. Are you afraid I will discover your secret affair with the North Prince?”

Chu Yuqin sighed deeply.

Chu Qingli, who had always repressed her emotions since childhood, was stubborn. Once she set her mind on something, it was very hard for her to change.

“If you want to follow your sister, I will not object, but let me remind you, if you attempt to harm Chen’er, from then on, we are no longer sisters, but enemies!”

At this point, Chu Qingli did not speak.

Chu Yuqin then said, “Come with me, I’ll arrange a room for you.”

With that, Chu Yuqin walked toward the mansion, and Chu Qingli followed.

When they entered the courtyard, Mu Zixuan saw a stunning woman with an icy demeanor following Chu Yuqin and asked, “Madam Chu, who is this lady?”

Chu Yuqin replied, “Zixuan, this is my sister from the Chu Family.” Hearing this, Mu Zixuan immediately said, “So this is Madam Chu’s sister. Miss Chu, please come and sit over here.”

Originally, Chu Yuqin had intended to arrange a room for her, but since the Princess had invited her for tea, she was in no hurry for the moment.

At that moment, Chu Yuqin turned back to Chu Qingli and said, “Qingli, this is the Princess, and these are Chen’er’s two wives.”

Chu Qingli promptly curtsied and said, “The commoner greets the Princess and pays respects to the two ladies.”

Mu Zixuan smiled and said, “Miss Chu, no need to be formal. Come and sit.” Without hesitation, Chu Qingli went straight to the stone table inside the pavilion and sat down.

Mu Zixuan subconsciously poured a cup of tea for Chu Qingli, then curiously asked, “Miss Chu, do you have any business in North City?”

Chu Qingli answered, “Back to the princess, I plan to take my sister away from the Prince’s Mansion.”

Upon hearing Chu Qingli’s answer, both Mu Zixuan and the two Zhou servants were stunned. After regaining her composure, Mu Zixuan looked at Chu Yuqin and said, “Madam Chu? Are you planning to leave the Prince’s Mansion?” The relationship between Lu Chen and Chu Yuqin was known to them; how could Lu Chen possibly let Chu Yuqin leave.

Chu Yuqin hurriedly said, “I have no plans to leave the Prince’s Mansion for the time being, I have already rejected her.”

Hearing this from Chu Yuqin, Mu Zixuan breathed a sigh of relief.

At that moment, Chu Yuqin said to Chu Qingli, “Qingli, the tea of the Prince’s Mansion has the effect of refreshing the mind and relieving fatigue. You must be somewhat tired after your long journey. Why not taste the tea of the Prince’s Mansion?”

No sooner had Chu Yuqin finished speaking than Chu Qingli picked up the cup of tea Mu Zixuan had poured for her and drank it down.

Seeing Chu Qingli drink the tea, Mu Zixuan’s heart skipped a beat.

Oh no! She had forgotten to change the tea!

The tea they were drinking was Dragon and Phoenix Tea brought from Yan County!

Others might not know the effects of Dragon and Phoenix Tea, but Mu Zixuan was well aware of them.

This was trouble!

At this time, Mu Zixuan took another look at Chu Qingli.

Cold as ice, skin like creamy jade, an elegant and cold demeanor, a willowy figure, like a goddess descending from the nine heavens, very similar to Bai Qingqing, the concubine maid that Lu Chen had just accepted before they left the Prince's Mansion.

Mu Zixuan thought to herself that the Prince must like such a woman, right? She just hoped that when they returned to Yan County, Lu Chen wouldn't be angry with her.

After drinking the Dragon and Phoenix Tea, Chu Qingli found that the tea from the Prince's Mansion did indeed have the effect of refreshing the mind and stabilizing emotions.

Despite her consistently cold expression, she had been feeling quite heavy-hearted after hearing Chu Yuqin's unwillingness to leave the Prince's Mansion with her.

But after drinking the Dragon and Phoenix Tea, that feeling of heaviness dissipated instantly, and she felt much more relaxed.

The tea was indeed miraculous.

Afterward, Chu Qingli said to Mu Zixuan, "Thank you for the tea, Princess." Mu Zixuan replied with a slightly embarrassed tone, "You're welcome." Then Mu Zixuan continued to ask, "Miss Chu, with the current unstable situation in North City, what are your plans now?"

Chu Qingli, with an impassive face, answered, "Back to the princess, wherever my sister is, I shall be as well."

This...

Mu Zixuan looked at Chu Yuqin.

Then Chu Yuqin quickly said, “Zixuan, I plan to make her the Deputy Commander of the guard in the inner court of the Prince’s Mansion. What do you think?”

Without hesitation, Mu Zixuan said, “That’s no problem at all. By the way, Miss Chu, I still don’t know your name.”

Chu Qingli then said, “My name is Chu Qingli.”

Mu Zixuan enthusiastically said, “Then from now on, we will call you Qingli.” Just as Mu Zixuan was about to continue speaking, a maid from the Prince’s Mansion suddenly rushed in, panic-stricken, “Princess! Princess! It’s terrible!!!”

Seeing the maid’s pale face and frantic expression, Mu Zixuan immediately asked, “What happened?”

The maid hurriedly responded, “Princess, the garrison of Anping City has just spotted a cavalry of about five thousand men rapidly approaching Anping City! They are suspected to be the vanguard of the Barbarian Tribe!”

Upon hearing these words, Mu Zixuan felt her mind go blank, almost fainting to the floor.

Zhou Youyou and Zhou Xiaoxiao quickly supported Mu Zixuan.

With trembling body, Mu Zixuan said, “How... how is this possible... with Yan County there, how could the Barbarian Tribe reach Anping City so quickly, could it be... Yan County has already...”

As she spoke, Mu Zixuan became more agitated, her complexion turning even paler, completely devoid of color.

Chapter 120: Chen’er is a Man Capable of Creating Miracles!

Mu Zixuan did not understand military affairs, but she was not foolish either. She knew that Yan County was the fortress blocking the Barbarian Army's advance southward. If Yan County stood firm, the barbarians would have to take a much longer route to reach Anping City; it simply was not possible for them to arrive so quickly.

There was only one scenario where the barbarians' cavalry could reach Anping City so fast: Yan County had fallen!

The thought of Yan County falling, with Lu Chen's fate unknown, made Mu Zixuan feel like her world was collapsing.

For a moment, the atmosphere in the courtyard became instantly oppressive and gloomy.

Although Dazhou and Xiaozhou were supporting Mu Zixuan, they themselves could barely stand steady.

If the North Prince really had met with disaster, what would become of all the women of the Prince's Mansion?

It was then that Chu Yuqin snapped back to her senses and immediately asked a maid, "Has Captain Mu confirmed that they were the barbarians' cavalry?"

Chu Yuqin refused to believe that Lu Chen had just met with an accident.

Lu Chen was someone blessed by fate; considering his confidence in staying at Yan County, he must have been quite sure he could hold the fortress for a while, until the imperial army marched northward.

It hadn't been long; how could Yan County have fallen already!

Perhaps the cavalry was not from the Barbarian Tribe but from the imperial army instead.

The maid said, “Captain Mu has already ordered the city gates to be shut, and all soldiers within the city are prepared for battle. However, he did not say they were conclusively the barbarians’ cavalry. He just said the cavalry came from the north and is most likely the barbarian cavalry, advising the princess to prepare herself mentally.”

Mu Xingping, Mu Zixuan’s second brother, had intended not to tell her about this matter, fearing she would not be able to bear the news.

But in the end, Mu Xingping had someone inform the North Prince Mansion, thinking that giving Mu Zixuan some forewarning could provide her time to brace herself, as it was still uncertain the advancing cavalry were indeed the barbarians.

If they waited until the North Prince’s fate was confirmed before telling Mu Zixuan, she might be even less able to withstand the shock.

Hearing the maid’s words, Mu Zixuan’s complexion turned even paler.

At that moment, Zhou Youyou’s tears could not help but fall from her eyes, “Wuu wuu wuu, has the Prince already...”

Chu Yuqin then said, “Zixuan, don’t panic, everyone. I’ll go take a look and find out. Have you all forgotten that Chen’er has a blessed destiny? He won’t encounter misfortune so easily. Even if North City has indeed fallen, he would not be in trouble.”

Hearing this, the other women came to their senses.

Indeed, their Prince had a blessed destiny; how could he have died so easily?

Thinking this, Mu Zixuan breathed a slight sigh of relief, yet she remained very worried.

Chu Yuqin then went straight towards the exit of the courtyard. Seeing Chu Yuqin leave, Chu Qingli quickly got up and followed.

Chu Qingli saw this as a good opportunity and said on the way, “Sister, if the North Prince really has an accident, will you leave North City with me?”

As soon as Chu Qingli finished speaking, Chu Yuqin immediately replied, “Chen’er won’t have an accident!”

Hearing the certainty in Chu Yuqin’s tone, Chu Qingli thought she was in denial and did not say anything more.

She thought to herself that it wouldn’t be long before Chu Yuqin had to face reality, and there was no need for her to hurry.

The Barbarian Army of three hundred thousand was moving southward, and Yan County had at most fifty thousand soldiers. It was clear to anyone with eyes that the North Prince could not hold out, yet Chu Yuqin still had faith in him.

Chu Qingli found this somewhat laughable.

She was eager to know what kind of enchanting potion the North Prince had given her sister, making her believe he could withstand the barbarians’ southern invasion.

After leaving the courtyard, Chu Yuqin immediately went to Ma Peng to get a group of horses and headed straight for the city gates.

Chu Qingli also hurriedly followed with a group of horses from the Prince’s Mansion.

Soon, the two of them arrived at the city gates, where the gates of Anping City were completely closed, and the catapults on the city walls were ready.

Chu Yuqin and Chu Qingli leaped up to the city wall. Seeing Chu Yuqin had come, Mu Xingping immediately approached and said, “I’ve seen Madam Chu.” Chu Yuqin promptly asked, “Captain Mo, what’s the situation? Is it confirmed to be the barbarians’ cavalry?”

Since they were in front of the soldiers, Chu Yuqin still addressed Mu Xingping as Captain Mo to avoid detection of his true identity as part of the Mu family.

And being in Anping City, closer to the core of Great Sum, called for extra attention to these details.

Mu Xingping, frowning, answered seriously, “It’s not confirmed yet. They seem to be all Heavy Cavalry dressed in black armor. I have never heard my father mention such cavalry among the barbarians.”

Mu Xingping did not have experience fighting the barbarians directly, but he had heard many things about them from Mu Changtian and had some understanding of them. However, it was his first time hearing about black- armored Heavy Cavalry from the Barbarian Tribes of the North Land.

The barbarians of the grasslands lacked iron and would find it challenging to produce a Heavy Cavalry, so Mu Xingping was still unsure if they were definitely barbarians.

As Mu Xingping spoke, dust kicked up in the distance, and a soldier immediately reminded, “Captain Mo, Madam Chu, they’re coming!”

Chu Yuqin immediately turned to look at the cavalry charging straight towards Anping City from afar.

Chu Yuqin and the others had left Yan County before the Black Cavalry arrived, so they were unaware that Lu Chen had a Heavy Cavalry in his command.