

Es. Benefits 571

Chapter 571: War Begins_1

Yongan County.

On the border line, there are rows of trenches, and with the change of weapons, the form of warfare has also transformed accordingly.

The wars North Country would face in the future are no longer defensive battles hunkered down in cities.

Mu Changtian's army of two hundred thousand was ready for a head-on clash with Great Wu's military.

At the same time.

West of the border line, the three hundred thousand strong army of Great Wu also prepared to attack.

A tall man clad in black armor rode his horse to a small hill near the border line and looked in the direction of Yongan County, followed by many soldiers.

At that moment, a deputy general said, "I don't know what ghosts the soldiers of North Country are up to, digging so many trenches. Do they really think they can stop the cavalry of Great Wu with these ditches?"

Another deputy general said, "Deputy General Xue should not underestimate the soldiers of North Country. They were able to wipe out the Barbarian Tribes of the North Land and also defeat the Tianqi King's army; they do have some strength."

Hearing this, Deputy General Xue snorted coldly, "Defeating those brainless barbarians is nothing to brag about; we are not like those barbarians in the north."

At this point, some soldiers began to echo the words of Deputy General Xue.

"North Country is just a feudal state; how could it possibly match our Great Wu dynasty."

"In my opinion, in less than three months, we will be able to crush the defense of Yongan County and invade North Country."

"Three months? What are you thinking about? Within three months, we could have annihilated the entire North Country, not just invaded Yongan County."

...

The soldiers discussed how long it would take to defeat North Country, as if to them, the downfall of North Country was already a certainty.

Just then, the Main Commander in black armor, Ying Feiyu, spoke up: "Don't get too excited too soon. In this attack on North Country, it is highly likely that we won't be the main force."

Upon hearing Ying Feiyu's words, the deputy generals behind him were taken aback. They knew how significant the achievement of annihilating North Country was. If they could be the main attacking force into North Country, they would definitely earn a lot of military merit. But now, their Main Commander was telling them that they were probably not the main force.

At this time, a deputy general, puzzled, said, "General, after all, we are at the very front line bordering North Country. How could we not be the main force? Didn't His Majesty move us here ahead of time to breach the defense of Yongan County?"

Ying Feiyu replied indifferently, "Most of North Country's forces are concentrated in Yongan County. Do you think His Majesty would commit all our forces to a war of attrition with North Country in Yongan County?"

"If attacking a small North Country already causes us to lose a large number of soldiers, how are we going to annihilate Great Sum in the future?"

Hearing Ying Feiyu's words, everyone paused in thought.

Indeed, although they verbally dismissed North Country's strength, they were well aware that North Country, having defeated the northern Barbarian Tribes and even a Great Grandmaster's army, did possess some means.

If they engaged in a head-on collision with North Country's forces in Yongan County, Great Wu would inevitably suffer significant soldier casualties.

Great Wu's goal of annihilating North Country was preparation for taking down Great Sum. If too many losses were incurred while defeating North Country, it would be a Pyrrhic victory for Great Wu. Therefore, it was very likely that the Martial Emperor would not put all forces into Yongan County.

Ying Feiyu went on, "In my view, the real main forces will surely be those led by General Zhan and General Xu. They may use Great Jue as a path to bypass Yongan County and attack North Country. Our role here is simply to hold North Country's defending forces in Yongan County."

Hearing this, some soldiers thought about it and felt their General had a point.

This made the soldiers feel somewhat disheartened. If they weren't the main force, it meant that Great Wu would not send more troops to them afterward. If they couldn't break through Yongan County, then the credit for conquering North Country would have little to do with them.

Even though they were containing the enemy, they were, after all, not the first to invade North Country. They were only serving a containment role, and would certainly not get as much credit as the forces invading North Country.

Moreover, another key concern was that if they could not invade North Country promptly, then the wealth of North Country would have nothing to do with them. By then, the main force that invaded North Country would have already plundered it, leaving these three hundred thousand troops to look on helplessly.

Seeing that the soldiers behind him seemed unhappy, Ying Feiyu chuckled and said, "Even if we're not the main force, as long as we can take down Yongan County and invade North Country, we will still be the main force."

While it was highly probable that the imperial court would have them contain North Country's main force, if they defeated North Country's main force and invaded it, their merit would be significant. And as long as they could invade North Country before the imperial court's main forces, they could still make a fortune.

After hearing Ying Feiyu say this, the soldiers behind him were once again invigorated. North Country had so many exotic treasures, and if they could invade it before the imperial court's main forces, those treasures would be theirs.

With this in mind, the soldiers found new motivation.

Although this was what they thought, until the imperial court's orders were issued, they could only stay within Great Wu's territory, waiting for the commands from the imperial court.

Half a month later.

Yan County.

Lu Chen and Zhuge Zhongguang stood in front of a map, discussing how the upcoming battle with Great Wu should be conducted.

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Lu Chen at this time said, "Great Scholar, do you think we should attack Great Wu's territory this time?"

Lu Chen had great confidence in the combat capabilities of the North Country's army. In his opinion, it wouldn't be a problem at all for North Country to defeat Great Wu's forces.

However, defeating Great Wu's army would be easy, but the follow-up matters would be more troublesome, such as counterattacking Great Wu.

Lu Chen was still tangled in his heart about whether to counterattack Great Wu and occupy their land.

Although Lu Chen already had experience in governing North Country, after all, it was his feudal state, and if he were to occupy Great Wu's land, he might not be able to manage the common people there effectively.

Governing the common people of another country is a complex matter and not an easy task.

As North Country was still developing, Lu Chen did not wish to create chaos in his own country by occupying foreign lands.

Zhuge Zhongguang at this time said, "Prince, in the humble opinion of this old servant, not only should North Country counterattack Great Wu, but we should also seize Youping County, which borders Yongan County."

"Only by counterattacking Great Wu can we better deter other dynasties and buy more time for North Country's development."

"And by occupying Youping County, it would allow North Country to border the lands directly controlled by the Great Sum court."

"Most importantly, Youping County has a large population, and these common people have grown resentful towards the Great Wu court in the past two years due to droughts and taxation issues. If North Country's policies are introduced to Youping County, we can quickly win over the hearts of its common people, and North Country is also in need of this population."

When Zhuge Zhongguang initially came to North Country, he traveled through many places in Great Wu, including Youping County, so he had some understanding of the situation there.

When North Country was buying Yongan County from Qi Country, they only purchased half of it, and the other half just so happened to block a direct border between North Country and the lands controlled by the Great Sum court.

But Great Wu's Youping County just happens to border the region controlled by the Great Sum court, so if North Country were to move against Great Sum one day, they could launch their troops directly from Youping County, bypassing Qi Country and other feudal states to attack cities controlled by the Great Sum court.

Of course, if North Country were to march south to attack the Capital city one day, they could also choose to advance straight through, but having an additional route into the region controlled by the Great Sum court simply means having more options.

Just as Great Wu would not concentrate all of its military might in Yongan County when attacking North Country but would also pass through Great Jue, entering North Country from there.

Moreover, occupying Youping County has other benefits, such as caravans being able to bypass Qi Country and save on some taxes, but of course, these are all trivial benefits.

For North Country, the real benefit is the population, as the development of North Country relies on its populace, particularly for industrial advancement.

Lu Chen looked at the map before him and pondered for a moment, then said, "Alright, once General Mu and his troops have crushed Great Wu's three hundred thousand soldiers in Youping County, we will immediately launch the counterattack."

Just then, the voice of a soldier rang out from outside, "Prince, urgent report from a Great Wu scout!"

Lu Chen immediately said, "Come in."

The next moment, a Jinyiwei Guard entered the study and handed the intelligence report to Lu Chen. Lu Chen opened it and read carefully, then passed the report to Zhuge Zhongguang who was beside him.

Zhuge Zhongguang took the report, glanced over it, and then said, "It seems that there's going to be a fight over at Yongan County."

Lu Chen then immediately picked up a pen and began writing military orders, stating in the orders that once Great Wu's forces attacked Yongan County, Mu Changtian would lead troops in a counterattack against Great Wu, seize Youping County in the shortest time possible, and cut off the logistics of Great Wu's main force, preventing supplies from reaching the main army entering Great Jue.

Immediately, Lu Chen handed the military orders to a Red Ribbon Messenger, instructing them to deliver the orders to Yongan County with utmost speed.

After handing over the military orders to the Red Ribbon Messenger, Lu Chen wrote another set of orders, instructing Song Xuelin from Yingyang County and Dongmen Feiyue to prepare to face Great Wu's main force directly.

The intelligence that Lu Chen had just received was precisely the news that Great Wu had sent three hundred thousand troops through Great Jue.

Since Great Wu had already sent two Grandmaster Military Generals and three hundred thousand troops into Great Jue, it was certain that Yongan County would be the first to see action; Great Wu would attempt to tie up the soldiers of North Country there and buy time for the main force led by the two Grandmaster Military Generals.

In essence, Great Wu had mobilized a total of six hundred thousand troops for the campaign against North Country.

This news not only reached North Country but also quickly made its way to the Sum Emperor who was immensely pleased upon learning that Great Wu had mobilized six hundred thousand troops to exterminate North Country, as it meant his own plans could soon commence.

A few days passed in the blink of an eye.

The citizens of Yongan County had essentially all left already; in order not to involve them, Lu Chen had issued an announcement early to have them evacuate. Now on the roads of Yongan County, one could hardly see anyone other than soldiers.

Just at that moment, the excited voice of a soldier rose up outside the tent, "General, they're here, they're here!!!"

Hearing this, Mu Changtian immediately stood up.

The next moment, that soldier entered the tent and after catching his breath he said, "General, the enemy general Ying Feiyu is leading an army of three hundred thousand towards our defenses. They claim their soldiers were killed last night and have come to demand justice from us!"

Upon hearing this, everyone in the tent broke into smiles. After such a long wait, the enemy had finally committed troops, and they couldn't wait any longer.

Mu Changtian promptly said, "Prepare the horses, meet the enemy!"

As his words fell, Mu Changtian headed towards the outside of the tent with large strides.

After Mu Changtian left the tent, the sky above Yongan County resounded with continuous drumbeats.

Before long, both armies had arranged their battle formations.

However, when the soldiers of Great Wu caught sight of the army of the North Country, they were all incredibly puzzled.

Their confusion wasn't because the army of the North Country dared to leave the city to engage in battle; they were puzzled as to why the soldiers of the North Country looked so few in number?

In reality, the majority of the soldiers from the North Country had already been on standby at their respective positions—for instance, the artillerymen were already at their stations, and soldiers armed with guns were already waiting in the trenches. The army behind Mu Changtian was the force that would surge forward to scatter Ying Feiyu's troops after the initial clash.

When Ying Feiyu saw a burly man draped in a red cloak emerge from the North Country's side, he knew it must be the North Country's leading general. He immediately gathered his energy and shouted loudly, "Last night, soldiers from North Country infiltrated Great Wu's territory and killed our soldiers. Today, this general has especially come to seek justice!"

Hearing this, Mu Changtian chuckled and then, gathering his energy as well, shouted back, "Ying Feiyu, cut out the nonsense. If you have the capability, bring your soldiers and fight us!"

Upon hearing the familiar voice, Ying Feiyu was taken aback for a moment. Then he furrowed his brow and took a serious look at Mu Changtian in the distance.

The next moment, he suddenly realized who it was.

But before he could say anything, someone behind him intervened, "Mu Changtian, the North Country's leading general is Mu Changtian!"

"Wasn't Mu Changtian already eliminated by the Sum Emperor long ago? Why would he appear here!"

"What's going on?"

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Once Ying Feiyu came back to his senses and didn't care too much about who the leading general was, he continued, "So you're not dead. When I heard in Great Wu that you had been killed, I even felt sorry for you. But not only are you not dead, you've become the Great General of North Country."

"Good, this general has long wanted to see for himself what General Mu is capable of!"

Ying Feiyu and Mu Changtian could be considered old acquaintances after all, belonging to the same generation, and they had met before. This was why, upon hearing Mu Changtian's voice, Ying Feiyu immediately recognized him.

However, even though he recognized Mu Changtian, it did not affect Great Wu's decision to send troops against North Country in the slightest.

War was imminent!

The next moment, Ying Feiyu shouted loudly, "Attack!"

As his voice died away, the sound of drums rose from the ranks of Great Wu's army, and both the archers and spear-carrying soldiers swiftly shifted their positions.

Seeing them arranging their formation, the corners of Mu Changtian's mouth couldn't help but lift slightly.

In the past, it took some time for two armies to arrange their formations before a battle.

But the times had changed.

No matter how good the battle formation was, it couldn't withstand the bombardment of cannons.

The army of Great Wu was swiftly arranging its formation, but the soldiers of North Country didn't budge; mounted on their horses, they stood still.

Chapter 573: The Defeat in War, It's All That Woman's Fault!_1

Seeing that the soldiers of the North Country still stood in place, Ying Feiyu sensed something was amiss.

In battle between two armies, had the opponent really not arranged their formations?

Mu Changtian was an old hand at this; how could he possibly be unaware of the importance of military formations?

Soldiers without formation were nothing but loose sand, could it be that Mu Changtian intended to lead this mass of loose sand against their Great Wu's army of three hundred thousand?

The scene already showed the North Country's soldiers in fewer numbers, roughly estimated at only tens of thousands. Tens of thousands against three hundred thousand had no chance of winning to begin with, let alone the fact that these soldiers of the North Country weren't defending a city, but had come out to face Great Wu in a head-on clash.

In open field battles, the most crucial aspect when two armies squared off was the changing of the military formations; the side without a formation was basically doomed to collapse.

Feeling that something was off, Ying Feiyu considered that Mu Changtian wasn't a fool. How could he possibly not arrange his troops into formation? What was North Country doing?

Although he couldn't figure out what Mu Changtian had up his sleeve, since North Country had exposed such a huge flaw, Ying Feiyu had no plans to be polite.

Under the beat of drums, Ying Feiyu's army quickly formed their battle array, yet at that moment, the drumbeats from the side of North Country also began.

Hearing the drumbeats starting from the North Country, Ying Feiyu initially thought that Mu Changtian's forces were just now organizing their formations. A slight smile curled the corners of his mouth, and he muttered to himself, "It's already too late!"

The next moment, Ying Feiyu prepared to lead a charge, but just then, a deafening sound came from the distance, so loud it drowned out the drums of both sides.

Before Ying Feiyu could react to what had happened, a huge iron ball fell among Great Wu's troops.

Normally, soldiers within a formation would be tightly packed, and it was not hard to imagine the consequences of a cannonball falling directly into such a crowd.

Just as people thought the iron ball was nothing more than a stone hurled by a catapult from North Country, the ball exploded in an instant, and the next moment, soldiers around it were blasted to the ground.

The violent explosion brought Great Wu's soldiers to their senses, including Ying Feiyu. However, Great Wu's three hundred thousand soldiers, seasoned as they were, did not immediately fall into chaos.

Just as Ying Feiyu was about to issue new orders, another continuous rumble echoed from afar.

At the North Country artillery positions, the soldiers had entered into battle status, ceaselessly firing their cannons at Ying Feiyu's army.

With each cannonball exploding in Ying Feiyu's ranks, Great Wu's soldiers' limbs began to fly through the air.

Ying Feiyu finally understood why North Country had so easily conquered the North Land and defeated the Tianqi King's army that had a Grandmaster.

He immediately gave the command, shouting loudly, "Disperse!"

Although he did not know what the exploding iron balls were, he was very clear that if they maintained their dense formation, his army of three hundred thousand would soon be annihilated.

Upon hearing Ying Feiyu's command, the Messenger Soldiers frantically waved the flags. However, just then, a piercing sound passed by Ying Feiyu, and in the next moment, he sensed a threat to his life and quickly dodged.

He might have dodged, but the Messenger Soldier behind him fell down instantly. Ying Feiyu looked back to see a small hole in the Messenger Soldier's forehead as if struck by a hidden weapon.

Shortly after, numerous heads emerged from the trenches dug by the North Country, followed by a torrent of bullets pouring out.

North Country's musket bullets weren't very accurate for now, but Ying Feiyu's ranks had yet to disperse and the soldiers were so densely packed, it was as good as facing a firing squad.

Facing the barrage of incoming bullets, Ying Feiyu immediately said, "The entire army, retreat!!!"

As his words fell, the drumbeats sounded once more—the Messenger Soldiers in the ranks desperately waved their flags, and Great Wu's three hundred thousand soldiers just like that began to retreat, not even enduring a quarter of an hour.

It wasn't due to the loss of many men, but because they had never seen the weapons used by North Country. The shock brought by the cannons and muskets instilled immense fear in their hearts.

Humans always fear the unknown, and Ying Feiyu was afraid that if they continued, the three hundred thousand he led would be decimated here. They must retreat now.

The weapons used by North Country were too terrifying; they had to figure out exactly what those weapons were. Until he understood what weapons North Country used and how they were acquired, Ying Feiyu did not plan to engage again with North Country's troops.

However, that was just his personal thought; Mu Changtian and his forces wouldn't give Ying Feiyu's forces any time as they saw Great Wu's three hundred thousand army retreat in disarray.

At Mu Changtian's command, the North Country's army launched a full counterattack, and Wenren Lie's Heavy Cavalry units also began to move.

Seeing the North Country army counterattacking, Ying Feiyu who was retreating immediately ordered a deputy general to stay behind with fifty thousand troops to hold back the North Country army.

Though reluctant, it was, after all, a battlefield where orders were absolute. The deputy general stayed, ready to have his soldiers loose arrows to stop the North Country army, only to be greeted by relentless bombing.

Before Great Wu's fifty thousand troops could organize an effective defense, their soldiers were blasted into the air by the cannons.

Chapter 574: The Defeat in War, It's All That Woman's Fault!_2

Even the battle-hardened soldiers of Great Wu were terrified by those dreadful cannons, and at this point, no matter how loudly the drums sounded or how the Messenger Soldiers implored them to return, they were resolutely unwilling to go back.

The soldiers' fear had reached its peak, and now, not even military law could restrain their determination to flee. Seeing the fifty thousand soldiers crumble so quickly, Ying Feiyu felt a violent rage inside, but he was helpless in his fury.

The weapons of the North Country were truly terrifying; the explosion from a single cannonball was almost as powerful as an attack from a Grandmaster. One cannonball equaled a strike from a Grandmaster, ten cannonballs were like ten strikes, and a hundred were like a Grandmaster striking a hundred times.

Nobody could withstand the onslaught of a hundred Grandmasters; even if Great Wu's main forces were here, they likely wouldn't be able to withstand the bombardment of the North Country.

Ying Feiyu only wanted to flee to Lingyun City and then attempt to use the city walls to fend off the counterattack of the North Country's massive army.

At that moment, one of Ying Feiyu's deputy generals exclaimed in terror, "It's the Heavy Cavalry! The Heavy Cavalry of the North Country has mobilized!!!"

Hearing this, Ying Feiyu quickly turned to look behind him, and his gaze immediately locked onto the Heavy Cavalry battalion of the North Country.

Those black armors, the soaring murderous aura, made Wenren Lie, a veteran Great General, shudder with fear.

If they were in a proper formation, Ying Feiyu wouldn't be entirely afraid to face the charge of the Heavy Cavalry.

Ordinary formations indeed could not withstand the charge of Heavy Cavalry, but Great Wu's formations had evolved through real combat experiences and could be quite effective against the onslaught of the Heavy Cavalry.

But now, their formations had been completely broken by those cannonballs of the North Country, and in their current state of disarray, they simply couldn't defend against the slaughter of the Heavy Cavalry.

The key issue was that most of Great Wu's troops were infantry, and no matter how fast these infantrymen ran, they could not outrun the mounted Black Cavalry.

Seeing the North Country's Black Cavalry ruthlessly reaping the lives of Great Wu's soldiers, Ying Feiyu's face turned exceedingly grim, yet he was without any solution.

All his soldiers were terror-stricken; there was no chance to form up and resist the Black Cavalry's onslaught now, not to mention the terrifying cannonball weapons of the North Country. Even if they did form up, their ranks would be shattered by the blasts in an instant.

At this moment, Ying Feiyu said coldly, "Pick up the pace!"

The soldiers lagging behind were all considered expendable by Ying Feiyu. He would rather have the Heavy Cavalry of the North Country focus on them, to give the others more time to escape.

About two hours later, the outskirts of Yongan County were littered with corpses, the bodies of Great Wu soldiers lay everywhere.

Meanwhile, Ying Feiyu managed to lead the remaining forces to Lingyun City. The city gates were wide open, with the common folk coming and going, completely unaware of what had happened.

Seeing suddenly a number of soldiers appearing in the distance, the citizens of Lingyun City were stupefied, and some began to complain.

"Another war is upon us, and it's always us who suffer."

"Those Aristocratic Families haven't contributed a grain of rice, always conscripting from us poor families."

"Life is unbearable these days, I say we might as well move to the North Country."

"I heard that as soon as you become a person of the North Country, you immediately get a large piece of land, and what's more, you're exempt from agricultural taxes forever."

"Have you all gone mad, discussing such things? Aren't you afraid of those military lords overhearing?"

As the people were all talking at once, Ying Feiyu's retreating soldiers directly rushed towards the city gate. The common folk had no time to dodge and were instantly knocked to the ground by the horses, with subsequent mounts trampling over those already down. In an instant, the entrance to the city became incredibly chaotic, and many commoners were trampled to death.

Before those who had avoided the army could recover, Ying Feiyu's voice suddenly echoed, "Close the gates!!!"

The Great Wu common folk at the gate were dumbfounded by the sudden order to close the gates of Lingyun City. Right at that moment, a cloud of dust rose again in the distance.

At this time, a Great Wu commoner who had visited the North Country immediately recognized that it was the Black Cavalry of the North Country and urgently shouted, "It's the Heavy Cavalry of the North Country!!!"

A single stone stirred a thousand ripples; the Great Wu commoners immediately panicked. In their eyes, soldiers from any country were all the same, all capable of murder and plunder.

"The North Country's forces have come!!!"

"Run!!!"

"Don't kill me!!!"

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Watching the chaotic scene at the city gate, Wenren Lie raised his hand, and the soldiers behind him immediately halted.

Now, with the Black Cavalry at a standstill, the Great Wu commoners by the city gate didn't continue to run. They were trapped between the Black Cavalry and the city walls, with nowhere to escape; they could only wait quietly and apprehensively for the next move of the Black Cavalry.

At that moment, Wenren Lie swept a glance over Lingyun City and, harnessing his skill, loudly addressed the Great Wu commoners at the gate, "The Martial Emperor disregards the life and death of Great Wu's common people, levies taxes oppressively, and has sent troops to attack the North Country with the delusion of annihilating it.

Now, the Martial Emperor's plans have been thwarted, and the three hundred thousand strong army of Great Wu has been dissolved by the North Country."

Chapter 575: The Defeat in War, It's All That Woman's Fault!_3

"North Prince is merciful," he promised that he would not harm any of the Great Wu commoners who voluntarily surrendered to North Country, and the soldiers of North Country would not trouble any of the commoners, nor would they take as much as a needle or thread from the poor people. They would only confiscate the wealth of the landlords and the aristocratic families."

Upon hearing this, the people of Great Wu at the city gate of Lingyun City looked at each other uncertainly, their hearts actually not daring to believe the words of Wenren Lie.

What kind of soldier doesn't loot and plunder?

Just then, one of the commoners said, "I have been to North Country, and the current North Country is very rich; they probably don't fancy the little money we poor people have. Even if they were to plunder, it would be the wealth of the landlords and aristocratic families."

Another person added, "I think so too, and the general even said he would not make it difficult for us."

At this moment, other voices emerged from the crowd, "Do you really believe what he is saying? The war was started by our emperor, and now that Great Wu has lost, with the soldiers of North Country coming in, how could they possibly do nothing."

"It's over, we're all going to die here."

Just as the commoners at the city gate were filled with concern, Wenren Lie turned and led the Black Cavalry away directly.

Ying Feiyu at the city gate breathed a sigh of relief at this sight and hurriedly ordered a Pigeon Letter be sent to the capital city for reinforcements.

Meanwhile, the commoners of Great Wu saw the Black Cavalry of North Country just walk away and suddenly felt it was unimaginable. Many of them were merchants in the caravans, and yet the North Country's Heavy Cavalry came all the way to them, and none of the soldiers came to plunder their goods.

Could it be true, as the general from North Country said, that they really had no intention of giving a hard time to these ordinary commoners?

Although some people had come to believe Wenren Lie's words, there were still many commoners who quickly rushed back home to prepare to flee Youping County with their families once the Black Cavalry left.

Soon after Wenren Lie withdrew, he met up with Mu Changtian, who led the troops into Youping County.

Wenren Lie was in command of the Cavalry, and his main task was to chase down fleeing enemies, while the task of sieging was left to the large forces led by Mu Changtian.

Mu Changtian had artillery at his disposal, and there was no way the ramshackle gates of Lingyun City could hold.

Ying Feiyu, who had already been resting in the county magistrate's office, suddenly heard the rumbling sounds outside.

Shortly after, a soldier rushed into the courtyard, exclaiming, "General, General, it's bad!!! The army of North Country is coming!!!"

Ying Feiyu slammed the teacup in his hand to the ground and said with a furious expression, "Damn it!"

"What are the intelligence organizations under the Princess's command doing? They're all useless!!!"

"North Country has such terrifying weapons, and the Princess didn't know anything at all!!!"

"The defeat in this war is all that woman's fault!!!"

Ying Feiyu became emotionally agitated, and by the end, he referred to the Princess not by her title, but simply as "that woman."

People tend to become angry when they are afraid, and Ying Feiyu had reached the peak of his rage, putting all the blame onto Wu Junwan.

In his eyes, Wu Junwan was in charge of Great Wu's intelligence agencies, yet she had no understanding of the weapons owned by North Country and had not provided the imperial court with relevant intelligence, leading to the defeat of their 300,000-strong army.

At that moment, a deputy general approached Ying Feiyu and suggested, "General, let's withdraw from the back door!!!"

With such powerful weapons, Lingyun City's gates might not hold, and if the North Country army surrounds the whole city, we won't be able to retreat later on.

Hearing this, Ying Feiyu came back to his senses; he tried to calm his emotions and collect himself.

He then reflected that Youping County lay between Great Jue and Great Wu, and if he fled directly, abandoning Lingyun City, the main forces entering Great Jue would likely be cut off from logistical support. Even if he managed to escape to the capital city, he would face military justice.

With this in mind, Ying Feiyu clenched his fists and then said, "We can't retreat! If we retreat now! If we lose Youping County, if we lose Youping County, this general will lose his head when he returns!"

"I refuse to believe the North Country army can break through!"

With that, Ying Feiyu took up his sword and made his way to the gates of Lingyun City.

The siege battle had already begun.

Many cannonballs landed on the city wall, causing craters everywhere.

The soldiers of Great Wu were terrified by the cannon fire but continued to counterattack with catapults and bows, although these had little effect on Mu Changtian's forces.

The range of North Country's cannons had basically exceeded that of regular archers, and unless they were Ninth Grade or above, it was very difficult to hit the North Country soldiers at a distance.

After arriving at the city wall, Ying Feiyu saw the shattered remains everywhere, his face turning ashen.

But soon, he noticed something.

Although the weaponry of North Country was very powerful, it seemed that it was now in far less supply than before, and before long, the cannon fire became sparse, allowing the soldiers to anticipate the impact points and evade attacks in advance.

Realizing that the number of shells had suddenly dropped, Ying Feiyu laughed and said, "The more powerful a weapon, the more precious it is. These iron balls have such immense power but must be difficult to manufacture; surely there is a limited supply."

"North Country's attack turning this flimsy proves the weapon must soon run out, we just need to hold off until the reinforcements from the imperial court arrive, and then there will certainly be a chance for a counterattack."

Inspired by Ying Feiyu's words, his military generals and soldiers were all invigorated.

Indeed, a weapon so powerful must be incredibly difficult to produce and couldn't possibly be in large supply.

North Country's forces had already used so many, so it should be about depleted. Even if they used those iron balls to blast open the city gates, as long as the Great Wu soldiers could defend the breach, North Country's soldiers would still not be able to enter.

Chapter 576: Martial Emperor: Who Should Manage the Land of North Country?_1

Ying Feiyu's idea was certainly beautiful, but reality was cruel.

The weakness of North Country's offensive, and the decreasing frequency of cannon fire, were mainly because the vanguard led by Mu Changtian advanced too swiftly, and the artillery camp had not caught up.

The artillery camp had many ordinary soldiers who found it rather difficult to transport the heavy cannons.

The vanguard led by Mu Changtian only had a few heavy cannons with limited ammunition; the rest were small mortars which didn't have much advantage when attacking a city.

So Mu Changtian was waiting, planning to continue once the artillery camp arrived at night.

Anyway, within the day, they would surely take down Lingyun City and then hasten to sever the logistical support of the Great Wu main forces that had entered Great Jue, leaving the Great Wu army there without support.

By afternoon, the counterattack of the North Country army had ceased. The vast North Country forces set up camp at a distance from Lingyun City, as if they were preparing for a long-term siege.

At this moment, Ying Feiyu stood on the city ramparts, looking at the distant North Country army's camp, and once more solidified his guess that they had ceased their attack due to the lack of that weapon.

Thus, he thought holding out until the imperial reinforcements arrived would not be a problem, and Lingyun City had ample supplies of food, which could easily last a few months.

As dusk approached, the fiery red sun hung in the west, and the red afterglow cast upon the people turned their skin color to a bronze hue.

The North Country's artillery units were mostly in place, just waiting for Mu Changtian's order to attack, and Mu Changtian had no intention of wasting time, as he immediately had the call to attack sounded.

Meanwhile, Ying Feiyu was still completely oblivious to the severity of the situation and had returned to the mansion prepared for him by the county magistrate, ready to rest.

Just then, an explosive roaring shattered Ying Feiyu's illusion, followed by a soldier who rushed into the courtyard in a flurry, "General, it's terrible! The North Country soldiers have launched another attack!"

Ying Feiyu frowned—what was happening? Could the North Country army still have that terrifying weapon?

Hadn't they already used so much of it? How could there still be more?

Without much thought, Ying Feiyu promptly picked up his sword again and rode swiftly towards the city rampart.

No sooner had Ying Feiyu arrived at the ramparts than he saw the city walls riddled with craters; some had even collapsed considerably. If the bombardment continued, the walls would fall apart in a large breach before even the gates were breached.

Ying Feiyu's expression darkened.

Seeing the relentless cannonballs flying towards the city wall, Ying Feiyu realized that North Country likely had no shortage of this mysterious weapon at all. Their previous halt was probably due to some incident or plan.

This could not go on.

Just then, a deputy general suddenly said to Ying Feiyu, "General, look! Those cannonballs are all coming out of those tubes!"

Hearing this, Ying Feiyu immediately followed the direction the deputy general was pointing and indeed, he saw an iron ball flying out of a tube.

Ying Feiyu thought, if those tubes could be destroyed, could the iron balls than be prevented from being launched?

With this thought, Ying Feiyu immediately said to the deputy general at his side, "Deputy General Xue, continue leading the soldiers here to hold off the North Country attack. I will lead the cavalry to destroy those egg-throwing cars."

"Yes, General!"

Ying Feiyu then descended from the city wall and immediately led five thousand cavalrymen from North City, planning to strike from the flank and rush to the side of the North Country artillery camp at the fastest speed to destroy all of what they took to be "egg-throwing cars."

Ying Feiyu resorted to this out of desperation, as Lingyun City must not be lost under any circumstances. If it fell, he certainly would not meet a good fate. He would do everything possible to hold the fort until the imperial reinforcements arrived.

If Youping County were lost and Great Wu's main forces' logistics were cut off, it essentially meant that the operation to extinguish North Country had failed. Worse still, it was possible that Great Wu's main forces could be annihilated by the North Country.

Should Great Wu's main forces retreat, they would have to fight against the North Country soldiers who had occupied Youping County. With such a terrifying weapon in North Country's possession, even Great Wu's main forces would have difficulty securing victory.

While Mu Changtian was commanding the North Country soldiers in the siege, he suddenly saw a contingent of light cavalry emerging from the flank, heading straight for the artillery camp. A slight smile crept up on his lips—he had been waiting for Ying Feiyu and his men to emerge, and Ying Feiyu indeed did.

It wouldn't be easy to take down North Country's artillery camp.

Mu Changtian immediately ordered, "Artillery Second Battalion, aim at those cavalymen, blast them mercilessly!"

The drumbeat sounded urgently, and with the transmission of the order, the soldiers of the Artillery Second Battalion immediately turned their cannon barrels, taking aim at Ying Feiyu's cavalry. In the next moment, countless cannonballs rained down, exploding amidst the cavalry.

In an instant, both horses and men were torn apart, and their limbs mingled in the air while the soil was churned up wave after wave.

However, Ying Feiyu did not retreat, because he knew this was his last chance. If he retreated now, they would still be bombarded by those iron balls, and the devices launching them must be destroyed.

Ying Feiyu and his men dodged the iron balls raining from the sky while continuing to charge toward the artillery camp. Despite the artillery's extensive attack range, Ying Feiyu and his troops managed to get close to the position where the artillery was stationed.

But in the next moment, suddenly some infantrymen aimed their sticks—a distance away—at the approaching cavalry. Before Ying Feiyu and his men could react, a barrage of bullets flew toward them.

With cannon fire and bullets, the artillery camp's flanks had essentially formed a wall of fire, making it impossible for Ying Feiyu's cavalry to break through no matter how they charged.

Seeing soldiers falling beside him, Ying Feiyu realized the tide had turned against them. He immediately turned his horse around and shouted, "Retreat!"

Ying Feiyu then dodged the artillery while swiftly retreating from the battlefield amidst a storm of gunfire. At this time, the siege had not ended, and Wenren Lie and his forces did not pursue Ying Feiyu's cavalry.

Their foremost task for the front-line troops was to capture Lingyun City and then take control of the entire Youping County. As for the remnants of Ying Feiyu's defeated soldiers, it didn't matter if they ran away.

After leading the few hundred remaining cavalry out of the battle at the flanks, Ying Feiyu did not immediately return to the city to continue directing the soldiers in defense; instead, he led these few hundred cavalry straight away to escape to the next city in Youping County.

Ying Feiyu had come to realize the terrifying might of the North Country; their soldiers simply couldn't match the North Country's army. The North's weapons were far too advanced—they made even their Ninth Grade Martial Artists as ordinary as any commoner. This battle was undoubtedly unwinnable for them.

In his mind, Ying Feiyu considered how to shift the blame. With the war inevitably lost, he had to report the North Country's weapons as a matter of utmost importance to the imperial court and make them understand that the defeat in this battle was not his fault, but rather that of Princess Junwan.

That woman had not informed them in time of the North Country's horrifying weapons, and that had led to the defeat and the fall of Lingyun City.

The deputy general of Lingyun City was waiting for Ying Feiyu to return and lead their defense, but he never appeared. At that moment, the city gates were blasted open.

The defending soldiers of Lingyun City immediately went to the gates to hold their ground, not allowing the North Country soldiers to get close. However, the North troops didn't even approach the gates.

The soldiers from the North Country simply pushed several cannons forward and bombarded the gates wildly. The soldiers defending the gates were quickly blown to pieces.

Once the gates were cleared, the musketeers and Black Cavalry entered the city and swiftly cleared out the Great Wu soldiers.

Seeing the hopelessness of the situation, the deputy general ultimately chose to surrender.

The battle of Yong'an County—Lingyun City came to an end, with the North Country devastating Great Wu's three hundred thousand-strong army, killing nearly two hundred thousand Great Wu soldiers and capturing close to one hundred thousand. They successfully took control of a key city in Youping County.

Now, using Lingyun City as a springboard, the North Country only needed to swiftly capture the other cities in Youping County and then cut off the logistical support for the main forces of Great Wu entering Great Jue.

The results of this battle quickly spread to the Great Wu imperial court and across several other dynasties, with nearly all powers being intimidated by the combat effectiveness of the North Country's army.

...

Great Wu Dynasty.

Li Zheng Palace.

At this time, the ministers in the court were still unaware of the events at Lingyun City, laughing and talking among themselves.

Sitting on the Dragon Throne, the Martial Emperor was also oblivious to what had happened. He asked, "After conquering the North Country, whom do my ministers think would be most suitable to manage its lands?"

Hearing this, one minister said, "Your Majesty, this servant believes it would be most appropriate to entrust this task to Prince Wu Ming. His diligence, perseverance, and outstanding talents assure me that he could quickly make the commoners of the North Country pledge loyalty to Great Wu."

As one person spoke up, ministers from the Imperial Prince Faction immediately echoed in agreement, "This servant also believes Prince Wu Ming is most suitable..."

It was clear to everyone that controlling the North Country would provide access to the fine items the North Prince had managed to procure in the North Country—a temptation too great for any prince to resist.

Those items were all valuable goods that could bring incalculable benefits in the future, so every prince wanted them.

Soon, ministers from other prince factions also started speaking out in support of the princes they served.

As the ministers bickered for a while, the Sum Emperor suddenly turned to Chai Jiliang with a smile and said, "Chai, what is your opinion on whom we should entrust with the management of the North Country?"

Chai Jiliang bluntly poured cold water on the conversation, "Your Majesty, the war has not yet ended. It's premature to discuss this matter now."

Hearing this, the Martial Emperor's face darkened instantly, and he asked, "What do you mean, does Chai doubt that my six hundred thousand troops cannot exterminate a mere feudal state?"

Just as Chai Jiliang was about to respond, a voice from outside the hall suddenly resonated. It was from a Messenger Soldier.

"Urgent news from Youping County!!!"

Chapter 577: Impeach Princess Junwan - 1

Upon hearing the noise that echoed from outside the grand hall, the ministers within instantly became excited.

A rush report from Youping County?

Youping County borders Yongan County. Does this battle report coming from Youping County not mean that Great Wu's army has already taken Yongan County?

But then again, is the North Country's army really that useless?

At this moment, Chai Jiliang's brow furrowed, and his expression turned sour, a shade of worry crossing his face.

He did not believe that Great Wu's three hundred thousand troops could have taken Yongan County so soon after the battle began. Yongan County was defended by fifty thousand heavy cavalry, and the North Country had stationed several hundreds of thousands of soldiers there.

Moreover, if Great Wu's army had indeed taken Yongan County so quickly, it would indicate that the North Country's forces there must have been insufficient. Consequently, it's highly likely that the North Country's troops had moved to other locations.

The easier Yongan County was to capture, the greater the resistance the North Country's main troops would encounter elsewhere.

No matter how one looks at it, the battle report from Youping County can't be good news.

As Chai Jiliang was thinking this, the Messenger Soldier now entered the grand hall; he quickly knelt on the ground and in the midst of the ministers' expectant gazes, he loudly reported, "Pigeon Letter from Youping County: General Ying's three hundred thousand-strong army has been defeated by the North Country's army.

General Ying has retreated to Lingyun City, and the current situation is unknown!"

Upon hearing these words, the grand hall erupted into an uproar.

They all thought that the North Country had been defeated, but it turned out to be Great Wu's defeat instead.

How could this be?

After all, Ying Feiyu was a battle-hardened military general, and their Great Wu soldiers were all elite—how could they have been defeated in such a short time? It's been only a few days. What exactly happened in Yongan County?

Now it's a Pigeon Letter; Pigeon Letters are generally used for urgent messages and don't tend to be very detailed. They will only know the full situation once the official war report reaches the Capital City.

However, regardless of the details, a defeat is a defeat.

The outcome is now almost certain.

Ying Feiyu's defeat means that Lingyun City is likely in jeopardy. If Lingyun City falls, then the occupation of Youping County by the North Country is not far off.

Youping County is the vital route for the logistics of the main armed forces. If Youping County is taken, Great Wu's main forces will be completely cut off logistically. But if the main forces fail to take down the North Country promptly and their logistics are disrupted, their morale will inevitably suffer.

At this moment, the court was hushed, the atmosphere oppressively somber, not a single person spoke, and cold sweat involuntarily appeared on many foreheads.

The war had just begun a few days ago, and already Great Wu's three hundred thousand-strong force was defeated. Although they had not expected this army to achieve significant victories, at the very least they were supposed to tie down the North Country's forces stationed in Yong'an County. Yet, the defeat came so swiftly—wouldn't the North Country's army soon be able to send reinforcements?

Once the North Country's troops from Yongan County started to reinforce, it was very likely that Great Wu's main forces would fail to breach Yan County. In such a case, Great Wu's plans would fail.

At this time, the ministers dared not speak, fearful of provoking the Martial Emperor. After who knows how long, the Martial Emperor finally exclaimed furiously, "Useless, all of you are useless!"

"Ying Feiyu, that waste, couldn't even hold out for half a month before his defeat! What use is he to me! And to think he is a veteran general who has experienced numerous battles!"

Seeing the Martial Emperor's temper flare, the ministers within the hall dared even less to breathe a word.

After venting his anger, Chai Jiliang stood up and said directly, "Your Majesty, now is not the time for anger. General Ying's army has been defeated. We do not know how many soldiers he has left. We must send someone to Youping County promptly to clarify the situation and dispatch reinforcements."

"If the North Country occupies the whole of Youping County, Great Wu's main forces will be cut off from their logistics, and the frontline soldiers' morale will surely be affected."

Seeing Chai Jiliang daring to speak up at such a time, the ministers within the grand hall couldn't help but admire him.

It was just like Chai Jiliang to dare to provoke the ire of the Martial Emperor at such a moment.

After listening to Chai Jiliang, the Martial Emperor also quickly calmed down. Although he was still very upset, the situation took precedence. They must hold Youping County at all costs; they absolutely could not allow the North Country's soldiers to mount a counterattack.

Youping County, no matter what, must not be lost. If Youping County were lost, it would be a complete collapse across the board.

With that thought, the Martial Emperor immediately commanded, "Have Tang Ming lead two hundred thousand troops to reinforce Youping County at once; they must hold it at all costs. Also, issue an order to Ying Feiyu to return to the Capital City immediately. I want to know exactly how he was defeated!"

Although the Martial Emperor internally still couldn't accept the fact of Ying Feiyu's defeat, he was no fool; Ying Feiyu was after all a battle-hardened veteran. He had participated in many foreign wars, routing many enemy armies. When he attacked Great Sum, it was under his command as well.

How could he have been defeated this time so suddenly? There must have been problems they hadn't anticipated. The Martial Emperor knew that the war report would reach the Capital City in a few days, but he was more intent on hearing the description from Ying Feiyu himself.

At this juncture, the Martial Emperor stood up, threw his sleeve, and without declaring the court adjourned, walked off to the side.

Seeing the Martial Emperor leave, the ministers quickly said, "We respectfully bid farewell to Your Majesty!"

Chapter 578: Impeach Princess Junwan - 2

After the Martial Emperor left, the grand hall immediately descended into chaos. People were abuzz with discussions about the war in Youping County, still unable to believe it was true.

How could Ying Feiyu have been defeated so quickly?

That was an elite army of three hundred thousand soldiers, yet they couldn't hold on for even half a month.

The combat prowess of the North Country soldiers is too terrifying, isn't it?

They had originally thought that the North Country's defeat of the barbarian tribes of the North Land and Tianqi King's army might have been due to some luck, and if it had been Great Wu's army in their place, North Country would only be humiliated. Now, it seems they had seriously underestimated the military strength of the North Country.

It wasn't long before that.

Inside the Green Cloud Palace, amidst curling wisps of smoke, Wu Junwan's expression was very unsightly within the red silk chambers.

She had also received news from the frontlines immediately. Although she had long sensed that the North Country would not be easily defeated, she had not anticipated that Great Wu's army would collapse so quickly.

At that moment, Chai Jiliang entered the grand hall.

"Your servant pays respects to Princess Junwan!"

Wu Junwan coldly asked with an expressionless face, "Mr. Chai should already know about the incident that occurred in Youping County, right?"

Chai Jiliang replied, "Your servant learned of it while in court."

Wu Junwan asked, "Mr. Chai, what do you make of this matter?"

Chai Jiliang answered, "If Great Wu's army could have held Youping County and continued to stall the several hundred thousand troops of North Country in Yong'an County, there would still be hope for victory if General Zhan and the others could breach into North Country."

"But..."

Chai Jiliang did not continue.

Wu Junwan inquired at that time, "Why has Mr. Chai stopped?"

Chai Jiliang then continued, "But judging from the swift defeat of Youping County's three hundred thousand troops, the military capability and the combat prowess of North Country soldiers have far exceeded our estimates. No one knows what other cards North Country may hold."

Even if General Zhan and his forces were to penetrate into the homeland of North Country, they may not necessarily be able to smoothly advance to Yan County and eradicate North Country."

The battle between Yongan County and Lingyun City had directly shattered Chai Jiliang's confidence. With such a formidable Great Wu army defeated in just a few days, it was not only Chai Jiliang who lacked confidence; few in court still harbored great hope for the war launched by Great Wu.

Listening to Chai Jiliang's words, Wu Junwan fell into contemplation for a moment before murmuring, "It seems my palace will face quite a few troubles ahead."

Wu Junwan thought to herself that it must have been the mysterious weapons of North Country that had caused Great Wu's army to be defeated so quickly.

She had failed to investigate those weapons beforehand. With the war turning sour, inevitably some would seize on this to raise issues, then impeach her.

Thinking of this, Wu Junwan felt uneasy, her mind already working on how to avoid this crisis.

If anyone targeted her, she really wouldn't have much to say, as the one in charge of intelligence. She had provided absolutely no information on the terrifying weapons of North Country, contributing to the disastrous defeat of Great Wu's army, a failure she could not shrug off.

After pondering for a while, Wu Junwan came up with an idea; there was no other way now but to make the Qian Family the scapegoats.

She could cast all the blame onto the Qian Family, then claim that she was deceived by them, which was why she failed to provide intelligence on North Country. Although she would still bear responsibility, she could shift most of the blame and appear merely to have been misled by her subordinates.

Thinking this, Wu Junwan immediately said to a female guard in the palace, "Xiao Yu, immediately send someone to arrest the entire Qian Xingchang family. We can't let the Qian family escape!"

"Yes!"

The female guard immediately turned and left the grand hall to arrest the "chief culprits."

Witnessing this, Chai Jiliang instantly realized what Wu Junwan was doing. The Princess was preparing to shift the blame.

Wu Junwan then said to Chai Jiliang, "Mr. Chai, in the coming days, my palace might face impeachment by many ministers. I would trouble you to handle that for my palace."

Chai Jiliang promptly replied, "Your Highness can rest assured. Your servant will not let any scoundrel tarnish your reputation."

Chai Jiliang would never allow Wu Junwan to be engulfed in an affair that could lead to her dethronement. Even if Wu Junwan truly fell into crisis, he would stand by Princess Junwan's side, unwaveringly. After all, this woman represented not only his political interests but was also the object of his affection.

Hearing Chai Jiliang's commitment, Wu Junwan smiled faintly then said, "Then I'll trouble Mr. Chai with this."

Chai Jiliang replied, "It is your servant's duty."

...

A few days later, the true report of the battle entered the Capital city. By this time, Great Wu's reinforcement army of two hundred thousand had already set out for Youping County.

In the court of Great Wu, there was silence, not a single minister dared to speak, and even Chai Jiliang had lapsed into quiet.

They all knew the latest battle reports had reached the Capital city. Only the Martial Emperor had seen the reports thus far, and having them summoned to court likely meant they were to discuss the report.

At that time, the Martial Emperor pulled out a battle report and began, "A battle report personally written by General Ying has arrived in our hands."

"According to Ying Feiyu, the North Country has unveiled a kind of mysterious weapon. These weapons, resembling iron spheres, are hurled using catapults. Once an iron ball lands among soldiers, it immediately explodes. And when an iron ball explodes, it is as if a Grandmaster has struck."

"North Country has a vast number of such weapons. Faced with these iron balls, Great Wu's military formations could not withstand even a quarter of an hour before collapsing!"

Chapter 579: Impeach Princess Junwan - 3

Upon hearing these words, the great hall was suddenly in uproar.

"As if a Grandmaster made his move?"

What kind of weapon is this?

How can its power be so immense?

The more powerful the weapon, the more difficult it is to use, and the rarer they should be. How could the North Country possess such a large number of these mysterious weapons?

Could it be that Ying Feiyu was defeated and is now trying to shift the blame in his haste?

If the North Country really possesses such weapons, then Great Wu's campaign against the North Country is bound to fail without a doubt. A single iron ball is like the strike of a Grandmaster; if the North Country had tens of thousands of them, how could Great Wu possibly stand against the North Country.

For this campaign against the North Country, Great Wu dispatched only two Grandmasters.

While the ministers in the great hall were abuzz with discussion, suddenly, the voice of a Messenger Soldier came from outside, "Urgent report from Lingyun City!!!"

Upon hearing this voice, the Martial Emperor's face turned even grimmer. If what Ying Feiyu reported in the dispatch was true, then it was very likely that Lingyun City had fallen.

Just then, the Messenger Soldier entered the great hall, knelt in the center, and tremblingly lifted the latest dispatch over his head, saying, "Lingyun City has fallen, our army of three hundred thousand has been annihilated, General Ying's life or death is unknown!"

As soon as these words were spoken, everyone in the great hall gasped in shock. The Martial Emperor's dispatch had arrived not long before, and now the second dispatch had come, bringing news of the fall of Lingyun City. This proved that Lingyun City had been lost within a single day, and Ying Feiyu hadn't even managed to hold it for one day.

Had the military strength of the North Country's army already reached such a terrifying level?

After a moment of stunned silence, the eunuch by the Martial Emperor's side quickly approached the Messenger Soldier, took the dispatch, and promptly delivered it to the Martial Emperor.

The Martial Emperor took the dispatch, quickly scanned it, and said nothing. His expression was somber; it was apparent he was in great distress.

Ever since his ascension to the throne, he had launched numerous wars and had almost never been defeated. Each war had managed to expand Great Wu's territory, bringing in a lot of land. But this time, he had not only failed to gain any land, but he had also lost such an important city in such a short period.

If everything was as described in the dispatch, then Youping County would inevitably fall to the North Country's army within half a month.

Think about it, an army entirely composed of "Grandmasters"; how many countries could stand against them? No matter how sturdy their city walls, they couldn't possibly withstand the joint assault of hundreds, perhaps thousands of Grandmasters.

Although "Grandmaster" is merely a metaphor, the use of the North Country's weapons in battle indeed resulted in a unilateral massacre.

Now, one could only hope that the main force of the North Country was in Yongan County and that their main forces could successfully invade the North Country's homeland and capture the North Prince. Otherwise, with the North Country's military strength, if Great Wu couldn't annihilate the North Country this time, they would soon be overthrown by the North Country instead.

The Martial Emperor's expression kept changing, as he couldn't understand why such terrifying weapons existed in the world.

He now finally realized why the North Country was able to annihilate the barbarians of the North Land and defeat the Tianqi King's army in such a short time.

With such devastating weapons, isn't the North Country capable of annihilating whomever they please?

Great Wu's three hundred thousand elites were defeated in a day; what could those barbarians possibly amount to?

At this moment, the great hall was profoundly silent; not a single minister spoke. The sound of people's breathing could even be heard, and just then, the Imperial Censor Zhang Yuanbai suddenly spoke out, "This minister impeaches Princess Junwan for her negligence, disregard for human life, and abuse of power!"

Chapter 580: Junwan Loses Power_1

Hearing the words of Imperial Censor Zhang Yuanbai, all the officials in the great hall were stunned; no one had anticipated Zhang Yuanbai would choose this moment to impeach Princess Junwan.

Although Zhang Yuanbai was the Imperial Censor, Great Wu had just suffered a defeat, and the Martial Emperor was still furious; Zhang Yuanbai's actions at such a time risked having his head chopped off by the Martial Emperor.

At this moment, the eyes of the ministers turned to the face of the Martial Emperor, wanting to see how he would react now.

However, the Martial Emperor did not show anger. He merely asked indifferently, "Does Zhang consider himself to know what he is talking about?"

Cold sweat began to bead on Zhang Yuanbai's forehead; he calmed his emotions and then continued, "Your servant knows what he is saying!"

"This military defeat is entirely due to our lack of understanding of the mysterious weapon possessed by the North Country, and Princess Junwan, who controls Great Wu's intelligence service, didn't even know about the North Country's mysterious weapons, let alone provide any information about them."

"In addition, some spies under Princess Junwan have recently started gravitating towards your servant, submitting ample evidence of her abuse of authority to eliminate dissidents and her extensive embezzlement."

"I believe that Princess Junwan is no longer suitable to manage the intelligence service, and even her title should be stripped away as well!"

After hearing Zhang Yuanbai's speech, the officials on Prince Wu Ming's side immediately seized the opportunity, and other officials also began to stand up in support of Zhang Yuanbai.

"Your servant also impeaches Princess Junwan, the Princess..."

...

Soon, more voices calling for impeachment arose in the court, and Zhang Yuanbai kept his gaze on any change in the Martial Emperor's expression.

Seeing the Martial Emperor so composed, Zhang Yuanbai guessed that the Martial Emperor must also have grievances against Wu Junwan. Under normal circumstances, the Martial Emperor would have stopped people from continuing at this point, but today, he did nothing.

In fact, the Martial Emperor's heart was indeed wavering.

Just then, Chai Jiliang could no longer bear to watch; he immediately said, "Master Zhang keeps accusing Princess Junwan of negligence, reckless killings, and abusing power, but where is the evidence?"

"Would the evidence rely solely on Master Zhang's words?"

Hearing this, Zhang Yuanbai sneered and then said, "If I had no evidence, I naturally would not impeach the Princess."

Having said this, Zhang Yuanbai gave a bow to the Martial Emperor and then requested, "Your Majesty, please allow your servant to summon witnesses!"

Hearing this, the face of the Martial Emperor finally showed a slight change. He furrowed his brows and then commanded, "Granted!"

Seeing the Martial Emperor actually agreeing to Zhang Yuanbai's request, the hearts of officials like Chai Jiliang who were on the side of Princess Junwan chilled by half.

If the Martial Emperor still trusted Princess Junwan, he definitely would not have allowed Zhang Yuanbai to bring the evidence, or witnesses, to the court; the fact that he agreed now proved that the Martial Emperor also wanted to curb Princess Junwan's power.

Zhang Yuanbai immediately had someone bring Qian Xingchang and others to the court.

Upon seeing members of the Qian Family appear in court, the faces of Chai Jiliang and the ministers from Princess Junwan's camp instantly turned extremely unsightly.

They were well aware that Wu Junwan had intended to use the Qian family members as scapegoats. They had started to capture the Qian family members initially, so how could they appear here?

The Qian Family was also core to the intelligence service, after all, the Qianhai Commercial Association of the Qian Family provided a large amount of funding for the intelligence service, and many spies operated under the guise of the Qianhai Commercial Association among various dynasties.

The members of the Qian Family held many pieces of evidence unfavorable to Princess Junwan!

This was trouble!

After arriving in the great hall, Qian Xingchang immediately knelt down and said, "Commoner Qian Xingchang pays his respects to Your Majesty, long live, long live, long live Your Majesty!"

The Martial Emperor asked coldly, "I remember your Qian Family has always had some form of cooperation with the intelligence service."

Qian Xingchang answered, "Your Majesty, indeed, Princess Junwan initially reached out to us in order to build the intelligence network."

At that moment, a hint of murderous intent flashed in the eyes of the Martial Emperor, "Do you realize what fate befalls those who betray their masters?"

In this era of strict hierarchical systems, servants who betrayed their masters generally met with dire fates, and Great Wu's laws explicitly prescribed decapitation for servants who betrayed their masters.

However, Qian Xingchang was not intimidated by the Martial Emperor's words, and he said at this time, "Your commoner knows that the intelligence service is directly under Your Majesty's control. Your Majesty is the commoner's master, and the commoner has never betrayed Your Majesty!"

Hearing this, the Martial Emperor couldn't help but sneer.

Then the Martial Emperor continued, "Tell me, what things did Princess Junwan have you do?"

At this point, Qian Xingchang glanced at Zhang Yuanbai, who then said, "Qian Xingchang, have no fear, speak freely, His Majesty will protect you."

Thereafter, as Qian Xingchang knelt on the ground, he revealed all the deeds Wu Junwan had done, one by one, piece by piece.

After all, Wu Junwan was a woman infatuated with power, which led her to commit many secretive acts, and in fact, most incidences were known to others, they had just not been exposed before, and many were even known to the Martial Emperor himself.

Once Qian Xingchang finished exposing all the deeds of Wu Junwan, the eyes of the ministers all turned to the Martial Emperor, waiting for him to speak.

Yet at this moment, an official from Prince Lu Yi's faction suddenly knelt down, "Princess Junwan, royal Princess appointed by His Majesty, neglects her duties day by day, indulging in trade and commerce, even abusing her authority, which led to the intelligence service's severe lack of information about the North Country, causing the failure of this northern campaign.

This servant earnestly requests that His Majesty revoke the title of the Princess!"