Governor 141

Chapter 141: Selfish Desires

Jason Morgan, with a lump swollen on his forehead, felt he was out of luck.

He was a clerk at a small factory inside Revival City, doing some statistical work. With no special skills or power, he diligently performed his duties, earning his due salary. Life was much better than it was for starving refugees outside the city but was by no means wealthy. He could barely afford a room within the inner city and, with his wife's income, just managed to support their three children.

After the war, his wife, taken in by some superstition, believed that the newly established government by the incoming governor was reliable. She not only joined it herself but also persuaded him at home for two days.

"We're literate, we can do math, we have work experience—we can make it big."

"It's said that Lady Ossina got promoted to such a high position just because she could read!"

"The sooner we get in, the better. If we ingratiate ourselves early, we might also become important people someday."

Bewitched, he agreed and, after initial political screening and training, was dispatched to the Immigration Bureau under the Civil Affairs Department.

At that time, he thought that though it was tough and he had to leave the city to work, just looking at the E9 rank set for him initially, combined with the basic rank quota with his wife, was enough to feed the family. Add to that the salary beyond the quota, their quality of life wouldn't be reduced at all compared to before.

Moreover, just before this 'business trip', the newly appointed head of their bureau, encouraging them, said that this was a valuable experience. If they did the job well, it would all be counted as meritorious service. He promised to apply for the Rejuvenation Medal for those with the most outstanding performance and give priority to promotion in both rank and position upon their return.

Morgan was fed to the full by these promises. Coupled with the extra allowance for the trip, it all sounded advantageous. After discussing with his wife that evening, supported by her, he signed up that very night.

The next day, a work group was formed, and a vehicle took them, a group of people, to Major Perbov's military force.

Dealing with the first settlement of about a thousand people, they were a bit frantic and encountered some difficulties and setbacks, but ultimately, they managed to handle it. They even became the first group to complete the relocation task, and when reporting to their leaders via telegram, they received commendation from their director.

He was in high spirits until, without any rest, they were sent overnight to newly liberated Sanchi Town.

Sanchi Town had a population of over three thousand. According to the former leader of the town, the name 'Sanchi' came from three large pools surrounding the town from which they could harvest some aquatic products that they relied on for a living. They would consume part of it and dry the rest to make dried fish and canned goods for export. Additionally, the town's location was favorable, with traders passing through regularly. They ran a small tavern and provided food, lodging, and recreational services to traders, which kept the town's livelihood modestly sustainable.

Following such a narrative, the first direction the work team took was that the town could be preserved. It could serve as a trade transit point, and the three productive lakes could also serve as aquaculture sites for food production.

They began their work along this direction.

However, after some field surveys, they quickly noticed that something was off.

There were 'three pools,' but they were just three 'ponds.' They couldn't be called ponds, at most, very small lakes. There was some aquatic production, but it was clearly limited due to poor management.

And the tavern? There was indeed one, but adding up the rooms, there were probably only about ten, and the first floor had twenty or so tables—hardly a trading station.

If this were just a small village of a few hundred people, those three pools plus the tavern might just about manage to make a decent living.

But three thousand?

They would've starved long ago, relying on that, right?

The people of Sanchi Town had lied.

At first, Morgan didn't understand why they would lie, but on the third night after the military left, leaving only their work group behind, he saw crates of weapons and equipment being moved out of a warehouse and the townspeople began arming themselves. That's when he knew something was terribly wrong.

Those people had pretended to surrender unconditionally and show loyalty to the military as soon as they arrived, and as soon as the military left, they began to arm themselves.

Lately, he saw a large number of looters enter the town, getting along well with the townspeople.

Combining this with the previously investigated mismatch between industry and population scale, he finally realized that they had walked into a den of thieves!

No wonder how those three small pools and a run-down tavern could support three thousand people—the town didn't rely on that for sustenance at all.

Trade route transit point… They indeed depended on trade along the route for sustenance, but perhaps not in the way he thought before.

Running shady inns, highway robbery… If they said their livelihood was related to merchants, that wouldn't be wrong.

Add to that plundering and extorting other settlements, along with acting as a hub for robbers to deal with stolen goods, provide supplies, and hide out as a criminal center…

Well, then it wouldn't be a problem to support a population of three thousand.

Jason Morgan, covered in cold sweat and not daring to finish urinating for fear of being noticed, tiptoed back to his room and told his other six colleagues about his discovery.

Chapter 142: Personal Desire_2

Everyone was somewhat panicked.

Even during the most intense battles in Revival City before, all they did was listen to the sound of gunfire and feel the vibrations when the orbital bombardments hit the wind farms on the outskirts of the city, shivering with fear inside their homes.

But as for a clear and present physical threat, it hadn't been as palpable as now.

If they stayed any longer, death was certain.

The plunderers, no matter what they were planning, clearly weren't going to let them go.

The seven people discussed and decided to make a run for it before those guys came to trouble them and restricted their movement.

Unfortunately, it was too late.

They were no stealth experts, not even soldiers; they had no training in this area, how could they possibly sneak out of a town unnoticed?

In fact, they hadn't gotten far before they were caught.

Morgan was struck on the head with two strikes of a gun butt, leaving him dizzy. By the time he regained most of his senses, he and his colleagues were already tied up in a room.

Now, all he felt was regret, immense regret.

Back then, choosing to go on a business trip had been because he was dazzled by the pie in the sky painted by his boss, blinded by the extra travel allowance.

He had only seen the benefits and forgotten how dangerous the wasteland was.

Now what?

"No choice, just wait for death," said one person optimistically.

A true pessimist would have said, "Is there any way to die quickly, preferably painlessly? The plunderers here actually eat people, and some even more twisted, to ensure the meat is fresh, slice and roast while the victim is still alive…"

Morgan, who had just recovered from his dizziness, was scared almost to the point of fainting again upon hearing their conversation.

Wait, just a few days ago I was at home enjoying a blissful future with my wife, and now you're telling me I might be skinned alive?

His mindset was collapsing.

Morgan didn't want to die. He shook his head, trying to think of a way out but couldn't. The seven of them were tied up tightly, thrown on the ground, struggling even to squirm like caterpillars, let alone think of a way to untie themselves.

It would be futile anyway; they were unarmed, and there were two armed plunderers guarding the door.

What to do?

No matter how hard he racked his brain, he couldn't think of a solution.

And then an even more despairing situation arose.

He heard footsteps outside.

It seemed like several people were coming over, then started talking to the guards at the door, and then there was some arguing.

The conversation was slightly muffled by the door and wall, but it sounded like…

"…orders…to come…is it these people?…execute…just bury outside…release…no good…"

Those words made Morgan go pale.

It's over!

They were coming to execute them!

As he thought this, the door was opened.

He saw three armed plunderers walk in.

Morgan was terrified.

He felt that everything was over.

At that moment, all he could do was close his eyes, preparing to face death, praying his end would be swift.

But just then, he heard one of the newcomers speak.

“Chief Terrell’s orders are to kill all of you.”

Just as I thought… Morgan thought to himself.

Then he heard a twist that gave him a flicker of hope:

“But I can let you go, only if you agree to one condition.”

Before Morgan could speak, his colleague beat him to it:

“What condition?”

The newcomer sighed, “Chief Terrell insists on opposing Revival City, which I disagree with. I see this as an opportunity to wash my hands of this, stop plundering, and live as a peaceful citizen of Revival City. What’s wrong with that?”

He paused, then added with some dejection, “But, I can’t change his mind. So, I took the task to execute you, but I want to let you go. When Terrell is defeated, you must remember my kindness. If I’m captured, you have to rescue me; if I escape, I hope you report this and help us secure a place in the New Alliance.”

Morgan hurriedly responded, thumping his chest, “Of course! We’ll certainly do that!”

The others also hurriedly made various promises.

The newcomer relaxed a little and threw them some clothes, “Then quickly change into these, and I can find a route to have my men escort you out. I still have to find some bodies to burn as yours; we’re short on time.”

Morgan and the others sprang into action.

While hurriedly changing, it crossed his mind:

The promotional work for the New Alliance policies in Sanchi Town was actually effective.

After changing, Morgan and the others were led out.

At the moment of parting, Morgan hesitated but still said, “You might as well escape with us. Otherwise, if your act of releasing us is exposed, it could be very dangerous.”

“If I escape with you, we won’t make it. My identity will cover for you. As for the risk of exposure… I’ll be prepared.”

“All right then.” Since the man had said so, Morgan didn’t insist, but he asked another question:

“What’s your name?”

“I’m Reddy Bore.”

…

“Reddy Bore… these seven, are they really from the New Alliance?”

Faced with Chief Terrell's question, no matter how much turmoil was in his heart, at least Bol managed to maintain a calm exterior: "Of course."

Chief Terrell's green eye peered at him for a good while, then turned his gaze onto the other members beside Bol, "Then tell me, why is it that your Captain Bol specifically wants the bodies burnt?"

Chapter 143: Personal Desires_3

Bol opened his mouth, hoping to speak, but Chief Terrell lifted a hand to stop him.

"Shut your mouth. I didn't ask you. Say one more word, and I'll kill you," he said.

Bol could only close his mouth and remain silent.

The brothers beside him, however, couldn't maintain the composure that he had when facing the notorious and brutal Chief Terrell.

Terrell looked at these men with their nervous and confused expressions and revealed a fierce grin:

"Speak up. The one who speaks, I'll spare your life," he said.

Finally, someone couldn't resist any longer.

A tall, thin fellow quickly distanced himself from his brothers and said, "It was Bol! Bol convinced us to do this! He let the person go, talking about needing to keep a way out, not to take things too far!"

As these words were spoken, Bol and the comrades next to him turned pale. Some were shaking so badly they could barely stand; others cursed the traitor; some sought to make excuses…

Bol's gaze, however, was locked on Terrell.

At this moment, life and death lay within the great leader's whim.

As the noise gradually subsided, Terrell calmly took out a gun and spoke, "Do you have anything else to say?"

Taking a deep breath, Bol answered, "All I did was for the good of our brothers. If we killed everyone, we'd make an enemy for life, and then…

"You're pretty good at keeping options open for yourself," he was interrupted.

Bol tried a different approach, earnestly pleading, "Chief, I've followed you for ten years now. The brothers from the early days are dead or missing, and few of us are left. We've built a great enterprise, with thousands dependent on us for a living, and we've united many tribes around us… We've come to an end here.

"What will come next? We couldn't stand against the old Alliance Government, and we stand even less of a chance against the New Alliance Government. Haven't you seen the army that recently came here? They have armored vehicles! They have tanks! They have artillery! Are we really meant to fight such an enemy?

"Though we greatly outnumber them, and we have the advantage of surprise, even if we win, they will send a second, a third army. We can't afford such losses.

"What's wrong with taking this chance to join the New Alliance's system? All the brothers would have a place, and you could still lead us, enlisted by the Alliance into the army. Look at that Major Perbov, how impressive he seemed arriving in that armored vehicle. In the future, you could also be a general… Wouldn't that be good? I really don't understand why you insist on being a bandit, a plunderer?"

Bol's words indeed came across as sincere.

Regrettably… Terrell was utterly unmoved.

He quietly said, “Are you done?”

“I’m done,” Bol replied.

“For the sake of your father, who once saved my life, and for the ten years you’ve been with me, I gave you a chance to speak. You know if you begged for mercy, I would have let you live, but unfortunately, you have said such things,” Terrell responded.

He pulled the trigger.

The bullet mercilessly passed through Bol’s head.

The raider captain immediately fell to the ground, lifeless.

Terrell looked at the other followers of Bol with disgust and waved his hand: “Kill all these traitors.”

A burst of gunfire ensued, leaving no one alive.

Then, Terrell turned to the fellow who had reported Bol earlier.

The man was so scared that he was about to wet his pants: “You… you said you would spare my life.”

“Yes,” Terrell approached him, his hands gripping the man’s head, “I did say that. I will forgive your act of betrayal, but you caused the death of my dear nephew Bol; I never said I would forgive you for that.”

“You…”

The man barely had time to say anything more when he felt a tremendous force.

Terrell broke his neck with his bare hands.

After executing the men, the raiders dragged the bodies away, while others continued to keep watch. Terrell turned to the few people who had been standing behind him, watching the scene unfold, and with a grin said:

“In my life, I despise traitors the most. I apologize for the display, gentlemen.”

“Nothing to apologize for, Chief. You’re still merciful,” someone replied.

“I don’t know how old Bol could produce such a naive fool of a son,” remarked another.

“We’ve roamed this wasteland for so many years, relying on our guns, being tougher than anyone else. To expect us to lay down our arms and become farmers, workers? Hell, I’d rather die!”

Among those standing behind Terrell were some of his tribal leaders and some raider chiefs he had invited from elsewhere. At this moment, they were all clamoring, praising Terrell for the killing.

Meanwhile, they left unsaid what was tacitly understood among them.

What Bol had said wasn’t entirely without merit. Were the days of being raiders actually that good?

They burned, killed, and plundered, but there had to be something to plunder. Finding a fat sheep, a wealthy merchant, a survivor’s camp with some savings, they could have a full meal, but such opportunities were not always there, and people wouldn’t just willingly hand over their possessions. To rob at gunpoint meant risking lives.

Even after attaining significant military strength, they dared not ruthlessly plunder many camps; they had to learn sustainable development. They would demand tribute from weaker survivor camps. But those camps barely eked out an existence themselves—how much could they give? In times when life was hard for everyone, the raiders didn’t feast on meat and drink every day.

Chapter 144: Personal Desires_4 In Sanchi Town, during hard times, it was common for people to starve to death. Those who survived would divide and consume the dead, in an effort to endure the lean years.

Under such circumstances, if what the officers from the New Alliance were saying was true, as long as you worked, basic food and warmth were guaranteed; then what harm was there in becoming a farmer, a worker, or even a soldier?

For the lower-class plunderers, it was indeed so, but it was different for those present.

No matter how hard the days were, could they ever really become unbearable for their leaders?

After all, they were the rulers. They received offerings; they commanded thousands of plunderers, roaming freely through the wastelands, whistling past, living with satisfaction.

Having joined the New Alliance, those middle and lower-class looters could perhaps conceal their pasts and live peaceful lives.

But what about these leaders?

Could they still dictate and act recklessly?

I'm afraid not.

It was nearly impossible to expect a group of plunderer leaders to think of the greater good, considering the welfare of all their subordinates, and giving up their privileges.

However, their minds weren't completely controlled by selfish desires, forgetting the reality of the situation.

They were well aware that, in their current state, even though they had a few thousand guns, it was still unrealistic to confront directly the troops led by Major Perbov. Numerous men and guns they had, but they were seriously lacking in heavy firepower. With only twenty light mountain cannons and some individual rocket launchers, they could threaten the heavy armored vehicles, but the risk was too high; deploying all their forces might not guarantee the destruction of even a few tanks.

A single anti-tank group encountering an armored vehicle or tank definitely had the potential to cause damage, but the requirements were too stringent. It wasn't impossible for them to stealthily approach within a few dozen meters and then hit the vehicle's side armor with two or three armor-piercing rockets. But it was more likely they'd be discovered before getting close, and then a barrage from the enemy would wipe them all out.

It was precisely for this reason that they had never considered a head-on collision with the New Alliance's military forces.

Otherwise, there would have been no need to play the part of compliant citizens when Major Perbov first arrived with his troops.

In fact, they were prepared to give up on Sanchi Town altogether.

They weren't any sort of legitimate settlement; whether it was the industry Mesh had built, those three broken ponds, or the decrepit tavern, if they decided not to cling to these, they would simply depart. Once the word was out, why couldn't they sleep anywhere out in the wilderness?

Guerrilla warfare was nothing remarkable for a gang of bandits who lived off plunder.

There weren't many mountains here, a few small woods but not many, yet most crucially, there were plenty of extensive urban ruins!

These were even better suited for guerrilla warfare than any other kind of terrain.

Take part in whatever business is available, strike when there's an opportunity for an ambush, and retreat into the city whenever a powerful enemy force approaches. I have no lair, no foundation, are your armored forces going to come into the urban ruins to fight me? In the ruins, do armored forces have the agility, the speed of a person?

However, before actually moving into the ruins or the forest, they still had to launch an ambush.

After those officers from the New Alliance had fled, Terrell realized that Major Perbov's forces would surely come.

Far from telling his troops to hurry and escape, he decided instead to stage an ambush along the way.

Chapter 145: Battle of the Three Ponds

After receiving the telegram about Morgan and others escaping, Perbov realized the road to Sanchi Town would certainly not be peaceful.

To be honest, he was somewhat annoyed.

His troops had spent more than two days in Sanchi Town and yet had failed to recognize it as a den of thieves!

In hindsight, there were indeed some signs. But at that time, he was entirely focused on planning the subsequent operations, considering how many settlements could be taken over through intimidation, and where some military measures might be necessary…

Put simply, he hadn't paid enough attention to Sanchi Town, which had already been secured, and that led to this huge blunder.

The escape of the seven civil affairs officers was good news. The intelligence they brought back was also of great importance to him.

In the wastelands, plunderers had always been a major problem.

The reason why he decided to relocate all the population except the essential agricultural labor was not only because there was a significant shortage of manpower in Weixing City, but also there was another major issue, as Gu Hang had previously mentioned to him: they lacked the capacity to manage those less valuable small settlements.

Those places weren't entirely without value, but the input-output ratio was seriously unbalanced. If you wanted to run them, you would need to input a large amount of materials and support industries, which basically meant engaging in "poverty alleviation" work.

Besides poverty alleviation, military forces had to be invested for protection. Otherwise, settlements that became even slightly wealthier would become targets for looters.

Plunderers, monsters in the wild, these were all major threats in the wasteland.

And now, in addition to consolidating various settlements, Perbov's forces had another mission: bandit extermination.

The three agricultural settlements that were left behind needed a stable environment to expand production; this region was also an important trade route from Weixing City to Rubbish Town. Rubbish Town was a crucial source of raw materials for the industrial base of Weixing City, and it also needed to ensure the security of this transportation route to import food.

According to the governor, he wanted to see every power in this region fly the flag of the New Alliance, and that included the plunderers' forces.

Originally, Perbov was unaware of the severity of the banditry in the area, and he had planned to settle the survivor settlements first before dealing with the bandit suppression.

Now, it seems that action had to be taken ahead of schedule.

Similarly, Perbov could tell that those plunderers definitely didn't have the guts to confront him head-on, otherwise they would have attacked when he entered Sanchi Town unguarded.

But since they ultimately chose to rebel, they must have had something to rely on.

Urban ruins… guerrilla warfare… Perbov subsequently thought of these and made a judgment: he couldn't let this band of plunderers get away. A few thousand people dispersing and running into the

pre-war ruins to then launch intermittent strikes at the trade routes would leave him with very few options to counter them.

The entire bandit suppression operation would turn into a prolonged counter-guerrilla campaign.

He almost immediately made a decision.

“All forces, attack immediately! To Sanchi Town!”

Apart from his main forces’ swift and fierce advance, he also gave orders to several other deployed squads.

Following his instructions, the two mechanized infantry companies that could move the fastest were to cut into the back of Sanchi Town. The ‘Strider V’ armored vehicles had exceptional off-road capabilities, allowing them to maintain a relatively good speed even off the road.

The orders he gave to the two company commanders were to block Sanchi Town’s retreat routes. If the evacuation had already started, they were to attack immediately, delay their retreat, and wait for the main forces to arrive for an encirclement.

The two motorized infantry companies advanced rapidly along the roads in two different directions, with trucks carrying soldiers charging toward Sanchi Town from the connected routes.

Perbov himself led the headquarters along the main road towards Sanchi Town, with the tank battalion and the artillery battalion possibly moving slower, but they were also the strongest units.

And a day later, Perbov’s main force, still two days’ march from Sanchi Town, received two pieces of news.

The fight had already begun at the front.

The mechanized infantry companies he sent to cut off the rear arrived just in time. Each of them caught the tail of a retreating band of plunderers and launched an immediate attack.

The enemy clearly had a lack of understanding of the mechanized troops' marching speed. The bandits, relying on foot travel and ox carts for transport, were caught completely off guard.

The 'Strider V' played an enormous role in the open field. The 40mm autocannons, firing without restraint, made it difficult for the plunderers to withstand, even using ox carts and various goods as temporary cover; the grenade machine gun substituted for the twin machine guns on the armored vehicle's weapon station acted like a rapid-fire small grenade launcher, bombarding the enemy forces relentlessly.

The dismounted infantry, following the armored vehicles and sweeping through the area, were mainly tasked with finishing off the survivors.

The enemy had artillery. The caliber of those mountain guns wasn't large, but a few direct hits could potentially damage a few armored vehicles if they got unlucky.

Unfortunately, those few mountain guns didn't even manage to set up a firing formation before they were destroyed by concentrated fire from the autocannons and grenade machine guns.

Chapter 146: The Battle of Three Ponds_2

After these few mountain guns failed to make an impact, the only means they had left to threaten the armored personnel carriers were direct-fire rocket launchers.

But these things, beyond two hundred meters, were hard to aim accurately, and even when they hit, the power wasn't sufficient. To ensure both accuracy and enough power to threaten the 'Wanderer's' side armor, one would have to get within a few dozen meters, and it would be best if two or three groups attacked at once.

How difficult was this condition?

Quite a few brave warriors tried to carry their rocket launchers closer, but in this open field with little cover, there was no chance to approach. The crew inside the Wanderer was equipped with a

considerably sophisticated battlefield reconnaissance system, which could detect most threats through observation ports. Then came a round of machine-gun fire or explosive shells, promptly blowing those brave ones daring to advance to pieces, along with the tubes in their hands.

Even if there were blind spots in the armored personnel carriers' observation that allowed one or two rocket launcher teams to emerge, it was not a big deal.

The soldiers who dismounted to fight on foot were for just this task.

T5 level soldiers, no matter which military skill, all had sufficiently solid proficiency.

You have a launcher, I have one too, plus more; the gun in my hand is more accurate than yours, with longer range and fiercer firepower.

A few controlled shots or a pre-emptive rocket launch, and those raider fire teams that had managed to get close were wiped out.

When the brave warriors daring to counterattack had mostly died, those left with less courage finally couldn't hold out any longer, and in complete collapse, they scattered. Then, like lambs awaiting slaughter in the wilderness, they were eliminated by soldiers wielding all sorts of weapons while fleeing.

Actually, even if they all fought to the death, what could that have accomplished?

Caught in a surprise attack by mechanized forces, without any position, without cover, lacking heavy weapons, out in the open field, they were just sitting ducks.

Of course, there were many of them, and in the completely disordered rout, quite a few managed to escape.

But without any transport, without supplies, it was uncertain how many of the raiders who fled would survive, how many could regroup and return.

…

If the two mechanized infantry platoons responsible for the encirclement fought an exceedingly beautiful ambush and claimed a great victory, then the two motorized infantry platoons rushing towards Sanchi Town along the roads had suffered a small loss, a sort of draw.

These two platoons were a bit lacking in heavy weapons and heavy vehicles.

The motorized infantry platoon only had the Iron Ox transport trucks and Scout Rider Motorcycles.

But the enemy they faced came prepared.

The battle reports indicated that the raiders had clearly expected Perbov to lead his troops here. Along the way, they planted mines and bombs; they constructed roadblocks and positions along the roads; they set ambushes on both sides of the roads, ready to emerge and strike when the troops passed by.

All these preparations had been effective.

However, what they absolutely did not foresee was that the soldiers coming to fight would be of such elite caliber.

During the advancement, a platoon led by Scout Rider Motorcycles detected the enemy troops blocking the road ahead of time and relayed the information back; the platoon's scout squad also spotted the ambushes on both sides and immediately deployed from the trucks to meet the threat on both flanks.

Bombs and mines along the road destroyed two trucks, but they did not cause further casualties, as the platoon's engineers began mine-clearing operations and constructed positions using the vehicles.

These responses and reactions left the raiders, who were supposed to be the ambushers, somewhat dazed.

This is not right!

It wasn’t the first time they had used similar tactics. The caravans they had ambushed before, even if protected by relatively strong mercenaries, would be disoriented after such an attack, and a complete route was very possible.

Even if they didn’t scatter, it was already good if they could barely organize a defensive line relying on their baggage train, let alone have the spare capacity to counterattack the ambushers?

And this counterattack was especially fierce!

A single infantry squad dared to face over a hundred enemies. Their tactical movements were standard and effective, crouching low, using the slight undulations of the terrain to conceal themselves; during fire exchange, their marksmanship was precise and surprisingly powerful. In contrast, sending an indiscriminate burst of gunfire from their side, whether they hit their mark or not was unknown, but certainly no one on the opposite side was falling; on the other hand, a few three-shot bursts from the enemy and people on their side were getting killed.

One infantry squad managed to hold back the attackers on one side, which was rather exaggerated.

But what could be done? Surely over a hundred men on their side couldn’t truly be chased away by a mere dozen from the other side?

After a brief regroup, they began a forceful assault. They intensified the firepower directly in front, while others were sent to infiltrate from the flanks.

Who doesn’t know how to infiltrate?

The result was, the team responsible for infiltration ran right into another infantry squad.

Next, the limited heavy firepower from the platoon and company came into play.

At the convoy, hastily constructed mortar positions began to assert themselves; rocket launchers from the squads were drawn, loaded with high-explosive ammunition, and as the raiders launched their attack, a single shot would explode and kill several.

Chapter 147: The Battle of Three Ponds_3

They really couldn't break through.

Then more soldiers flushed out from the positions built around vehicles and launched a counter-charge in the direction of the two ambushing forces.

The ambushing forces on both sides of the road, each numbering about two hundred men, were actually overrun by this assault.

However, these soldiers did not pursue too aggressively.

After all, a gunfight between infantry in the open field still results in a certain level of casualties.

There was simply no need for it.

They retreated to their positions, allowing those looters who had started to fall back to come forward again.

This was exactly what they hoped for.

In battle, the efficiency of killing with guns is just too low.

In fact, at the very start of the combat, they had already sent word to the rear.

Upon receiving the message, the driver of the artillery support company, parked quite a distance away at the main camp, floored the accelerator. In less than half an hour, they had covered almost twenty kilometers.

This was a somewhat risky decision; moving the artillery battalion forward without protection was hazardous. The only defense they had was a few dozen soldiers from the guard, engineering, and logistics units, riding “Scout Rider Motorcycles” for protection.

But obviously, the looters who had never encountered heavy artillery didn’t take that into account.

The artillery support company, having advanced twenty kilometers, halted the Iron Bulls acting as tow trucks and quickly set up the towed howitzers.

Using the coordinates relayed from the front-line infantry, they adjusted their firing parameters. Then, the ten gods of war before them began to roar.

The 155mm howitzers they deployed had a range that could reach nearly 25 kilometers.

And there, that was exactly where the two motorized infantry companies at the front were engaging in combat.

After entangling in battle with the ambushers in the front and on both sides for nearly an hour, they finally received support from friendly artillery.

Twelve heavy artillery shells fell about two to three hundred meters outside their positions, covering a half circle.

The looters were dumbfounded by the explosion.

The fifty-kilogram shells, standing half the height of a person, blasted craters two meters deep upon impact, with a lethal range nearly the size of a soccer field.

Those near the blast center were obliterated; those a bit further away suffered from shattered organs due to the shockwave or were wounded by shrapnel…

Without defensive fortifications or cover, this round of artillery fire resulted in extremely heavy losses for the ambushing looters.

Besides the loss of personnel, an even heavier blow was to their morale.

In the hour of combat preceding, they exerted themselves only to fail in vanquishing this group of soldiers, less than half their number, and even suffered a few countercharges, losing men.

With all the advantages on their side—being prepared against the unprepared, resting against the weary, using terrain for ambush, outnumbering the enemy—they still ended up in a deadlock.

This had already disheartened them.

And with a round of heavy artillery pounding down, it further shattered their already low morale.

The number of men killed in the hour-long fierce battle was probably fewer than those killed by this round of artillery fire!

Immediately, looters whose morale had entirely collapsed began to flee; and the few who obeyed their leaders' orders to stay were soon met with a second round of artillery fire.

After the deafening barrage of heavy artillery, not a single survivor dared continue the battle.

What was the point of fighting if they couldn't win and just took bombs on the outskirts?

But now, escaping was not so easy.

Within the motorized infantry companies, there were indeed motorcycles.

The “Scouts” that had been pulled back inside the positions raced out with a sputtering sound. Two men per vehicle, one driving, the other operating the machine gun mounted in the sidecar, began the pursuit. A large force of infantry followed closely, accompanied by the blare of the charge horn.

How could the fleeing looters outrun the “Scouts” with their superior off-road capability? Many were mowed down by the light machine guns on the motorcycles, and any attempt to stop and retaliate was met with a brief engagement from the “Scouts.” The following infantry would instantly greet them with rocket launchers, then a dense shower of gunfire.

The looters involved in this ambush and blocking battle suffered extremely heavy casualties, and less than one in ten managed to escape the battlefield.

…

Two battles, two reports—the information reaching Perbov’s hands still served as a wake-up call.

There was no doubt it was a great victory. In the two battlefields, at least two thousand enemies were defeated; the number of dead and wounded was countless, with no time to tally, but certainly exceeding a thousand.

Meanwhile, the two mechanized infantry companies had suffered fewer than double-digit casualties; the two motorized infantry companies fared slightly worse, with a combined total of about thirty casualties.

With a casualty ratio of 1:50, what was there not to be satisfied with?

Still, there were concerns.

Perbov was summarizing the lessons learned.

For instance, he should not have allowed the motorized infantry companies to advance too far ahead, leading to artillery support not being available until an hour into the battle. If that timeframe could be moved up by half an hour, the casualties of the motorized infantry could perhaps be further reduced.

Moreover, considering he had spread his forces quite thin, he also needed to consider how the main force of looters from Sanchi Town would act next. After all, he was still unclear about the exact number of enemies, their arms and equipment, especially regarding heavy weapons.

Chapter 148: The Battle of the Three Pools_4

If the enemy also has formidable heavy firepower and takes advantage of his current situation of having divided forces by launching a fierce attack on one of his units, what then?

But on the other hand, this problem is unsolvable.

If he were to gather his troops in one place, they might still be en route, and if the enemy were to launch an ambush during this time, even a small one, holding them off for just a few hours through progressive resistance, what if the main plunderer force in the rear got the message and seized the opportunity to scatter and escape?

Conversely, the current situation is still relatively good.

The motorized infantry company, with the help of artillery, broke through the enemy ambush and has entered the area before Sanchi Town, where they are now constructing positions and laying siege.

The mechanized infantry company is cruising behind, blocking the retreat.

Looking at the four separate companies, they have locked down the four directions of Sanchi Town, effectively trapping the gatherings of plunderers who were preparing to evacuate.

As long as he can achieve another significant victory, a battle of annihilation, then coupled with the previous battle outcomes, at least five thousand upward plunderers would have been dealt with.

From Weixing City to Rubbish Town, the route would essentially be cleared of plunderer bandits.

Of course, there will inevitably be a small number of fish that slip through the net, but they will no longer pose any threat.

How did the plunderers come to be? While some were born bad to the core, they are the minority. The majority of the plunderers are just ordinary people unable to make a living, who in desperation began to rob others of their chances to survive on this wasteland.

Murder and theft, though reprehensible, becomes somewhat understandable upon deeper thought.

And if the welfare policy for the 45 occupational classes being promoted by Lady Osenia in Revival City could successfully be extended to all the areas here; and if the majority of property-less poor people were relocated away, then the breeding ground for the plunderers in this area would be swiftly eradicated.

Without a source, without more impoverished potential plunderers, these bandits would decrease with each one eliminated, negating the situation where the more you suppress them, the more they multiply.

Sitting in the command vehicle, Perbov thoroughly pondered the whole situation and ultimately decided to maintain the current method of divided encirclement and suppression.

Despite the risks, from a purely military standpoint, this wouldn't be the preferred way to fight.

There was a hint of waging a political war, but… Perbov remembered something the governor had said during a casual chat with them military officers, "Military actions are an extension of politics, and war is the most brutal and intense form of special violent political means."

He was beginning to understand what that meant.

…

"Damn it! They're really looking down on us!"

“We must teach them a harsh lesson!”

“So what if they have armored vehicles and cannons, does that make them so great?”

Inside Sanchi Town, the leaders were holding a meeting.

From Terrell down, emotions ran high, and everyone was yelling.

Though they talked tough, in reality, each of them was panicking.

How could they not panic?

The original plan was to quickly evacuate once the army left, trying to take as much from their homes as possible. However, a traitor emerged, allowing several detained officials to escape.

Then, sticking to the plan to continue the evacuation, they even decided to get a jump start by having some people take part of the supplies and leave first, while also setting up ambushes along the enemy’s path, complete with landmines and roadside bombs.

The result was that the enemy breached their ambush in just an hour, and most of those sent to participate in the ambush were killed or injured; the forces that left early with some supplies were ambushed by the enemy’s mechanized troops from behind on the plains. The escorted supplies were completely lost, and of the two thousand people, less than four hundred made it back.

One piece of bad news after another truly bewildered them.

And what made them even dizzier was the combat strength exhibited by the New Alliance Army.

About forty armored vehicles and fewer than two hundred infantrymen crushed ten times their number with almost no casualties; about two hundred infantrymen formed a defensive position using trucks, stuck it out against nearly a thousand men for an hour, and then everything was wiped clean after a round of artillery fire…

How were they supposed to fight this?

Indeed, their group of plunderers still had their main force untouched, and there were over three thousand men in Sanchi Town. But judging by the displayed combat power of the New Alliance Army, if all three thousand men were thrown into battle, they would probably be swept away by several rounds of artillery fire and a charge by the armored forces.

No one was willing to admit defeat; they only acted fierce with their words. Terrell had already attempted to muster a force to attack, but when it came to leading their own trusted troops out for a fight, nobody was willing.

Amidst the clamor, Terrell finally lost his patience.

He banged the table several times until everyone fell silent, then he spoke:

“Are you done arguing?”

Seeing the grim face of Terrell, the leading chief, no one dared to speak further.

But in reality, many still held a disdainful attitude, and some even dared to openly display such feelings.

How does a plunderer leader maintain his authority?

It’s nothing but battle honors.

If you can lead your men to victory and indulge in feasting, then you’re the toughest, regardless of whether you are known for loyalty or brutality—it’s merely a matter of style.

But if you lose… those who are known for loyalty get backstabbed, and those who rule with cruelty face rebellion.

Chapter 149: The Battle of the Three Ponds_5

He hadn't reached this level yet, but there were already signs of it.

Two devastating defeats, coupled with being cornered in Sanchi Town and facing a deadlock, had greatly shaken his authority.

He could even guess that there must be many people whose faith was wavering, who were already considering Bol's words.

Would surrender be a better choice? Following the previous opportunity to join the New Alliance Army, would it not spare them from facing the sharp edge of blades? Even without privileges, being just an ordinary civilian was better than losing one's life.

There were probably not a few people with this mindset, and all these thoughts would turn into resentment, falling onto him, the great leader.

But there was still a way out.

He had to find a way out for his brothers; then perhaps his authority had a chance of being maintained.

Seeing that his action of slamming the table had silenced the crowd below, he felt somewhat relieved. His authority, built up over many years, had not completely vanished.

He took a deep breath and began to outline his plan:

"Those governors' lapdogs, to put it plainly, are only about eight hundred strong, armed with fierce weapons, but they've spread their forces too thin in their attempt to surround us. If we concentrate our remaining cannons, all our explosives, in one place and strike with all our might, we're sure to break out."

Someone jumped out with a dissenting view, “The great leader makes it sound so easy! It’s our men who will be going out to die!”

Another spoke up, “Talking about breaking out, who knows how many would die on the way! Bore is right, we should have just been honest from the start.”

First there were scattered remarks, then the remaining crowd seemed eager to try, as if the whole meeting was on the verge of descending into a marketplace again.

But the sound of gunfire cut off the brewing argument.

The three who had just spoken each now had a bullet hole in their forehead.

They fell backward with disbelieving faces.

The shooter was Terrell.

Everyone else was startled, their faces carrying a look of disbelief as if they never expected Terrell to dare to draw a gun and kill people in such a setting.

All from outlaw backgrounds, some instinctively reached for their guns within moments.

“Nobody move!” Terrell bellowed loudly.

But at that moment, was shouting alone enough?

There were still those continuing to reach for their guns.

However, the many plunderers guarding nearby, as if prepared, raised their weapons and aimed at those who were stirring.

These men were undoubtedly Terrell's confidants.

With the present situation foreseen, Terrell was naturally prepared.

These guards, already in position, targeted the agitating leaders and opened fire, but bullets don't discriminate, and stray shots hitting the innocent were all too common.

Many fell and died; those not involved yet injured called out, some tried to resist, but in the end, they were all swept to the ground like the others before them.

Quickly, all the plunderer leaders on one side of the meeting hall were shot dead.

On the other side, there was little commotion.

That side consisted of Terrell's staunch supporters, who even anticipated the current turn of events.

Once the tumult subsided, Terrell stood up and cursed, "A bunch of ungrateful bastards."

After finishing his tirade, he directed his supporters to take over and integrate the troops of those who had been killed.

After making arrangements, he had someone bring in two wooden crates from outside.

Upon opening them, green vials of medicine wrapped in straw were revealed.

"Hand these out, and when it's time to break through, have the assault team drink them."

…

The battle came even more suddenly than expected.

Terrell, after clearing out the internal opposition, had almost exhausted all the authority he had accumulated over the years, managing to keep the tribes of the slain leaders under control as he took them over.

Then, he struggled to mobilize the troops, hoping to rally the remaining 3,000 to nearly 4,000 people within Sanchi Town to launch a full-scale breakout in the same direction.

The heavy artillery the New Alliance Army possessed was the weapon he feared the most.

One shot from that thing, if the troops were a bit too clustered, meant dozens, even hundreds of casualties; yet the width of the battlefield for breaking out of the city would not be too large, and if one were determined to break through, ensuring enough force in the assault team meant troops couldn't spread out too much.

However, that would significantly increase the lethality of the enemy's artillery.

It was truly a dilemma.

But a choice had to be made in the face of any dilemma.

Terrell planned to order his troops to launch a desperate assault, rushing to fight at close quarters with the enemy, just tens of meters away, so they could engage in close combat.

In this way, the distance between friend and foe was greatly reduced; the New Alliance Army's heavy artillery would not be able to perform as well.

They would have to be wary of causing friendly fire, as the enemy could not afford to take losses any more than they could.

However, he somewhat underestimated the difficulty of reassembling his forces after the killings. Although he managed to avert outright mutiny and internal strife, the speed of regrouping the entire military force was far slower than expected.

Before he was ready to lead his forces in the breakout, the New Alliance Army launched an attack first.

Chapter 150: The Battle of the Three Pools_6

At the start of the attack, the plunderers in Sanchi Town were already a little stunned.

Even Terrell, when he bravely ascended a high platform to observe the battle, was somewhat dazed.

It was unquestionable that the heavy artillery fired first. Around the edges of Sanchi Town, and then at the buildings, followed by the plunderers who had dug trenches, were too scared to stick their heads out under the bombardment. If it weren't for the leaders exerting pressure, nobody would have dared to run, and it's possible that this artillery barrage alone could have totally shattered the outer defenses.

The plunderers hiding in fortifications, bunkers, and trenches actually suffered relatively few casualties. If they weren't hit directly by a shell, or too close to the blast to be killed or injured by the shock wave, the deadly and terrifying shrapnel couldn't penetrate their cover to cause harm.

After all, they wouldn't die as miserably as those unlucky ones who had been defending in the open field — being bombed there was truly horrific.

However, the ear-splitting roar of the cannons and the terrifying force that made the earth tremble filled people with fear and horror. It seemed the enemy's artillery must have been more than twenty kilometers away; even if they wanted to retalitate, they couldn't see a thing.

They could try to calculate the enemy's artillery position based on the trajectory of the shells, but it was useless. They did have cannons of their own, but those small-caliber, assorted mountain guns could barely maintain accuracy beyond ten kilometers, let alone affect the heavy artillery positions twenty kilometers away. Their only option was to shrink back and bear the bombardment.

But if that had been all, it would still have been within Terrell's expectations.

However, following this round of artillery fire, he could see that the Alliance Army had launched a full-fledged offensive.

Just after the shelling, maybe just two hundred meters from the blast site, the infantry of the Alliance Army had already appeared. The mortar teams also showed their might, unleashing a round of shelling toward the front.

The soldiers were rapidly charging forward; before the warmth of the artillery barrage had even dissipated, they had already rushed into the position that had just been shelled.

The stunned plunderers, with the wounded getting finished off by rifle fire, and those lucky enough to be unharmed, were too scatterbrained to put up any effective defense and were quickly and messily eliminated.

But of course, there wasn't just one layer of defenses, aside from the locations that were bombed, there were still other plunderers present behind them. If they had shown themselves and started shooting at this moment, they could certainly have posed a threat to the attacking soldiers.

But they didn't, as another round of artillery had already covered their position.

The most terrifying thing was that the infantry of the Alliance Army were only about two hundred meters from the blast site. The lethal range of those fearsome heavy cannons was nearly one hundred meters.

Weren't they afraid that if a shell were to fall just a bit off course, it might land on their own men?

The gunners weren't afraid, the commanders weren't afraid, weren't those frontline infantry afraid?

Terrell had never seen anything like this before.

A few terms he had only heard of but never witnessed crossed his mind: combined arms operation, creeping barrage.

He knew that the outer defenses he had spent so much time building were now doomed.

But Terrell quickly realized that he couldn't really let the outer defenses be destroyed.

Otherwise, once the Alliance Army broke through, without the town's edge fortifications and trenches, the battle would become even more difficult.

That area was intended to be his launch point for a breakout operation from behind.

Terrell, gritting his teeth, issued orders to the troops behind him to open fire with their own artillery.

The much smaller caliber mountain guns, even if they couldn't reach the Alliance Army's artillery in the rear, at least had to threaten the enemies right in front of them, making them taste the artillery fire as well.

Moreover, under his command, more plunderers counterattacked in the direction of the Alliance Army's advance.

He didn't want this, but the situation changed too fast, and there was no time to slowly organize troops and find a breakout direction. If they truly had to fight a breakout battle, then they needed to crush the enemies before them and they could potentially kill their way out.

However, just as he had ordered a large number of his own troops to fill into the first line of defense and engage in close-range firefight with those new Alliance soldiers, two new developments occurred.

First, the artillery barrage they had just fired two rounds of, was finished.

He had ordered his own artillerymen to fire and then move positions after each shot. Nevertheless, the narrow spaces within Sanchi Town made it difficult for the artillery to maneuver, and relocation was even tougher. Moreover, although their cannons were light, they lacked towing vehicles, and relying on manpower to push meant the speed of movement was not at all guaranteed.

As a result, they were caught in the act.

Their artillery could not reach the Alliance Army's artillery formation, yet the enemy's heavy cannons undoubtedly brought their cannons within their firing range.

After two rounds of bombardment, the raiders' artillery positions were no more.

Not only were there heavy casualties among the gunners, but a large number of the cannons were destroyed or damaged as well.

Of course, once the Alliance's artillery had focused its firepower on the town's artillery, there was no way to provide cover for the soldiers fighting at the front.

Although the attacking infantry still had some mortars available to them, these were nowhere near as powerful as the 155mm howitzers.

This slowed the pace of those soldiers trying to break through the outer defenses, but the raiders who continued to push forward actually succeeded in pulling the combat range to within a hundred meters.

At this distance, the effectiveness of firearms greatly increased, and it became difficult for the Alliance's heavy artillery to cover this area.

Even if the Alliance's gunners were accurate and their soldiers fearless, friendly fire from artillery was a real concern. Hesitant to risk hitting their own, of course they couldn't continue to recklessly bombard an area where both sides were intermingled in close combat.

However, just as he started to comfort himself with this thought, Terrell saw another scene that sent a chill through his limbs.

The Alliance's tank platoon had advanced!

A total of twelve tanks stirred up clouds of dust on the dirt roads. Their 76mm smoothbore guns began to assert their dominance.

Knowing they wouldn't be facing any armored targets, all the tanks were loaded with high-explosive fragmentation shells. A dozen guns fired in unison, and at a range of just a few hundred meters, not even a kilometer, they began to strike at the raiders' newly-formed counterattack posture.

The raiders appeared to have no answer to these steel beasts.

And taking advantage of the tanks' suppressive fire, the infantry began to surge forward. They specifically targeted raider fire teams trying to threaten the tanks. As for places firmly held by the enemy, such as scatter pits and temporary positions built from building debris, there wasn't much to discuss—just call for the tankers to fire a couple of shots, or even sweep through with co-axial machine guns, and it was all over.

The tanks' tracks rolled over trenches, moving closer and coordinating with the infantry in combat.

The raiders' counterattack was directly destroyed, and those who dared to close in for hand-to-hand combat all learned of the power of tank cannons and co-axial machine guns, suffering heavy casualties as a result.

Seeing this scene, Terrell finally lost his composure.

Frantically grabbing the field radio, he shouted, "Drink all those combat drugs! Drink! Fight them with everything! If we can't win, there's no way out!"

After finishing, he took several deep breaths, then shook his whole body as if realizing something, and hurriedly left the command post.

Immediately afterward, his closest and most trusted squad, protecting him, headed out of Sanchi Town in another direction.

He was running away.