

I. Dynasty 135

Chapter 135: Luo Xin

“Luo Xin?”

Xiao Ming was also slightly startled. Luo Quan was the leading figure of the Great Yu Empire’s hawkish faction. Every time the barbarians invaded, General Luo Quan was always the first to advocate for war.

In fact, this general had clashed with the barbarians multiple times, with victories and defeats evenly split, earning him immense prestige within the imperial army.

Luo Xin was Luo Quan’s second son. Back in Chang’an, Xiao Ming and Luo Xin had been quite familiar with each other—though not in a friendly way. Rather, they had been mutually antagonistic.

At the time, Luo Xin had despised Xiao Ming’s reckless behavior in Chang’an. On several occasions, Luo Xin had thwarted Xiao Ming’s attempts to forcibly take common women for himself.

The King of Wei composed himself and sighed. “General Luo is truly a pillar of the state. He must have sent Luo Xin here to assist Your Highness.”

“General Luo has always advocated using war to stop war against the barbarians. Unfortunately, his stance is too lofty, and few support him. This time, he must be acting out of sheer desperation,” Xiao Ming said.

He then turned to Ziwei. "Bring him in at once."

Ziwei acknowledged the order and soon returned with a young man in military attire, his features sharp and heroic. This was none other than Luo Quan's son, Luo Xin.

"Luo Xin pays his respects to His Highness the Prince of Qi and His Highness the King of Wei."

Noticing the King of Wei in the main hall, Luo Xin was momentarily surprised but quickly bowed.

Xiao Ming stood and helped Luo Xin up. "No need for formalities, Second Brother. Seeing you here in Qingzhou brings me great joy. Please, take a seat!"

Luo Xin bowed again before sitting down in the lower seat.

The King of Wei smiled. "Second Brother, what brings you to Qingzhou?"

Though they had speculated earlier, they still needed to confirm Luo Xin's purpose for coming.

Luo Xin replied, "With the barbarians invading and the court filled with voices advocating peace, my father could no longer stand it. He sent me to Qingzhou to assist Your Highness in thwarting the barbarians' southern advance."

“Just as I thought. General Luo is truly wise and righteous. This prince deeply admires him. I, too, will spare no effort in this matter. Second Brother, if you don’t mind, why not join my army? We can plan our resistance together,” the King of Wei said with a hearty laugh.

Luo Xin’s expression shifted slightly. His father had explicitly instructed him to come to Qingzhou to assist Xiao Ming, not the King of Wei.

The King of Wei’s words put him in an awkward position.

Xiao Ming inwardly cursed the King of Wei for his shamelessness, which was truly unparalleled in the world. No wonder the King of Wei had thrived—his sheer audacity was enough to guarantee his success.

He glanced sideways at the King of Wei. “Third Uncle, Second Brother clearly stated he’s here to assist me. Isn’t it inappropriate for you to poach him like this? Unless, of course, you’re planning to lead the Wei army to defend the city in my stead?”

“Ahem, I was merely making conversation. Just idle talk,” the King of Wei immediately deflated.

As the saying went, “A tiger father does not beget a dog son.” Luo Xin had inherited his father’s martial prowess. Having followed General Luo Quan onto the battlefield and personally fought the barbarians, he was well-versed in countering them.

Moreover, Luo Xin was renowned for his exceptional combat skills. Ordinary generals were no match for him. Once, he had single-handedly charged into barbarian ranks to behead a centurion, earning widespread fame.

It was precisely for this reason that the King of Wei had shamelessly tried to recruit him.

Luo Xin's eyes flickered between Xiao Ming and the King of Wei. He was not just brave but also astute, recognizing that the apparent harmony between the two was merely superficial.

This aligned perfectly with his father's warning: the King of Wei would not genuinely resist the barbarians and would undoubtedly use Xiao Ming as cannon fodder.

Though the vassal kings of different surnames harbored their own schemes, the imperial vassal kings were no different. The two were bound to engage in covert struggles over this matter.

That was why his father had instructed him to go directly to Qingzhou—because, no matter what, Cangzhou was part of Xiao Ming's fiefdom.

There was no escaping this fate.

Ignoring the King of Wei, Xiao Ming addressed Luo Xin. "Second Brother, with the barbarians invading, Qingzhou is sorely lacking in talent. Your arrival is truly timely. As for my past offenses in Chang'an, I hope you can forgive me."

Luo Xin's impression of Xiao Ming was still rooted in their Chang'an days. Had his father not ordered him to come, he would never have willingly served under Xiao Ming.

Still, he thought that once the barbarian crisis was resolved, he could return home. Enduring this temporarily was bearable.

He said, "Your Highness, as long as we can stop the barbarians, let's not dwell on past trivialities."

Xiao Ming nodded. "Well said. I'll have Colonel Lu Fei come over to take you to the army for an inspection."

Luo Xin agreed. He had little to say to Xiao Ming and preferred to see the state of the Qingzhou army's training firsthand.

The King of Wei seemed deflated, clearly displeased that Luo Xin would remain with the Qingzhou army.

This barbarian invasion had indeed brought Xiao Ming no small number of advantages.

Xiao Ming immediately sent for Lu Fei. With war imminent, Lu Fei alone might not be enough to handle everything.

Though he wasn't familiar with Luo Xin either, the man was a figure of renown. If he could be of use, all the better.

“Your Highness, you summoned me?”

Moments later, Lu Fei arrived in the main hall. He had been training the Qingzhou army and was still clad in his plate armor.

The heavy armor, combined with his towering and muscular frame, made Lu Fei appear exceptionally fierce.

Upon seeing Lu Fei, Luo Xin seemed intrigued, his expression brightening with excitement. His eyes first swept over Lu Fei’s plate armor before settling on the man himself.

“So this is the Colonel Lu Fei who retook Cangzhou three years ago? Truly, meeting you in person surpasses hearing your name. You are indeed a formidable warrior,” Luo Xin said.

Lu Fei studied Luo Xin, noting his imperial army uniform, and looked puzzled. “And you are...?”

“This is Luo Xin, the second son of General Luo Quan,” Xiao Ming explained.

Lu Fei exclaimed, “An honor! So you’re the renowned Colonel Luo Xin!”

The two instantly recognized a kindred spirit in each other.

Xiao Ming said, "Colonel Lu, Colonel Luo has come to Qingzhou to assist us in resisting the barbarians. For the foreseeable future, he'll be working alongside you in the Qingzhou army. Take good care of him."

Hearing this, Lu Fei beamed. "Your Highness, rest assured. Colonel Luo is our guest. This general will ensure he's well looked after."

"Colonel Lu, there's no need for formalities. I'm here to assist His Highness. You remain in command of the army. Simply let me know where I'm needed," Luo Xin said.

Watching the three interact so warmly, the King of Wei grew increasingly sour.

He said, "Nephew, I won't linger in Qingzhou any longer. I'll return tomorrow to expedite the delivery of iron and coal. I trust you'll do everything in your power to hold Cangzhou."

Xiao Ming couldn't wait for him to leave. He had no time to entertain him now.

"Third Uncle, don't worry. I'll give it my all."