

## I. Dynasty 202

### Chapter 202: Court Meeting Discussion

“Hahaha...”

Loud laughter echoed in the Chengqing Hall. The King of Wei was all smiles; today, Xiao Ming unexpectedly gave him some face.

He pulled Xiao Ming aside and said, “Dear nephew, this great victory in Cangzhou—you are the main hero. But your royal uncle provided a lot of money, food, and supplies, so I deserve some credit too. On the court later, you should go easy on me.”

“Third Royal Uncle, this time our father ordered us both to defend Qingzhou. So this credit should belong to both of us. I won’t fight over the merit, but later you must fully support me in return.”

“Oh? Go ahead, tell me what you want,” the King of Wei was delighted—if Xiao Ming needed his help, things would be much easier.

Xiao Ming smiled mysteriously. “With your wisdom, Uncle, you’ll understand soon enough.”

As they were speaking, Feng Deshui suddenly walked into the hall and loudly announced: “His Majesty has arrived!”

All the ministers quickly returned to their places and stood straight. Xiao Ming and the King of Wei stood with the other princes.



When Xiao Ming had been chatting with the officials, the princes stood by coldly. After he approached, they gave him only a polite nod.

He didn't care much for their attitude.

Even the Crown Prince acted this way. Xiao Ming couldn't help but sneer inside. No wonder people said this Crown Prince was useless—he didn't even understand basic manners.

"Long live the Emperor!"

Xiao Wenxuan sat on the dragon throne, and the crowd shouted in unison.

After the chant, Xiao Wenxuan fixed his gaze on Xiao Ming.

"My dear officials, I believe you've already seen the King of Qi and the King of Wei this morning. The great victory in Cangzhou has brought glory to our country and made the barbarians retreat in defeat. For decades, our Great Yu Empire hasn't had such a win. I summoned the King of Qi and the King of Wei here to reward their merits."

Xiao Wenxuan was full of pride. He looked at Xiao Ming and the King of Wei with a happy smile.



The King of Wei looked pleased and said loudly, “Your Majesty, as a border prince, defending the country is our duty. Without your strong support, neither I nor the King of Qi could have won this battle.”

Xiao Ming glanced at the King of Wei. He thought to himself, “This old fox sure knows how to flatter while staying humble.”

He followed up, “Third Royal Uncle is right. Without Father’s full support, Cangzhou might have already fallen into barbarian hands. There wouldn’t have been a battle, let alone a victory. So rather than say this is my merit, it’s truly Father’s achievement. Though you were in Chang’an, Father, you commanded as if a thousand miles away. My admiration for you flows like the endless Yangtze River—continuous and mighty...”

The officials were all stunned. The entire hall was filled with Xiao Ming’s flattery that gave people goosebumps.

On the throne, Xiao Wenxuan’s smile grew wider. Even he felt embarrassed by the praise, but he had to admit—Xiao Ming’s compliments were creative and poetic.

“Hahahaha...”

Xiao Wenxuan finally burst out laughing.

At that moment, Xiao Ming stopped. When it came to flattery, could the King of Wei possibly beat all the jokes stored in Xiao Ming’s brain?



Officials led by Cui Hao felt uneasy. They thought they were shameless, but this guy was on another level.

The Crown Prince and the other princes were visibly uncomfortable. Xiao Ming used to be useless and couldn't even flatter well. When did he become so skilled?

The King of Wei was stunned but secretly gave Xiao Ming a thumbs up.

No emperor dislikes being flattered, especially when Xiao Ming gave him most of the credit for the victory.

He said, "King of Qi, don't be too modest. Though I planned the war, you fought it. You deserve the greatest merit. Tell me, what reward do you want?"

Before coming here, Xiao Ming had already discussed this with Pang Yukun and others.

For officials, such a victory would mean promotion and reward. But for a prince, there's no promotion. Gold and silver wouldn't be much, and it wasn't worth asking for.

What mattered now was planning for future strategy. So he said, "Father, I don't want any reward. Although the barbarians lost this time, it was only a small defeat. Their strength is mostly intact. Cangzhou is still in danger. If I want to keep my land safe, I must retake Shanhai Pass. So I am planning to drive the barbarians out of Youzhou and take back the pass. But I need your approval on one matter."



As soon as Xiao Ming mentioned retaking Shanhai Pass, the ministers started whispering. Many showed mocking expressions.

Everyone knew barbarians were bad at sieging cities. This victory relied heavily on defending and using cannons.

But fighting barbarians on the open plains was a totally different matter.

“What is it? Just say it. If I can agree, I will,” said Xiao Wenxuan. He was delighted by Xiao Ming’s ambition.

“I want to form a cavalry unit called the Guanning Iron Cavalry. These soldiers will be recruited from the former residents of Youzhou. To boost their spirit to reclaim their homeland, I promised them that whoever helps take back Shanhai Pass will be rewarded with land in Youzhou,” Xiao Ming said seriously.

Right after Xiao Ming finished speaking, a court official stepped out and shouted, “Your Majesty, you must not allow this! King of Qi has sinister motives—if you agree, it’s the same as giving Youzhou to him. His territory will become the largest in Great Yu!”

“Heh, what a joke, Minister Cui,” another official stepped forward and mocked Cui Hao. “Youzhou is under barbarian control. Letting King of Qi drive them out is better than feeding enemy troops. He is royal blood—don’t you know which side is heavier?”



“Minister Fang is right,” said General Luo Quan. “Some ministers clearly have evil thoughts. Sometimes I wonder—do they serve Great Yu or the barbarians?”

Cui Hao was shaking with anger. He turned to the emperor and said, “Your Majesty, according to our sources, King of Qi has made a weapon called a ‘cannon’. It’s extremely powerful. That’s why he won the war. If we let him control Youzhou too, he’ll become too powerful to control!”

As soon as the word “cannon” was spoken, every official turned to look at Cui Hao.

Xiao Ming sneered. So this was Cui Hao’s real plan—to bring up the cannon in court.