

I. Dynasty 251

Chapter 251: Guerrilla Tactics

Three months had passed since the Battle of Cangzhou.

The city gates that had once been blown open by barbarian gunpowder had been repaired by the craftsmen, now restored to their original form. Only the bloodstained earth at the base of the gates still bore silent witness to the brutal fighting that had taken place here.

On the city walls, fully armored Cangzhou soldiers patrolled back and forth, eyes sharp as they watched merchants entering and leaving the gates.

Though the Great Yu Empire was still at war with the barbarians, Prince Xiao Ming had not banned all trade with them. On the contrary, the flow of merchants had only grown busier.

However, every merchant crossing into the grasslands had to carry a travel permit issued by Qingzhou, and all goods were tightly controlled and inspected.

“Your Highness, the city walls now have one hundred cannons installed—one every five meters. Ammunition supplies are fully stocked, and morale is high. The soldiers can’t wait to fight the barbarians again!” reported Chen Fu confidently as they arrived in Cangzhou and began inspecting the fortifications.

Their last victory in Cangzhou wasn’t just a military success. For the people of the territory, it was a powerful symbol. It shattered their fear of the barbarians, especially among the soldiers—who once dreaded battle, and now actively sought it. That shift in mindset was priceless.

After all, an army with high morale fought very differently from one that was just waiting to run.

“This morale is rare. But remember—strategically, we must look down on our enemies; tactically, we must treat them seriously. Don’t let the previous victory make us careless.” Xiao Ming’s gaze swept across the vast, endless grasslands.

Somewhere beyond that horizon, Beishan’s Blood Wolf Tribe was already roaming. This was once the Great Yu’s own land. Ever since the empire had lost the sixteen border prefectures of Yan and Yun—prime pastureland—it had fallen behind in cavalry strength. Now they were always on the defensive.

For the past two months, Zhan Xingchang had been preparing construction for the city walls here. He now said, “Your Highness, the main problem with building the new wall is constant raids from the barbarians. They’ve gotten smarter—they no longer ride in big groups, but split up into smaller squads. Even our cannons struggle to hit them.”

“That’s exactly why I brought 2,000 cavalymen here—to deal with this problem. We can’t just sit behind walls anymore. We need to take the fight to them. With our spyglasses, we can spot enemies earlier, and then launch raids on the Blood Wolf Tribe ourselves.” Xiao Ming’s tone was firm.

This was a decision he’d thought long and hard about. Qingzhou didn’t have many cavalry, and what they had was precious. But if the walls couldn’t be built, the consequences would be far worse.

So this time, Niu Ben and Lu Fei would lead the cavalry deep into the grasslands, using Cangzhou as their base. They’d raid barbarian tribes—burning, looting, killing. Fighting fire with fire. Eye for an eye.

Zhan Xingchang nodded. “Your Highness finally made the call. The barbarians have always seen us citizens of Great Yu as inferior, slaughtering our people like animals. We must show no mercy either.

And we must not engage in prolonged fights. General Niu should adopt a strategy of ‘strike the weak, avoid the strong, hit and run, mislead and distract.’ Avoid direct confrontation at all costs.”

“That’s too much,” Lu Fei frowned. “If we start killing their women, children, and elderly, how are we any different from them? I can’t do that.”

Xiao Ming looked at Zhan Xingchang with some surprise—what he described was very similar to modern guerrilla warfare.

Then Xiao Ming turned to Lu Fei and said coldly, “Naïve. Did the barbarians spare our women and children? Have you forgotten that every man among them is a warrior the moment he mounts a horse? Or the 80,000 civilians the barbarians forced to charge our walls and die during the last battle? If you’re going into this with those thoughts in your head, Lu Fei, then stay behind. Go back to Qingzhou!”

Lu Fei shrank back under the scolding, rubbing the back of his neck. “I’ll do whatever Your Highness says.”

Xiao Ming snorted. “Zhan Xingchang is right. Against the barbarians, we can’t show any mercy. This campaign must use scorched-earth tactics combined with guerrilla warfare.”

“Guerrilla warfare?” General Niu Ben and the others looked confused.

Xiao Ming nodded. “It’s a tactic used when we’re weaker than the enemy. Scorched-earth tactics mean if we come across herds and livestock in a tribe, take what we can, and destroy the rest.”

“As for guerrilla warfare—Zhan Xingchang already explained it well. But I will officially make it part of our cavalry doctrine. You must use these methods on the grasslands. If anyone ignores these tactics and causes unnecessary losses, I’ll have their heads. No exceptions. I mean what I say.”

In military matters, Xiao Ming never played favorites. Whether it was Niu Ben, Lu Fei, or Luo Xin—orders were orders, and soldiers obeyed. That was the kind of army he wanted.

Hearing this, both Niu Ben and Lu Fei turned serious. Joking around was fine, but now it was time to act like soldiers.

“Yes, Your Highness!” the officers responded in unison.

Xiao Ming continued, “Now I’ll explain in detail what guerrilla warfare is, and how to use it in the field. There’s one guiding principle:

‘When the enemy advances, we retreat. When the enemy camps, we harass. When the enemy tires, we attack. When the enemy retreats, we pursue. And if we can stab them in the back, we never fight face-to-face.’”

Using knowledge from his modern-day tech archive, Xiao Ming explained the essence of guerrilla warfare to Niu Ben and the others. He even gave several specific combat examples—stories from modern times, which he altered to fit this world.

He also instructed Niu Ben to use terror tactics, just like the barbarians—massacres included. Only that kind of ruthless retaliation could shock the enemy and force them to constantly chase shadows, exhausting them.

His briefing lasted a full hour. Gradually, the generals began to understand.

“Your Highness, I understand now,” said Niu Ben. “I won’t let you down.”

“Old General, I’m asking you to lead personally because only you have experience fighting barbarians on the grasslands,” Xiao Ming said sincerely.

“That’s too polite, Your Highness,” Niu Ben replied with a grin. “Loyalty to king and country is a soldier’s duty. I’m no old man yet—I still have fight in me. And even if it’s just to repay your kindness, I won’t turn this down.”

Xiao Ming cupped his hands in respect. Then he looked toward Lu Fei—the guy was talented, but reckless.

“Lu Fei, this mission is different. You’re not allowed to do whatever you want this time. If you disobey, don’t think I’ll go easy on you.”