

I. Dynasty 388

Chapter 388: The Balance of Attack and Defense

“Barbarians?”

In the Imperial Study, when Xiao Wenxuan learned that the assassins came from the barbarians, he was shocked.

“Father, it is true the assassins are barbarians, but last night there were no fewer than three hundred of them. How such a large number of assassins entered Chang’an is very strange. This assassination attempt against me is one thing, but if it is against Father...”

Xiao Ming stopped speaking. He was purposely trying to scare Xiao Wenxuan.

Sure enough, Xiao Wenxuan’s face grew very uneasy. He said, “You make a good point. I have already sent the Lijing Gate forces to investigate thoroughly. Don’t worry, Father will give you a proper answer.”

“Thank you, Father. But I have one more request.”

“Speak. Whatever you ask, Father will do his best to agree,” Xiao Wenxuan said with some guilt. Xiao Ming had done great things but had not yet been rewarded, and now this happened.

“The remaining assassins still have no trace. For my own safety, please allow me to increase my personal guards to one thousand,” Xiao Ming said.

In Chang'an, every prince's personal guard number was limited to prevent trouble.

Considering Xiao Ming's situation, Xiao Wenxuan nodded and said, "Granted."

"Thank you, Father." Xiao Ming bowed respectfully.

Du Heng was still searching Chang'an for the assassins, but so far there was no news. Because of the assassination, Xiao Wenxuan had no heart to attend court.

After a few words, Xiao Ming left the Imperial Study. He planned to meet the Third Prince.

Outside the palace gate, Xiao Ming sent Zhao Long to the Jinwu Guard camp to call troops. Soon, Qi Guangyi arrived with one thousand cavalry.

Mounted on horses, Xiao Ming led the thousand cavalry straight to the Third Prince's mansion. The thousand soldiers surrounded the mansion completely, leaving no gaps.

"Xiao Ming, what do you mean by this?"

The Third Prince's face darkened when he learned Xiao Ming had come with heavy troops.

Having been in Great Yu for so long, he clearly understood who was favored and could act freely in Chang'an. The older princes had long shown him this by their arrogance.

Seven years ago, the Crown Prince, the Second Prince, and the Third Prince all openly humiliated him.

"Third brother, why so nervous? You said it's dangerous to walk in Chang'an at night, so I just brought more troops for safety," Xiao Ming said from his horse, just like the Third Prince used to look down at him from his horse.

When coming to Chang'an, Xiao Ming decided not to hide anymore but to be both offensive and defensive. The anger that once meant nothing to him now mattered only within the range of his cannons.

Power is truth. He had no time to play political games with these princes.

The Third Prince's face was dark as iron. In the past, Xiao Ming would never dare to act so arrogantly before him.

Seeing the Third Prince's angry face, Xiao Ming continued, "Third brother, don't you want to invite me in to sit? I have much to discuss with you — like the Dutch matter..."

At these words, the Third Prince's pupils suddenly dilated and his body stiffened.

Looking at Xiao Ming confidently, the Third Prince suddenly felt this seventh brother he once despised was actually terrifying.

“Please, come in,” the Third Prince narrowed his eyes. “But seventh brother, aren’t you afraid entering my mansion is like walking into a tiger’s den?”

Xiao Ming dismounted and walked toward the mansion, smiling. “Third brother jokes. But if something happens to me, I promise no one in this mansion will live.”

The Third Prince’s heart chilled. Xiao Ming’s tone was full of killing intent. Looking at the cavalry Xiao Ming brought, the soldiers also gave a dangerous feeling.

At the mansion’s main hall, Xiao Ming picked a seat, and the Third Prince took the main seat.

Then the Third Prince spoke, “Seventh brother, last night’s assassination attempt on you has caused a huge uproar in the city, but this matter really has nothing to do with me.”

“I know you have nothing to do with it, but your words last night must have meant something. I guess you were also watching the show. If I died, it would be clean. If I lived, we could talk. Isn’t that so?” Xiao Ming squinted.

“Seventh brother is indeed clever,” the Third Prince’s gaze sharpened. “I do know some clues about this, but why should I tell you?”

As he looked around the hall, Xiao Ming suddenly saw an exquisite mirror in the corner.

This mirror was very different from the mirrors made in Qingzhou. Ignoring the Third Prince, Xiao Ming stood and walked to the mirror.

The Third Prince was stunned, surprised and worried as he watched Xiao Ming approach the mirror.

“This mirror is beautiful, but it’s not made in Qingzhou,” Xiao Ming said, picking up the mirror. “It must be Dutch goods. I wonder how much it costs?”

The Third Prince sighed helplessly. Xiao Ming came too fast; he had no time to prepare. “Yes, it really is from Dutch merchants. The price is five times that of Qingzhou mirrors. Are you satisfied now?”

“Five times? Haha, the Dutch are really ruthless. Didn’t the mirrors from Qingzhou cause Prince Chu to smash Dutch mirrors in anger and lose a lot of silver?”

Xiao Ming smiled maliciously. Li Kaiyuan once told him he gave mirrors as gifts to the Crown Prince of Chu, but the Crown Prince was unhappy and even annoyed.

Since then, Xiao Ming suspected something was wrong.

While speaking, Xiao Ming stared at the Third Prince's eyes and saw his pupils shrink.

"Nothing can hide from the seventh brother. While Qingzhou mirrors are sold, the Dutch also bring in a batch of mirrors. But as you guessed, the prices are too high. They can't compete with your mirrors. Are you satisfied now?" The Third Prince almost bit his teeth saying this.

Xiao Ming was very pleased. He threw the mirror on the table and said, "Enough about that. Tell me how to find out who sent the assassins. Don't say barbarians; that won't fool me."

"So, seventh brother already knows these people are barbarian hybrids? Haha, very well. Since that's so, let's be frank. If you had died, the Dutch secret wouldn't have leaked. It could have been delayed a few years. But now, we can only talk with you. The condition of this exchange is the Dutch matter. Since you know, you must understand that Prince Chu's dealings with the Dutch are not new. But now this secret can't be hidden anymore. So, we hope you can help us get through this safely."