

# IRON DYNASTY

## Chapter 7: Finally Tasting Meat

The fallen barbarian cavalymen had not yet completely lost their ability to fight. They continued to shoot arrows at the shield wall, but the dense shields blocked them effectively.

Lu Fei, well-versed in dealing with barbarian cavalry, smirked and called out, “Brothers, don’t let our own caltrops trip us up! Pick them up and throw them at the enemy!”

The iron caltrops had hindered not only the barbarians’ movements but also those of the defending soldiers.

Following Lu Fei’s command, the soldiers picked up the caltrops at their feet and hurled them at the barbarians.

The barbarians cursed while continuing to fire their arrows.

The shield formation slowly tightened, curving into a semicircle that completely encircled the barbarian cavalry.

Their archery was formidable, and they were skilled in close combat, but with the caltrops trapping them, they had no space to fight properly.

Whenever a barbarian tried to leap out of the caltrop-strewn area, they were immediately beaten to the ground.

Within ten minutes, all thirty barbarian cavalymen were captured.

Inside the city, as the barbarian captives were escorted in, Li Kaiyuan—his face swollen and bruised—clung to Xiao Ming, sobbing, “Your Highness, you must uphold justice for me! Captain Lu is too much! Just to steal the credit, he completely disregarded our camaraderie. Look at how badly I fell!”

Lu Fei, utterly unimpressed, scoffed, “Your Highness, if I hadn’t kicked him aside, the fool would be dead by now.”

Xiao Ming had seen everything clearly. He was no longer the foolish prince who would stubbornly defend the wrong side out of spite.

He nodded and said, “Captain Lu is right. He saved your life—you should be treating him to a drink instead.”

“Hahaha! Your Highness is wise!” Lu Fei laughed heartily, a newfound respect in his eyes.

Xiao Ming smirked to himself. He was notorious throughout his fiefdom, with few who genuinely respected him.

But after this clever ambush, he might finally be able to restore some of his reputation. Lu Fei’s attitude alone was proof of his success.

Then, Xiao Ming turned serious. “Captain Lu, interrogate them thoroughly. Find out exactly where they crossed past Cangzhou.”

“Understood!” Lu Fei responded firmly.

After a pause, he hesitated slightly before bowing and asking, “Your Highness, could I request that these barbarians’ horses, armor, and bows be granted to my men?”

Xiao Ming glanced at the Qingzhou cavalry behind Lu Fei. They were still clad in leather armor, and their horses were far less sturdy than those of the barbarians.

As Lu Fei made his request, the cavalymen’s eyes gleamed with anticipation, eagerly awaiting Xiao Ming’s response.

“You are the elite of Qingzhou. If these fine horses and armor don’t go to you, then who should they go to?”

If Xiao Ming wanted stability in his fiefdom, he needed to maintain good relationships with his generals. This was an easy way to win their favor—after all, he was simply distributing captured loot.

“Thank you, Your Highness!” Lu Fei was thrilled—these barbarian weapons and horses were far superior to their own ragged equipment.

At that moment, Chen, the officer in charge of military supplies, stepped forward. “Your Highness, we have finished inventorying the spoils. However, two of the barbarian horses are severely injured—they won’t survive. What should we do?”

Xiao Ming’s eyes gleamed like a hungry wolf. He hadn’t had a single bite of meat in three days—he was nearly desperate enough to gnaw on his own foot.

“Dafu, have the palace cooks slaughter these two horses and stew them. Let the soldiers have a feast!”

(By “cooks,” he meant the palace butchers.)

“Thank you, Your Highness!”

The soldiers cheered in unison, their Adam's apples bobbing hungrily as they swallowed their drool. In these hard times, eating meat was an almost unimaginable luxury.

Xiao Ming could practically smell the aroma of horse meat already. He secretly leaned toward Qian Dafu and whispered, "Save a leg for me."

"Understood, Your Highness," Qian Dafu replied with a sly grin.

That evening, as dusk settled over the city, the enticing scent of stewed meat drifted from the King of Qi's residence, accompanied by the shocking news that the prince had personally orchestrated the capture of the barbarian cavalry.

As they savored the tantalizing scent of horse meat, the citizens of Qingzhou also found themselves puzzled—since when had the King of Qi changed so much? Instead of cowering in the palace in fear, had he actually taken the initiative to fight back?

Though many found it hard to believe, a quiet hope began to stir in their hearts.

“Your Highness, I’ve gotten the information. This squad of barbarian cavalry stumbled upon a hidden cave in the Qinling Mountains and accidentally made their way through,” Lu Fei reported.

As he sat around the pot of stewed horse meat, he explained the interrogation results. Given his direct and brutal methods, the captives had confessed quickly.

“A cave? Do any other barbarian troops know about it?” Xiao Ming frowned, flipping through the maps in his technology database.

In modern times, “Qinling” referred to the Huai River region, but in this era, it clearly referred to a small mountain near Cangzhou.

Ancient landscapes were vastly different from modern times. Outside of official roads, most areas were covered in dense forests and swamps, making them impassable for cavalry.

This was why barbarian cavalry had always been forced to breach cities in order to invade.

“They claim no one else knows about it, Your Highness. But if this cave really exists, we must seal it off. If the barbarians can bypass Cangzhou and attack Qingzhou directly, we will be in serious trouble,” Lu Fei warned.

Xiao Ming nodded. Stability in his fiefdom was essential—without it, he wouldn’t be able to focus on developing the territory. This was exactly why he had risked his life to capture these barbarians.

“This must remain a secret. Captain Lu, I want you to personally travel to Cangzhou and have that cave sealed off—make sure it’s well-hidden.”

Lu Fei bit into a chunk of horse meat and assured him, “Don’t worry, Your Highness. I already killed all the barbarian captives—not a single one was left alive.”

He spoke as if he were discussing slaughtering livestock.



But that was the reality of this world.

In an era where slavery was still rampant, the concept of human rights barely existed.

This was a savage age.

Two horses' worth of meat was not nearly enough to feed all the Qingzhou soldiers. After distributing portions to those who had participated in the battle, the rest had to make do with bone soup.

Even so, they were content. In these hard times, just being able to eat their fill was a luxury—let alone getting to drink broth.

After feasting together, Xiao Ming felt his relationship with his soldiers improve significantly.

To them, the fact that the King of Qi had willingly shared the precious horse meat with them was remarkable. Food was scarce for everyone, even royalty, so this act of generosity subtly altered their perception of him.

Of course, they had no idea that Qian Dafu had secretly stashed away two horse legs.

“Too bad we don’t have any wine,” Lu Fei lamented, sneaking a leftover meat bone into his coat. He had a wife and children at home—he wanted to bring them a taste of meat as well.

Li Kaiyuan noticed Lu Fei’s sneaky act and was about to tattle, but upon seeing the dangerous look in Lu Fei’s eyes, he quickly swallowed his words.

Instead, he muttered sarcastically, “Wishful thinking. Soldiers can barely eat, and you want to use grain to brew wine?”

Watching his men struggle for food, Xiao Ming sighed deeply.

“If my soldiers can’t even eat properly, how much worse must the common people be suffering?”

He looked at the raggedly dressed soldiers sitting on the dirt floor of the royal residence, savoring their meat in small bites, and made a solemn vow.

“One day, I will make sure you can drink whenever you want and eat meat whenever you please.”