

## I. Dynasty 781

### Chapter 781

A single falling leaf drifted in through the study window.

Xiao Ming looked at the sycamore trees outside the window, which were now shedding their leaves. He said, "All in all, attacking the Prince of Chu now brings no benefit to the north. Currently, we still need to utilize this superficial peace to establish the northern industrial system."

Speaking of this, Xiao Ming looked at the map in the study. In truth, his current position was somewhat similar to that of the Jin Dynasty during the Southern Song period.

At that time, the Jin Dynasty had Mongolia to its north and the Southern Song to its south. Now, he had the Golden Tent Khanate to his north and the Prince of Chu to his south.

Precisely because of this, he did not want to end up being attacked from both north and south. Now he had to find a way to cripple the Golden Tent Khanate.

After he dealt with the Golden Tent Khanate and the northern industry and commerce matured, it would not be too late to deal with the Prince of Chu. After all, France could not possibly help the Prince of Chu reach the same technological level as Europe, as a round trip from France to this region would take a year and a half in this era.

Their main purpose was to obtain wealth from the Prince of Chu; helping the Prince of Chu with the full might of their nation was simply not cost-effective.

Moreover, there were many ways to disrupt the Prince of Chu's previous cooperation with the French. In the council hall, he had only mentioned one of them.

"Where is Meng Youliang now?" Xiao Ming suddenly asked.

Wang Xuan was stunned for a moment. He said, "According to Your Majesty's instructions, we have been secretly in contact with Meng Youliang. According to the latest intelligence I have received, Meng Youliang is currently on Jinyin Island in Yian County."

"Jinyin Island?" Xiao Ming quickly located this place on the map.

The location of Jinyin Island in Yian County was contemporary Nan'ao County in Shantou, which was the only island county in contemporary Guangdong Province.

This Nan'ao County consisted of twenty-two islands near the main island, and Jinyin Island was one of them.

"Yes, Yian County is an island and a transit point for merchant ships on the Great Yu Empire's shipping lanes. It's easy to find passing ships there. Now, Meng Youliang has gathered a group of privateering ships in that area," Wang Xuan said.

Xiao Ming nodded. "If that's the case, send someone now to tell Meng Youliang to begin plundering merchant ships traveling between France and Lin'an from today. Thirty percent of the spoils from these merchant ships will belong to him, and the rest to the imperial court."

"Yes, Your Majesty," Wang Xuan bowed in response.

This Meng Youliang had a very special status. The imperial court did not acknowledge his identity, but he was also the Great Yu Empire's hidden privateering force.

On normal days, Meng Youliang's identity was that of a pirate, but upon receiving orders, he would specifically plunder forces targeted by the Great Yu Empire.

His main purpose in having Wang Xuan come over this time was for Meng Youliang's matter. Having given these instructions, he dismissed Wang Xuan. He then seriously looked at the map in the study, his gaze lingering on Pingzhou City outside Shanhai Pass.

Since the British wanted to support the barbarians, he would not give them that opportunity. This time, he would crush the Golden Tent Khanate in one fell swoop.

However, before that, he had to complete the military reform and the promulgation of decrees to facilitate the northern expedition.

So, over the next three months, he began to focus on overseeing this matter. A grand reform of internal affairs and the army unfolded vigorously throughout the Great Yu Empire.

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Yuzhou. Ever since Lei Ming received the order for military reform, he began to implement it from top to bottom. Unlike the previous designations of the Great Yu Empire army.

Now, the army he commanded was officially named the Great Yu Empire Huben 3rd Army, and he was the Army Commander of the 3rd Army. Below him were four division commanders, twelve brigade commanders, and numerous battalion and company commanders.

After the musket reform, the cavalry and artillery also underwent corresponding changes. Now, he commanded three cavalry divisions, and artillery was distributed among various army levels.

After completing the organizational reform, he ordered military exercises. To his surprise, this exercise greatly astonished him. After changing the organization, he found that commanding the army was much more flexible.

Because each company and each battalion was an independent unit, he could assemble these units together or split them up for individual operations.

“Army Commander, we have discovered that the barbarians are reinforcing Pingzhou City, and at least three hundred cannons have been transported to Pingzhou City.”

Just as military exercises concluded that day, a hunter cavalryman suddenly galloped in from outside the city to report the movements on the grasslands.

Being stationed at Shanhai Pass, he also had the responsibility of monitoring the barbarians.

“Three hundred cannons? Have the barbarians moved all their possessions to Pingzhou City?” Lei Ming frowned.

Gong Ziming, the commander of the 1st Division, said, “Army Commander, it must be our frequent military exercises during this period that have frightened the barbarians.”

“Frightened them? Not necessarily. In my opinion, this was also premeditated. Three hundred cannons cannot be brought out easily,” Gu Fangxiong, the commander of the 2nd Division, said loudly.

The hunter cavalryman who delivered the message was panting. He continued, “Besides cannons, the barbarians have also dug interconnected trenches outside Pingzhou City, and even installed chevaux de frise in the trenches!”

Lei Ming and the generals of the Huben 3rd Army’s faces immediately turned grim. A regimental commander said, “These are all things from our military academy. How did the barbarians learn all of them? Now Pingzhou City will be difficult to attack.”

“The secret guard’s intelligence says there’s a British man training the Golden Tent Khanate’s army, so none of this is surprising,” Lei Ming said. “However, this also indicates that the barbarians are beginning to take us seriously.”

With that, all the generals chuckled simultaneously. Previously, the barbarians had never looked down on them, and they wouldn’t even station troops in the cities on the grasslands.

Because they were confident they could defeat any Great Yu Empire army with their cavalry.

While everyone was speaking, a logistics general walked in and said, “Army Commander, a batch of Conqueror Muskets has just arrived from Qingzhou Province.”

Lei Ming and the others’ eyes lit up upon hearing this. The power of this firearm was well-known during the pacification of Bashu. Now, every army hoped to be equipped with Conqueror Muskets as soon as possible.

He mused, “Since the Conqueror Muskets have arrived, it seems His Majesty is determined to launch the northern expedition. Soldiers, now is your time to achieve great deeds! Anyone who disgraces me, I will flay him!”

“Yes, Army Commander!” The generals collectively saluted, then rushed out in a swarm to receive the new firearms.

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Jinling Province.

Lu Fei had also completed the army organizational reform in these three months. His army was now officially renamed the Great Yu Empire Huben 1st Army.

When he received this title, he was so excited he didn’t sleep a wink, because it showed the Emperor’s trust in him. Otherwise, the title of 1st Army wouldn’t have been his.

“The Grand Council has an order: the Huben 1st Army’s 1st Division and 2nd Division are to depart for Shanhai Pass within three days.”

Lu Fei read out the newly received order to his subordinate generals.

“What about our 3rd and 4th Divisions?” two division commanders stood up simultaneously and asked.

“You two will remain in Jinling Province to guard against the Prince of Chu,” Lu Fei said seriously.

The two division commanders slumped down dejectedly upon hearing this, while the division commanders who received orders were ecstatic.

Having endured so many years of humiliation, they were finally going to the grasslands to reclaim their lost homeland.

Chapter 782

White snow covered the grasslands. Wuzhugu and Beishan stood side by side.

Before them, slave soldiers were digging trenches, and cannons were being transported by slave soldiers to the Pingzhou city wall.

“The Great Yu Empire has been quiet all winter. They must be planning to attack Pingzhou City after spring begins,” Wuzhugu said, looking towards Shanhai Pass.

Beishan’s face was calm as water. To prepare for a possible attack from the Great Yu Empire, he was now ordered to serve under Wuzhugu.

Despite his reluctance, he seemed to have no other choice now.

“Last year, the Great Yu Empire attacked Haigucheng in spring. This year, it might be the same,” Beishan casually echoed.

Wuzhugu glanced at Beishan. He knew this younger brother was unwilling to be commanded by him, but he didn’t care, because Beishan understood the Great Yu Empire army’s fighting style better than he did.

He continued, “But if that’s the case, wouldn’t it delay the Great Yu Empire’s spring plowing?”

“My brother is wrong. The Great Yu Empire has stockpiled a large amount of grain in Shanhai Pass, and they can also transport it by sea. They don’t need to conscript commoners; slaves will be enough,” Beishan said calmly.

Wuzhugu frowned. Beishan’s words made him somewhat worried, because the Great Yu Empire of the past could definitely not have done such a thing.

As if to vex Wuzhugu, he continued, “Additionally, the Great Yu Empire has dispatched twenty thousand soldiers to Juehua Island. These twenty thousand men constantly threaten the heartland of the Khanate.”



Hearing this, Wuzhugu's brows furrowed even deeper. Unbeknownst to them, the Great Yu Empire seemed to have already completed its deployment for attacking the Khanate.

He said, "What must come will come. Father Khan has already summoned all the tribes on the grasslands. They can send cavalry at any time. Now, with the full might of the Golden Tent Khanate, I want to see how the Great Yu Empire takes Pingzhou City."

Best stood behind Beishan, a hint of an unnoticeable smile flashing in his eyes. The current confrontation between the Golden Tent Khanate and the Great Yu Empire was what he most desired to see.

He truly wished this war would end soon, so he could go home.

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Qingzhou Province.

Half a month had passed since the Spring Festival, but warm spring was still far from arriving.

For good fortune, on the day before the New Year, he ordered everyone in the temporary palace to move into the imperial palace, formally bidding farewell to the former King Qi's residence.

Upon arriving at the palace, Xiao Ming suddenly felt as if he had moved from an apartment building to a grand villa. Now, walking from south to north, it would take him twenty minutes.

When he was free, he could stroll around the palace with his consorts, instead of being cooped up in the small bedchamber.

At the same time, due to their formal move into the imperial palace, there were more imperial guards in the palace, and the palace rules suddenly increased, making it more and more like the Chang'an imperial palace.

And he no longer had to ride a carriage to the council hall for daily deliberations; he could go directly from the bedchamber to the Zhengda Guangming Hall.

“Your Majesty, the number of new recruits who enlisted last year was ninety thousand. Adding the current number of troops in the Great Yu Empire, the army now totals two hundred and twenty thousand men. I have now allocated these ninety thousand new recruits to various army corps in preparation for the northern expedition.”

In the Zhengda Guangming Hall, Niu Ben reported to Xiao Ming on the conscription situation.

Sitting on the dragon throne, Xiao Ming's gaze swept across the spacious hall. This was the first council meeting of the new year.

Hearing this, he asked, “How is the new recruit training?”

“Reporting to Your Majesty, these new recruits have all trained in the military camps for over three months. They are now familiar with the use of firearms and can go to the battlefield,” Niu Ben said.

Xiao Ming nodded. This was the advantage of firearms: they could form an army in three months of training. For the barbarians, it was impossible to replace a lost cavalryman in three months.

Because barbarian cavalry lived on horseback from a young age.

“Excellent,” Xiao Ming said loudly. Then he looked at Luo Quan, “General Luo, after the General Staff Department is established, all operational plans and grain and fodder allocations will be handled by the General Staff Department. How are your preparations coming along?”

Luo Quan bowed and said, “Your Majesty, the grain in Shanhai Pass is abundant. I also transported dried sweet potatoes, cured meat, and other supplies this winter. The army’s grain and fodder are now well prepared. Additionally, General Niu, I, and the generals of the General Staff Department have formulated a detailed plan. I hope Your Majesty will review it.”

With that, Luo Quan handed a map to Qian Dafu, who then transferred it to Xiao Ming.

Taking the map, Xiao Ming briefly glanced at it. His reason for requesting the formulation of operational plans was precisely to regularize the army and eliminate previous crude methods.

On the map, Luo Quan meticulously marked the offensive routes. Among them, Lei Ming's Huben 3rd Army would launch a frontal assault on the barbarians from Shanhai Pass.

And the Huben 3rd Army's 4th Division on Juehua Island would, along with the Huben 2nd Army led by Ye Qingyun, attack Liaozhou City, located on the Goryeo border, completely cutting off communication between the Golden Tent Khanate and Goryeo.

Xiao Ming nodded slightly, highly satisfied. He had extensively publicized this northern expedition, but it was actually to conceal the true purpose of the northern expedition's first phase.

Pingzhou City was not the primary target of the northern expedition; Liaozhou City was. Because once Liaozhou City was captured, Goryeo would be completely at his mercy.

Judging from last year's trade, Qingzhou Province's goods were very popular among Goryeo's powerful elite and common people. He needed to further control Goryeo to expand the market.

Besides the main offensive routes, this map also contained detailed combat methods. Of course, these were merely guidelines.

The battlefield changed rapidly, requiring generals to adapt on the fly.

"Excellent. Execute the established strategy without any errors. This northern expedition cannot be achieved overnight. All of you must be mentally prepared," Xiao Ming said.

The barbarians' territory was too vast. Even just traversing it would take a year and a half. Ending the war in a short time was impossible. At this stage, he could only reclaim the six cities in the northeast.

However, even so, the barbarians would contend with him with the full might of their nation this time. War sounded easy, but fighting it was not so simple. Pingzhou City would likely become a meat grinder for both nations.

Fei Ji and Pang Yukun and the others remained silent. In truth, they did not wish to initiate a war, but they also understood that even if they did not attack Pingzhou, the barbarians would still march south.

Rather than passively reacting, it was better to take the initiative to attack.

Returning the map to Luo Quan, Xiao Ming looked at the civil officials. He said, "During wartime, the Great Yu Empire's government affairs must not fall into disarray. Continue to encourage the development of industry and commerce, and by no means panic."

"Yes, Your Majesty," a group of civil officials said.

This northern expedition, in their view, was the most incredible event since the founding of the Great Yu Empire. Facing the nomadic empire that had bullied the Great Yu Empire for so many years, could they truly win?

Xiao Ming's gaze was sharp. This war would be a head-on confrontation between two nations of comparable strength. If they won, the Great Yu Empire would forever gain the Hetao pasture lands and the fertile black soil of the Northeast, extending for thousands of li.

If they lost, he would likely be in a very passive position

## Chapter 783

Luo Xin looked at the city wall of Shanhai Pass with a faint smile.

After eight days of travel, he finally reached his destination. As the Army Commander of the Shenji Army's 1st Army, he was ordered to lead his three divisions to rendezvous at Shanhai Pass.

Ordering his troops to enter the city, Luo Xin went ahead with his personal guard to the base of Shanhai Pass. By this time, Lu Fei, having received the news, was already at the gate.

Seeing Luo Xin, he couldn't help but laugh, "Luo Xin, why is your army so dragging like a bunch of women? You're only just arriving."

"Go to hell, you speak nothing but garbage." Luo Xin cursed directly. Although the two often bickered, their relationship was extremely close.

Because they belonged to different army corps, the two now rarely saw each other.

Lu Fei, instead of getting angry, laughed heartily when he was cursed. He said to Lei Ming, "Look, this is a scholar who's 'drunk on ten years of ink,' yet I see no difference between him and us rough folk."

Lei Ming smiled wryly, "As the saying goes, 'near cinnabar, one turns red; near ink, one turns black.' This is all thanks to Army Commander Lu."

Lu Fei glared, lifted his foot, and kicked Lei Ming's backside. "Alright, your wings have gotten hard now, you dare to mock me."

Luo Xin dismounted and snorted, "Now you can only bully Lei Ming. But he's an Army Commander, after all; what you're doing is improper."

Lei Ming said with a grin, "You two Army Commanders should save your bickering for the drinking table. It's already noon; it's time to eat."

Luo Xin's stomach rumbled at the opportune moment. Lu Fei, seeing this, laughed loudly and pulled Luo Xin to the Shanhai Pass grand camp for a meal.

Upon arriving at the military camp, the three had a few small drinks, not getting drunk. At this point, Luo Xin said, "This northern expedition is truly gratifying. His Majesty's ambition is unprecedented among past Emperors."

"That goes without saying. When I followed His Majesty back then, I could already tell that the then-King Qi was no ordinary person," Lu Fei said proudly.

Compared to Luo Xin and Lu Fei's relaxed demeanor, Lei Ming had a serious expression. Because he was stationed at Shanhai Pass and regularly engaged with the barbarians, he knew very well that this war would not be easy.

Taking a bite of food, Lei Ming said, "You two Army Commanders arrived at Shanhai Pass one after another. I haven't had time to tell you about the current situation in Pingzhou City."

Luo Xin glanced at Lu Fei, then realized that this fellow had simply arrived early.

He said, "You are more familiar with the territory outside the pass than we are. Tell us about the current enemy situation."

Lu Fei also put away his unruly expression at this point, his face serious.

After a moment of contemplation, Lei Ming said, "You two generals must surely be aware of the terrain outside the pass. Compared to the plains, hills, and mountains within the pass, the land outside the pass is truly flat, a vast expanse of grassland with even very few forests. Such a place is very suitable for large-scale cavalry operations, and this is precisely the barbarians' advantage. And judging from the small-scale skirmishes between our hunter cavalry and barbarian scouts over the past few years, our cavalry probably has no advantage."

Luo Xin nodded. In fact, they hadn't been carried away by victory. The reason for their continuous victories over the years was actually multifaceted.

In Jizhou, it was because Beishan was wounded by artillery. Other victories were based on city defense. Even the recent Bashu battle was only an opportunity to eliminate the barbarian cavalry because they were dispersed for plunder.

But this time was different. This was a regular war between two nations, and both sides would concentrate all their efforts to deal with this conflict.



Lu Fei said, "Therefore, this time we cannot waste precious cavalry in frontal combat with the barbarians. That would only deplete our limited cavalry. Last time, although Qi Guangyi pursued and eventually defeated the remaining cavalry, he also lost over three thousand men, and that was when the barbarian cavalry were exhausted."

Luo Xin deeply agreed. He said, "You are right. Our advantage is artillery and firearms. Cavalry is our weakness. So, our limited cavalry can only be used to pursue routed soldiers, not for attrition. I believe this march should follow the sea. The first step is to establish a fortified village twenty

li outside Shanhai Pass, so that even if our land supply route is cut off, we can still receive supplies from the sea."

After a pause, he continued, "Pingzhou City is only a hundred

li from Shanhai Pass. This distance is neither too near nor too far. Establishing just four such fortified villages would be enough to secure the grain and fodder we need when fighting in Pingzhou."

"I think so too. Juehua Island is between Pingzhou City and Jinzhou. There's quite a bit of grain stored on the island, which can fully supply us. But it's a pity that the two divisions on the island need to directly attack Liaozhou with Ye Qingyun; they can't be used by me," Lei Ming said.

All three had received orders from the Grand Council and knew their respective plans. Lu Fei said, "There's nothing to regret. Didn't Qi Guangyi already go to the island? According to orders, his mission is to feign an attack on Jinzhou, leading his cavalry to disrupt the barbarian rear. It's currently the

barbarians' spring plowing season. Even if we don't win this war, by winter, the barbarians will be driven mad."

"You're right. His Majesty probably saw this point, which is why he launched the northern expedition during the spring plowing season. The barbarians are currently relying on the grain cultivated by the people in the six cities to alleviate famine. If their spring plowing is disrupted now, many people will starve to death this winter," Luo Xin also laughed.

"If that's the case, when do you two Army Commanders plan to depart?" Lei Ming's eyes gleamed with excitement.

Lu Fei mused for a moment, "We still have to wait for the Grand Council's appointment. Our three armies gathering will need an Army Corps Commander, after all."

Luo Xin and Lei Ming nodded. Before the appointment came down, they still needed to make pre-war preparations, including inter-communication between the three armies.

Seven days later, along with a large number of chariots entering Shanhai Pass, orders from the Grand Council also arrived at Shanhai Pass.

To the surprise of the three, the Army Corps Commander this time was not any one of them, but Niu Ben, who had arrived from Qingzhou Province.

Xiao Ming also arrived at the same time.

“We, your humble servants, greet Your Majesty!”

The generals at Shanhai Pass, having received the news, all gathered outside the city gate to welcome the imperial carriage.

“All you beloved ministers, rise!”

Xiao Ming rode on horseback, clad in military attire. After gathering the troops at Shanhai Pass, he brought some personnel from the Grand Council and the General Staff Department to Shanhai Pass.

This northern expedition was a matter of national importance. His decision to personally lead the expedition was to boost morale.

At the same time, the symbol of any strong emperor was built on military achievements. His constant enjoyment of peace in Qingzhou City made it difficult to establish prestige in the army.

Moreover, this war was extremely important, and various unexpected situations might arise during the war. At such times, Lu Fei and others might have to appeal to Qingzhou Province for instructions.

This long process of transmitting messages would cause trouble for the war effort, but with him here, it was different. He could adapt to the situation at any time.

Chapter 784

A slightly chilling north wind howled across the city wall of Shanhai Pass.

Xiao Ming, along with Niu Ben and the generals, stood on the Shanhai Pass city wall, looking at the boundless grasslands before them. In the coming days, the Great Yu Empire would wage a war here that would determine its national destiny.

Unlike the hazy environment of contemporary times, the visibility in this era was extremely clear. Through a telescope, Xiao Ming could see very far.

“Your Majesty, this is the strategy we discussed.”

Lu Fei recounted the marching strategy he, Luo Xin, and Lei Ming had discussed a few days prior, to Xiao Ming.

Turning around, Xiao Ming looked at the dozens of generals behind him and said, “Building fortified villages takes too long, and preparing materials is quite cumbersome. This time, I have mobilized all the chariots. You can rely on the chariots to establish mutually dependent chariot redoubts every twenty li. This way, it will be much more flexible than fortified villages.”

Lu Fei glanced at the dense chariots outside Shanhai Pass. For these past few years, the Great Yu Empire had been continuously manufacturing chariots, and now the number of chariots reached 1,800.

On normal days, besides their regular training, they would also conduct military exercises with the chariots, simulating encounters with barbarian cavalry.

Niu Ben said, "Using chariots as strongholds allows for both offense and defense. In unfavorable situations, they can also quickly withdraw. This time, the barbarians will surely use the full might of their nation. For safety, we must still rely on the chariots. It won't be too late to dispatch construction battalions to build fortified villages once our positions are stabilized."

Luo Quan nodded upon hearing this.

Lu Fei and the other two exchanged glances, then bowed simultaneously, "Yes, Your Majesty."

Xiao Ming turned around and looked at the grasslands again. "Ammunition supply is extremely important in this war. Once ammunition is depleted, all advantages will be lost. So, if we can guarantee ammunition supply in this war, we can achieve victory. Otherwise, we will be in danger."

The generals' faces were grim. Since the founding of the Great Yu Empire, no war of such magnitude had ever occurred.

This was not an internal strife of the Great Yu Empire, nor a small border skirmish, but a full-scale war between the Great Yu Empire and the barbarians.

After inspecting the city defenses of Shanhai Pass, Xiao Ming and the generals descended the city wall. Along the way, the soldiers all looked at Xiao Ming with reverence.

The Emperor they worshipped day and night had appeared at Shanhai Pass and would fight alongside them, which excited the soldiers immensely.

Xiao Ming looked at the soldiers with a smile on his face. His purpose in coming here was to boost morale. Throughout the entire war, he would stay in Shanhai Pass rather than personally lead the expedition.

The reason for this was that he did not want to burden the generals. Because once the barbarians knew he was with the army, they would attack at all costs.

This would cause the generals to focus on protecting him and forget their objectives. He did not want to repeat the mistake of the Tumu Crisis in the Ming Dynasty.

After descending from the city wall, Xiao Ming did not rush to the General Staff Department established there, but went directly to the Shanhai Pass Grand Camp.

Now, soldiers from all over the Great Yu Empire were gathered here.

Upon arriving at the military camp, Xiao Ming and the generals entered the soldiers' tents one by one, greeting them warmly and asking about their current needs.

"Your... Majesty, we don't... need anything."

A soldier, only eighteen years old, stood ramrod straight, his throat convulsing, speaking nervously and stammering. He was chatting with soldiers in a tent when Xiao Ming walked in.

Xiao Ming patted his shoulder and said loudly, "War is about to begin. You might not return from the battlefield. Now is not the time for falsehoods."

The young soldier, hearing this, nervously glanced at Lu Fei. He was a soldier under Lu Fei's command.

Swallowing, the soldier said, "I want a wife."

As his words fell, the generals laughed. Niu Ben said, "The Emperor can't give you that, but when you return from war and achieve merit, people will probably be breaking down your door to propose marriage."

The soldiers scratched their heads upon hearing this. He shouted loudly, "Yes, General!"

After chatting with other soldiers for a while, Xiao Ming continued to inspect other parts of the military camp.

After he left, the young soldier plopped down on the ground. He said, "I must tell my mother when I get back that I saw the Emperor, and the Emperor even patted my shoulder."

The other soldiers also looked excited. One soldier said, "I didn't expect the Emperor to be so approachable."

While the soldiers were discussing, Xiao Ming visited five or six more tents. At noon, he ate with the soldiers in the same tent. This populist gesture greatly boosted the soldiers' morale.

In the afternoon, he gathered with the generals in the General Staff Department to plan the next day's battle.

According to the offensive plan, the main army would leave the city tomorrow and advance towards Pingzhou City. According to the intelligence from the hunter cavalry, the barbarians had already assembled one hundred and twenty thousand cavalry near Pingzhou, and over two hundred thousand slave soldiers had entered Pingzhou City.

"According to the intelligence provided by the secret guards, the total number of barbarian cavalry is three hundred and fifty thousand. After the Bashu battle, approximately two hundred and ninety thousand should remain. A portion of these two hundred and ninety thousand cavalry are also in the west, defending against the Ottoman Empire. Now, the barbarians have mobilized one hundred and twenty thousand cavalry to deploy in Pingzhou City. This must be the majority of the barbarian's eastern cavalry forces," Luo Quan analyzed.

Xiao Ming nodded. In this era, any country possessing over three hundred thousand cavalry was a terrifying prospect.

Because the expenditure for merely maintaining and supporting over three hundred thousand cavalry was enough to cripple finances. If not for the barbarians owning vast grasslands and raising horses in large herds, it would be impossible to develop cavalry to such a scale.

However, besides cavalry, the barbarians also had a large agricultural population. Besides slave soldiers, there were also barbarian infantry. Adding these up, the barbarian's military strength was not to be underestimated.



“The number of barbarian cavalry in the west should be around one hundred thousand. So, there are still seventy thousand cavalry not mobilized. These cavalry should be the forces guarding the Golden Tent,” Niu Ben said.

Lu Fei then said, “And we, with the newly supplemented recruits, total one hundred and ten thousand men, of whom eighty thousand are infantry and thirty thousand are cavalry. Qi Guangyi commands thirty thousand cavalry, and Ye Qingyun commands thirty thousand infantry. Our total military strength is one hundred and seventy thousand men.”

“The numbers are disparate,” Xiao Ming narrowed his eyes. However, the number of a modern army could not be compared to that of a feudal army.

Looking at the General Staff Department’s sand table, he continued, “For us, the most threatening force is the barbarian cavalry. As long as we eliminate the barbarian cavalry, the other infantry are merely a rabble and cannot directly confront us.”

The generals also understood this principle. They exchanged glances and nodded.

After analyzing the strengths of both sides, Xiao Ming and the generals determined the enemy’s troop deployment on the sand table and formulated the next day’s marching plan before adjourning.

Early the next morning, as a red sun had just risen above the horizon, the Shanhai Pass city gate opened wide. Soldiers in green uniforms, carrying Conqueror Muskets and flintlock guns, marched valiantly and spiritedly towards Pingzhou City.

Pingzhou City, Wuzhugu was listening to Best's advice.

A hundred li journey only took two hours for cavalry. Not long after the Great Yu Empire army left the city, they received news from their scouts.

"Now is not the time to harass the Great Yu Empire army. For an army, the longer its supply line, the more dangerous it becomes. So we need to wait for the Great Yu Empire army to arrive outside Pingzhou City. Here, we will use trenches to wear them down, and at the same time seize the opportunity to use cavalry to cut off their supply lines, trapping them in Pingzhou City."

Best laid out a diagram he had drawn on the table, explaining it in detail to Wuzhugu and Beishan.

Wuzhugu and Beishan exchanged glances. They indeed had no better plan at the moment.

The Great Yu Empire's cavalry was precious, and their cavalry was equally precious. Neither could afford the responsibility of losing 120,000 cavalry.

Moreover, after several failed battles, they became increasingly cautious. Fighting near Pingzhou City clearly gave them a greater advantage.

Wuzhugu said, "Even so, we can also dispatch a cavalry unit to probe the strength of this army. If any vulnerabilities appear during their march, we can seize the opportunity to attack."

Best did not object to Wuzhugu's words, because a small cavalry harassment was also a good idea; it could slow down their marching speed.

Having settled the battle strategy, Wuzhugu and Beishan departed. Soon, a ten-thousand-man unit led by Guduo set out from Pingzhou City towards the Great Yu Empire army.

At this time, the Great Yu Empire army, having set off from Shanhai Pass, had already marched twenty li

.

Here, Lu Fei left three thousand men to hold the position, establishing a supply point with a chariot formation as a barrier. Twenty li was a very short distance for cavalry.

This way, if barbarian cavalry surrounded this supply point, their cavalry could arrive within an hour to reinforce.

Having constructed the supply point, Lu Fei led his troops to continue advancing. According to their marching plan, they would arrive at Pingzhou City the next morning, so they were not moving very quickly along the way.

During the march, his Huben 1st Division served as the vanguard, at the very front. The Huben 3rd Division led by Lei Ming was at the rear, and Luo Xin's army was in the middle.

As before, the chariots and cavalry also marched on both flanks of the army, ready to form a chariot formation at any time to defend against barbarian cavalry attacks.

Starting from morning, and continuing until evening, after marching eighty li, Lu Fei ordered them to set up camp. Along the way, hunter cavalry continuously relayed messages.

When they were halfway through their journey, a barbarian cavalry unit of ten thousand appeared nearby. Lu Fei, upon receiving this news, did not stop but continued to advance.

If it had been the Great Yu Empire's army of the past, he would have been very worried about this ten-thousand-man unit launching a surprise attack, but now he was not afraid at all.

Because they could form a hollow square formation in the short time it took for the enemy to charge. This was the advantage brought by the military reform; each unit could react quickly when facing the enemy.

However, seemingly angered by his arrogant attitude, after they had marched less than one li

further, the barbarian cavalry suddenly launched a surprise attack on the Great Yu Empire army, which was marching in a long, serpentine formation.

The hunter cavalry first relayed the barbarian cavalry's movements to the marching infantry squares via flag signals.

At this point, the infantry squares, having received the news, quickly changed from their marching formation. Each company rapidly found its position within the hollow square formation.

The original long serpentine formation quickly transformed into walking hollow squares. If viewed from above, they resembled moving green-bordered "mouth" characters.

When Guduo charged forward and found that the Great Yu Empire's army had completely changed shape, he immediately turned his horse around.

Continuing the charge would mean death, after all, he only had ten thousand men, and his main purpose was harassment.

But now, it seemed he couldn't even manage basic harassment, because the Great Yu Empire's army's defense was simply too tight.

With a hint of worry in his eyes, Guduo suddenly led his cavalry around this army and headed towards Shanhai Pass.

"General, that's our stronghold!" a cavalry division commander said anxiously.

Lu Fei said, "No need to worry. Ten thousand men cannot breach a fortress made of chariot formations. Continue to advance; the real war hasn't begun yet."

Delayed in their march by the barbarian cavalry, Lu Fei's forces encamped twenty li outside Pingzhou City.

The next day, they continued their march, arriving outside Pingzhou City in the morning. At this point, he finally saw the full view of Pingzhou City.

The main army gradually assembled. Lei Ming and Luo Xin also arrived at the front. They observed Pingzhou City through telescopes.

At the same time, the soldiers began to set up camp here, because this war would not be decided in a few days.

Pingzhou City.

Best was observing the Great Yu Empire army outside the city. At this moment, he held a monocular telescope in his hand, but his face grew increasingly grim.

“Damn it! Since when could the natives of Asia possess such excellent equipment?” Best cursed, “This can already rival European armies.”

Beishan heard this and said, “In just six years, this Emperor of the Great Yu Empire named Xiao Ming has acquired such an army.”

“Six years? This is simply incredible!” Best put down his monocular telescope.

Here, he saw flintlock guns, field cannons, and even hot air balloons rising into the sky. Such a scene could only be seen in Europe.

“May God bless us.” Best’s throat felt dry. If this war were in Europe, it would also be considered a large-scale conflict. He could imagine the brutality of the war.

Beishan frowned. Although he didn’t understand what Best meant by “God,” he knew it was definitely not a benevolent statement.

While the Great Yu Empire army was setting up camp, the cannons on the Pingzhou city wall also began to prepare. Slave soldiers, holding weapons, entered the trenches, ready for battle at any moment.

On the other side, Lu Fei and the other two looked at the two-hundred-meter-long trenches with furrowed brows. Field cannons posed no threat to the soldiers in these trenches; only mortars could inflict casualties on enemies in trenches.

However, with the accuracy of mortars, it would be fortunate if even one out of ten shells landed in a trench.

“Fortunately, the new recruits this time lacked firearms, otherwise, it would have been troublesome,” Lu Fei said, looking at the new recruits who were setting up camp.

These new recruits wore plate armor and held swords.

Because the military machinery department could not produce ninety thousand firearms in such a short time, in fact, forty thousand of the new recruits heading to the battlefield were still wearing outdated plate armor.

When these strange new recruits entered the city, they were very surprised, but now they finally understood the ingenuity of the Grand Council.

It turned out these new recruits had their own use in dealing with the barbarians' cold weapon units.

"Have the new recruits in plate armor contend for the trenches." Lu Fei pointed to Pingzhou. Once the trenches were taken, Pingzhou City would be finished.

Chapter 786

Wuzhugu's face was shrouded in a black mist as he gazed at the Great Yu Empire army outside Pingzhou City.

Outside the city, the well-organized white tents of the Great Yu Empire looked particularly glaring in his eyes. It was clear that the Great Yu Empire was prepared to fight a protracted war with them.

"Despicable Great Yu Empire people! They are deliberately sabotaging our six cities' spring plowing." Wuzhugu was furious.

Beishan appeared to take it for granted. "I told you long ago that the current Emperor of the Great Yu Empire is unlike any previous Emperor of the Great Yu Empire. Unfortunately, none of you listened to me. It was your indulgence that allowed him to grow into a man-eating beast."

"I don't want to hear your sarcastic remarks now. If we lose this time, none of us will have a good life," Wuzhugu's gaze was sharp.



As the two were speaking, a melodious bugle call suddenly sounded from the Great Yu Empire army, which had finished arraying itself at the front.

At this, the musketeers who were originally standing at the front moved aside, and a group of soldiers clad in silver armor came forward.

The two were immediately startled upon seeing these soldiers.

Best also opened his mouth wide. He said, “Why? Why does the Great Yu Empire have such an army?”

But just as they were in shock, the Great Yu Empire’s position suddenly boomed.

Mortars lobbed lime bombs into the trenches in front of Pingzhou City. White smoke immediately enveloped the trenches.

Some barbarian soldiers, unable to dodge, were covered in lime powder, while those whose eyes were burned by the lime powder immediately cried out in pain, covering their eyes and stumbling wildly in the narrow trenches.

Outside the city, Lu Fei calmly observed all this. They were now a hundred meters from the trenches, where he vaguely saw barbarian archers hidden within.

If the musketeers advanced rashly, they would surely be subjected to fire from these archers. Therefore, if they wanted to approach the city wall, they had to capture the trenches in front of the city.

After all, at three hundred meters, the soldiers' firing accuracy would be much worse, making it impossible to effectively kill the barbarian slave soldiers on the city wall.

"Kill!"

At Lu Fei's command, the plate-armored soldiers immediately charged towards the trenches.

At this point, the barbarian slave soldiers in the trenches also drew their weapons. Some archers drew their bows and fired at the soldiers.

However, their arrows merely left dents on the plate armor made of high-quality steel. In an instant, they engaged in fierce combat with the Great Yu Empire soldiers, who were armed to the teeth.

The Great Yu Empire soldiers who reached the trenches immediately leaped into the trenches. Wielding their longswords, they rampaged like gods of slaughter among the barbarian slave soldiers.

Although the barbarian slave soldiers were numerous, the barbarians did not equip them with excellent weapons and armor. Many barbarian slave soldiers were merely dressed in tattered clothes and carried worn-out weapons.

They were no match for the well-armored Great Yu Empire soldiers. In an instant, the barbarian slave soldiers in the first line of trenches suffered heavy casualties.

On the Pingzhou city wall, Beishan and Wuzhugu's faces were grim. In their eyes, these silver-armored soldiers surged into the trenches like a torrent of steel.

The first line of trenches was quickly seized. After that, they surged into the second line of trenches.

"Fire the cannons!" Beishan gave the order coldly.

Wuzhugu said anxiously, "Wait! Our soldiers are fighting with theirs! How can we fire cannons?"

"Can slave soldiers even be considered people? As long as we can hold Pingzhou City, what does it matter if they all die!" Beishan said angrily.

Wuzhugu fell silent. He glanced at the continuously conquered trenches and finally nodded slightly.

"Fire!" Beishan gave the command this time.

"Boom, boom, boom..." At this moment, the cannons on the Pingzhou city wall finally let out a deafening roar. Black cannonballs shot straight into the chaotic crowd.

A barbarian slave soldier was engaged in fierce combat with a Great Yu Empire soldier. At this moment, a cannonball suddenly struck him squarely in the back.

The immense force directly sent him and the Great Yu Empire soldier flying. They then successively collided with several other soldiers.

The flames and smoke belching from the Pingzhou city wall made Lu Fei frown. He said, "Have the artillery immediately bombard Pingzhou City. Captain of the 3rd Battalion, you immediately lead your men to fire at the cannons on the city wall!"

"Yes, Army Commander!" The 3rd Battalion Commander immediately led his nine companies towards the trenches. When they were twenty meters from the trenches, they used Conqueror Muskets to fire at the artillerymen on the city wall.

The barbarian cannons had a range of only five hundred meters, far inferior to the Great Yu Empire's Conqueror Muskets. At a distance of over two hundred meters, they all opened fire.

Although the optimal firing range was within one hundred and fifty meters, this distance was still sufficient to inflict casualties on the barbarian artillerymen.

"Boom, boom, boom..." "Bang, bang, bang..."

Cannons and muskets roared in unison. The three armies, combining hundreds of cannons, launched a fierce bombardment against Pingzhou City.

Hundreds of cannonballs rained down on the city wall like raindrops hitting dust. Immediately, smoke and dust flew from the Pingzhou city wall, and some barbarian soldiers directly hit were torn apart.

Wuzhugu and Beishan quickly took cover under the city wall amidst the fierce cannon fire. Best also looked pale.

The Great Yu Empire's firearms were simply too fierce. This was a disaster for the technologically backward barbarians. Now, his confidence began to waver.

Would a Great Yu Empire possessing a quasi-European army be a match for this backward nomadic empire?

Wuzhugu now finally regretted it. He said to Beishan, "You're right. We should have destroyed the Great Yu Empire earlier, instead of fighting a meaningless war with the Ottoman Empire."

"It's too late for anything now. We can only drag this on. Once winter comes, they will stop attacking," Beishan said.

Wuzhugu was filled with regret. He was terrified by the horrifying scene on the city wall. At the same time, he knew very well that if this continued, Pingzhou City would cease to exist.

He said, "We must use cavalry to disrupt their attack. Beishan, I'll leave this place to you. I will personally lead the cavalry to cut off the Great Yu Empire's grain supply."

With that, he led a group of cavalry generals out of the city.

Beishan watched Wuzhugu leave. Then he said to Guduo, "Send out all the slave soldiers! We must hold the Great Yu Empire army outside the city!"

There were over two hundred thousand slave soldiers garrisoned in Pingzhou City. They still had ample manpower. Even if it was a four-for-one exchange, they could afford it.

Guduo responded and left. He immediately led the cavalry to drive the slave soldiers out of the city gate.

The Great Yu Empire soldiers, who were in the midst of a bloody battle, had by now occupied the eighth trench. Seeing only sixteen more trenches before they could charge into the city gate, the Pingzhou city gate opened wide. A dense mass of barbarian slave soldiers leaped into the trenches and charged towards them.

After the fierce artillery suppression, the cannons on the Pingzhou city wall were basically unable to inflict casualties on the Great Yu Empire soldiers in the trenches.

But when the slave soldiers appeared, his expression changed.

Chapter 787

"Have the soldiers withdraw, and send in two fresh regiments!"

Facing the barbarian slave soldiers who were frantically pouring into the trenches, Lu Fei hastily gave the order.

The barbarians were trying to wear them down with sheer numbers. The soldiers who had just charged were two regiments strong, and after a fierce battle, these regiments were already exhausted. They would be at a great disadvantage against this fresh batch of energetic slave soldiers.

Upon receiving the order, the bugler immediately sounded the retreat horn. The two regiments in the trenches immediately withdrew. As they withdrew, they also carried back their wounded soldiers, immediately sending them to the medical officers in the camp, who would be responsible for treating their wounds.

The barbarian slave soldiers chased closely behind the two regiments, quickly reaching the front of the trenches. At this point, Lu Fei immediately ordered the musketeers to fire.

Some barbarian slave soldiers standing on the trenches immediately fell. Seeing this, these slave soldiers immediately ducked into the trenches and no longer showed their heads.

At this point, the two fresh regiments seized the opportunity to jump into the trenches, continuing their fierce battle with the barbarian slave soldiers.

The entire battlefield was filled with the roar of cannons, the crackle of firearms, and the sounds of fierce combat.

From the ascending hot air balloons, flag signalmen continuously relayed the combat situation to Lu Fei and the others in the camp, and then relayed Lu Fei's and the others' orders to the battlefield.

Because of this flexible communication method, the Great Yu Empire soldiers' operations were very agile. Everything proceeded in an orderly manner, without any of the chaos seen when barbarian soldiers charged out of the city and lost command.

"This Pingzhou City truly seems destined to become a meat grinder. How long will this attrition last before the city falls?" Lei Ming said.

Luo Xin was very calm. He said, "What's your hurry? We are here to provide cover for Qi Guangyi and Ye Qingyun. As long as we can capture Liaozhou city and cut off communication between the barbarians and Goryeo, it will be like severing another one of the barbarians' arms."

"Exactly. Qi Guangyi is responsible for disrupting the barbarians' spring plowing, and Ye Qingyun has cut off the barbarians' access to grain from Goryeo. This winter, we'll see how these barbarians fare," Lu Fei laughed heartily.

...

Juehua Island.

Upon learning that the main army had advanced to Pingzhou City, Qi Guangyi decided to land near Jinzhou according to the predetermined plan.

His orders this time were simple: to cause destruction behind the barbarian lines and to plunder the population. This was the same objective as the barbarian invasion of the Great Yu Empire.



Unlike previous wars, they would focus more on plundering wealth.

“Everyone, board the ships!”

Qi Guangyi shouted to the soldiers on the island.

Under his command, soldiers, leading their horses, boarded the massive naval warships one by one. During this war, these warships would be responsible for transporting soldiers.

However, even so, transporting all three was an arduous task. For this, the Chamber of Commerce also provided many large merchant ships to assist.

Juehua Island was extremely close to Jinzhou, with a direct distance of only one hundred and forty li. They could reach it in just over half a day by ship.

To save time, they decided to depart in the evening, so they could arrive near Jinzhou by early morning the next day.

The secret guards had already found a hidden and convenient landing spot for them, where they would establish a temporary camp.

The next morning.

A vast fleet of ships appeared on a beach sixty

li east of Jinzhou City.

The barbarian land was vast and sparsely populated, and the settled population, like in the Great Yu Empire, was concentrated around cities. Such remote beaches were rarely visited.

The first batch of 8,000 cavalry spent three days building a camp near the beach. On the fourth day, 3,000 musketeers arrived with the last batch of cavalry; they would be responsible for guarding the camp.

With all preparations complete, Qi Guangyi led his cavalry towards Jinzhou City.

At the same time, Ye Qingyun, leading 40,000 musketeers and 6,000 cavalry, was advancing into Liaozhou.

Having stayed in Goryeo for nearly a year, Ye Qingyun was now very familiar with the cities of Goryeo and the barbarians.

So, upon receiving the order to attack Liaozhou, he greatly admired their Emperor, because Liaozhou was precisely the gateway through which the barbarians controlled Goryeo.

If Liaozhou were captured, the barbarians would have to travel long distances without supplies if they wished to attack Goryeo.

And fortunately, this Liaozhou was not very far from Bisa Castle; it could be reached in just three days.

If Liaozhou City were captured, the Goryeo “iron triangle” would be formed, and their control over Goryeo would become even easier.

Three days later, guided by a Goryeo guide, they arrived outside Liaozhou City.

Facing the unfamiliar environment and unknown city, Ye Qingyun showed no nervousness. He quickly dispatched hunter cavalry to reconnoiter the surrounding situation.

At the same time, the Goryeo merchants he had bribed conveyed the internal situation of Liaozhou.

“Originally, there were quite a few cavalry in Liaozhou City, but it is said that Great Yu Empire cavalry attacked outside Jinzhou, so the cavalry in the city rushed to encircle and suppress them. Now, there are only twenty thousand regular barbarian infantry and forty thousand barbarian slave soldiers in the city,” the Goryeo merchant said.

Ye Qingyun nodded. He said, “Well done. I will tell Chairman Li about this and get you some business.”

“Thank you, General, thank you, General.”

The Goryeo merchant said excitedly. Now, all Goryeo merchants who traded with the Great Yu Empire had made a fortune, and he had hoped for this day and night. Now it had finally come true.

After waiting for a while, the hunter cavalry who went out to reconnoiter reported that no ambush had been found. At this point, Ye Qingyun finally felt at ease.

Judging from the barbarians’ actions this time, they had also reinforced Liaozhou, but clearly, they were still not paying enough attention.

A faint smile appeared on Ye Qingyun’s lips. He ordered, “The 1st Division will be responsible for the East Gate, the 2nd Division for the South Gate, the 3rd Division for the North Gate, and the 4th Division for the West Gate. I want to eat roasted lamb inside Liaozhou City before sunset.”

“Yes, Army Commander!”

The four division commanders responded simultaneously. They then commanded their subordinate generals to immediately surround Liaozhou City.

Upon reaching their respective positions, they ordered the attack.

Because of the military reform, each division was an independent combat unit, fully equipped with musketeers, artillery, and cavalry.

After the siege began, the rumble of cannons echoed at every city gate.

The barbarian soldiers inside Liaozhou City had already discovered this suddenly appearing Great Yu Empire army. Before the siege, they had already sent out scouts to request reinforcements.

Now, they only hoped that reinforcements would arrive quickly.

However, the speed at which the Great Yu Empire army breached the city gate exceeded their expectations.

After the city gates were breached by artillery, musketeers immediately poured into Liaozhou City simultaneously from all four city gates. For a time, cries of “kill” shook the heavens.

Ye Qingyun showed a satisfied smile. He was not at all worried about the 60,000 barbarian infantry armed with swords; such an army, no matter how brave, could not withstand the attack of firearms.

Chapter 788

Aguda watched the Great Yu Empire soldiers pouring into the city and fell into despair.

Their supposedly sturdy city was vulnerable to the Great Yu Empire’s firearms. In a very short time, they lost the barrier of the city gate.

As the flag leader of Liaozhou City, his duty was to defend Liaozhou City. However, at the beginning of the war, this place was not a key defensive city for the Golden Tent Khanate.

Because they had not anticipated that the Great Yu Empire would dispatch troops deep into the Khanate's territory to directly attack Liaozhou City.

After all, this place was six hundred li from Shanhai Pass.

"We must hold the city until reinforcements arrive! Charge!" Aguda screamed hoarsely.

Now, the soldiers on the city wall were useless. The Great Yu Empire soldiers poured through the city gate, their weapons spewing flames and smoke as they killed their way into the city.

Now, he could only order his soldiers to charge down from the city wall and fight the Great Yu Empire soldiers.

Then he turned to the myriarch beside him and said, "Go tell the tribesmen in the city that whoever kills one Great Yu Empire soldier will be rewarded with three sheep and one cow! Hurry!"

"Yes, Flag Leader." The myriarch immediately descended the city wall. He commanded some cavalry to disperse, shouting Aguda's bounty order.

Although there were only sixty thousand soldiers in Liaozhou City, over three hundred thousand barbarians lived in this city. Now, the Great Yu Empire people were their sworn enemies.

After the cavalry galloped past, many barbarians emerged from the civilian quarters, holding machetes, forks, wooden sticks, and other tools.

Liaozhou belonged to the Golden Tent Khanate, and the Great Yu Empire people attacking Liaozhou were their enemies. Moreover, the generous bounty was enough for them to get through this winter; otherwise, many of them would starve to death.

At the same time, Ye Qingyun entered Liaozhou City under the protection of his personal guards.

At this point, the commander of the 1st Division suddenly came before him. He said, "Army Commander, something is terribly wrong. Now, even the barbarian common people in Liaozhou City have joined the war. The entire Liaozhou City is now filled with enemies."

"What!"

Ye Qingyun's expression changed. He had anticipated this when attacking Liaozhou. After all, this was not the Great Yu Empire, where Xiao Ming's imperial power would make common people abandon resistance and choose submission.

But here, they were surrounded by enemies everywhere.

Finding a low wall, Ye Qingyun skillfully climbed onto it. From the wall, he looked at the war scene inside the city, just as the commander of the 1st Division had said.

Now, Liaozhou City was filled with barbarians wielding weapons. His soldiers were very passive. Some soldiers even hesitated when they saw barbarian elders and women, and were instead killed by the charging barbarian common people.

The more Ye Qingyun watched, the deeper his frown became. He said to the commander of the 1st Division, "Immediately notify the soldiers: regardless of age or gender, anyone carrying a weapon shall be killed without mercy!"

"Yes, Army Commander." The commander of the 1st Division took the order and left.

Returning to his unit, he ordered the soldiers to form dense horizontal lines, with each company as a unit.

Looking at the charging army, a mix of barbarian soldiers, slave soldiers, and common people, he drew the ceremonial sword from his hand.

"Fire!"

He ordered the attack when the barbarian army rushed within fifty meters.

As the 1st Division, his soldiers were all equipped with Conqueror Muskets. Although they could fire from hundreds of meters away, he chose to let the enemy close to fifty meters.



Because within this distance, the Conqueror Musket had very high accuracy. Trained soldiers could basically hit an enemy with every shot.

“Bang, bang...”

Conqueror Muskets spewed flames. The swarming barbarians immediately fell in large numbers.

“Second rank!”

After the first rank fired, each company commander shouted.

As his voice fell, the first rank of soldiers retreated, and the second rank of soldiers stepped forward to continue firing.

“Third rank!”

“First rank!”

“...”

The entire battlefield was filled with the commands of company commanders and the sound of firearms firing.

Under the continuous firepower, rows of charging barbarians fell. In a short while, the entire ground was covered with barbarian corpses.

Smoke filled the battlefield. Ye Qingyun grimly watched this massacre. He felt no pity or guilt, because such scenes had happened countless times when the barbarians ravaged Qingzhou Province.

“Since they are not afraid of death! I will kill until they are afraid of death!” Blood gathered into small streams from the barbarian corpses. Ye Qingyun could even smell the strong scent of blood.

But for him, this was war. The Great Yu Empire and the Golden Tent Khanate were destined for one empire to disappear into the long river of history.

The land of Asia was indeed vast, but it could not accommodate two empires.

“Advance!”

It seemed the charging barbarians had either been completely killed or had hidden. After the smoke dissipated, only barbarian corpses remained before their soldiers.

At this point, the order came. They loaded their bullets. Soldiers holding Conqueror Muskets stepped over the barbarian corpses and continued searching within the city.

Soon, they saw barbarians hiding in the corners of civilian neighborhoods. At this point, they no longer showed the ferocity they had when charging just now, but were trembling.

The scene of the charge had completely terrified them. No matter how they charged, they couldn't get close to the Great Yu Empire soldiers. Instead, their casualties continuously increased.

It wasn't until the bodies of their tribesmen covered a hundred-meter stretch of ground that they finally understood they could not win, no matter what.

Moreover, the army composed of barbarian soldiers and barbarian slave soldiers had been crushed. Without command, they were like a swarm of headless flies.

"Round them all up!" a company commander ordered.

The soldiers immediately held their guns and confined the barbarians they found in houses. A room, once filled, was locked, and then they filled another room.

And those barbarians who still tried to resist were shot without hesitation. After a fierce battle, they finally gained control of Liaozhou City.

Night fell. Ye Qingyun and the generals gathered in a residence within the city.

After listening to the reports from various division commanders, he said, "Repair the city gate overnight to prevent barbarian reinforcements from arriving."

Everyone nodded. A division commander asked, "Army Commander, what about the barbarians inside the city now? Over two hundred thousand people is no small number. Leaving them is a hidden danger. You saw today's battle; they killed our soldiers without batting an eye."

"In my opinion, it's better to burn them all and burn them to death," another division commander said. He was seething with anger. He had lost three regiments' worth of men this time.

Ye Qingyun knew that these generals were now seeing red. War was like this, continuing until one side was annihilated.

He said, "Killing them would be too easy for them. The imperial court needs slaves everywhere now. This time, let them dig mines for a lifetime and build railways for a lifetime."

Chapter 789

Jinzhou.

Qi Guangyi led his cavalry, driving a group of barbarian soldiers towards the camp.

These barbarian soldiers formed long lines, with those in front and behind connected by ropes to ensure they would not escape.

Besides these slave soldiers, some cavalry also herded cattle and sheep, which were all plundered from barbarian villages.

After landing in Jinzhou, they followed the plan to cause chaos near Jinzhou, while simultaneously plundering everything they could.

This approach was extremely effective. The hunter cavalry soon discovered that cavalry reinforcements were continuously arriving.

However, Qi Guangyi was not nervous at all. Because, according to the timeline, Ye Qingyun should have already captured Liaozhou City by now, which meant they had driven a nail into the heartland of the barbarians.

Moreover, even if Liaozhou City could not be held, they could always retreat to Bisa Castle and Haigucheng, and then evacuate by warship.

Of course, this was the worst-case scenario, but now everything was going unexpectedly smoothly. Perhaps Lu Fei had attracted most of the barbarian cavalry, and the number of barbarian cavalry coming to reinforce Jinzhou City was small.

The barbarian soldiers they captured were precisely the small cavalry units that came to reinforce.

Before the sun set, Qi Guangyi and his group returned to the camp. After they returned, a group of merchants immediately swarmed over, their eyes gleaming like wolves.

Qi Guangyi's expression remained unmoved. He had grown accustomed to these merchants' greedy appearances. In fact, for the past few days, the merchants had been waiting in the camp to trade with them.

With the army mobilized, the supply lines were paramount. The most difficult aspect of leading thirty thousand cavalry to Jinzhou this time was logistics.

To fight a decisive battle with the barbarians in Pingzhou City, most of the slaves were transporting grain, fodder, and ammunition for Lu Fei and the others.

And to solve their supply problem, the Emperor had given him an unprecedented idea.

Before setting off on the expedition, the Chamber of Commerce gathered the Great Yu Empire's merchants and told them that all the goods plundered by the cavalry in Jinzhou this time could be sold to them.

Of course, the precondition was that they exchanged it for warhorse fodder, grain, and silver. Thus, the scene in the camp now.

"Army Commander Qi, these barbarian soldiers are excellent. Each one is very strong. I am willing to pay ten taels of silver per man."

Ding Wu said loudly to Qi Guangyi.

Now, for the merchants of the Great Yu Empire, slaves were the most valuable commodity. So, upon learning that the captured barbarians could all become slaves, they risked coming here.

“Twelve taels.” Qi Guangyi’s tone was unwavering. “My soldiers expended considerable effort to capture these slave soldiers alive. They deserve some compensation.”

Ding Wu’s eyes darted around. Even so, these strong slaves could be sold for around seventeen taels of silver upon return to Qingzhou Province. He said, “Alright, twelve taels.”

Qi Guangyi nodded in satisfaction. Besides trading with merchants, the Grand Council also implemented a bounty system this time.

Thirty percent of the silver obtained from this northern expedition’s trade would be equally distributed among the soldiers. This was also the reason why the soldiers’ morale had not decreased but increased over the past few days.

As Ding Wu’s words fell, other merchants also gathered around. After confirming the price, they quickly distributed the three thousand captured slave soldiers cleanly.

In exchange, they sent slaves to transport fodder, grain, meat, potatoes, and other items from the ships to the main camp.

Then, boxes of silver were moved down.

Having received the silver, the division commanders from each division immediately came to collect it, then distributed it layer by layer to the soldiers.

Plundering during the day and receiving silver at night. The soldiers were all in high spirits. Loyalty to the nation was a soldier's sentiment, but with the added motivation of profit, they maintained a high level of enthusiasm for war.

Seeing the soldiers happy, Qi Guangyi showed a faint smile.

The Great Yu Empire soldiers of the past greatly disliked war, because it not only delayed their farming but often also subjected them to exploitation by generals.

But now it was different. Clearly, being a soldier could earn more substantial profits than farming.

During the last northern war, many outstanding soldiers received large bounties. Using these bounties, they became a wealthy class in their local areas, completely changing the image of Great Yu Empire soldiers as being poor and lowly.

It was also for this reason that conscription last year was very lively, with many young men scrambling to join the army.

Shaking his head with a smile, Qi Guangyi returned to his camp. Tomorrow would be another day of blood and turmoil.



...

Shanghai Pass.

Xiao Ming was burning the midnight oil, writing the Great Yu Empire's "Slavery Act." This law would be implemented in the Great Yu Empire, aiming to clarify the status, ownership, and punishment system of slaves.

Coming from modern times, Xiao Ming knew very well that slavery would eventually be abolished. However, being in this era, he could not use modern ideas to solve the problems of this era.

Because an era itself had its limitations, and this limitation was reflected in the educational level of the general populace.

For example, his trying to persuade Europeans to stop colonization now would be as ridiculous as him trying to persuade a cannibal tribe not to eat people.

Having understood these points, Xiao Ming felt there was no need to be special in a world where slavery was rampant. Hence, the current "Slavery Act." Because the influx of barbarian slaves would inevitably bring various problems to the Great Yu Empire.

This act was precisely to address this problem.

“Your Majesty, General Niu has arrived.”

While he was concentrating on his writing, Qian Dafu walked in.

“Let him in.” Xiao Ming put down his pen. He had called Niu Ben over. Every day, he needed to understand the current war situation.

Qian Dafu left, and soon Niu Ben walked in. As it was customary, Niu Ben bowed and then directly said, “Your Majesty, today Lu Fei’s soldiers basically charged to the city gate, but they were repelled by barbarian soldiers. However, the barbarian slave soldiers have been largely depleted, and the remaining barbarian soldiers probably won’t last much longer. Now, the barbarians are very impatient. Today, the barbarian Great Prince Wuzhugu led his cavalry to continuously assault the chariot formations along the route, and the casualties among the soldiers in the encampments are heavy.”

“The more frantic the barbarian cavalry, the more it shows they can’t hold out. This time, with three forces attacking simultaneously, flourishing in the heartland of the barbarians, they are finally making the barbarians experience what we felt when they ran rampant in the Great Yu Empire,” Xiao Ming said coldly.

Niu Ben said, “Your Majesty is absolutely right. If everything goes smoothly, Ye Qingyun should have established a foothold in Liaozhou City by now. When we then take Pingzhou, Jinzhou will be an isolated city, and taking it will be very simple.”

Xiao Ming nodded upon hearing this. He said, "You must now relentlessly attack Pingzhou City at all costs. As long as this city is breached, Wuzhugu's cavalry will be like rootless duckweed, and they will only be able to retreat to the grasslands."

"Yes, Your Majesty," Niu Ben responded. "Give your old servant three more days, and your old servant will surely capture Pingzhou City!"

## Chapter 790

The lingering rays of the setting sun cast a red glow over the battlefield. The figures of the soldiers returning were stretched long by the dim light.

During this period, Great Yu Empire soldiers and barbarian soldiers repeatedly fought here, turning it into a veritable meat grinder.

The trenches in front of Pingzhou City were stained red with blood. The soil inside the trenches was damp, covered in the blood of soldiers from both sides.

In such a protracted tug-of-war, troop morale was extremely important. Now, both sides were competing to see who would ultimately falter and completely collapse.

In the tent, Lu Fei, Lei Ming, and Luo Xin sat around a low table. Each of them had disheveled beards and dirty clothes.

For several days of warfare, they barely slept, either personally leading soldiers in fierce combat with barbarian cavalry or formulating combat plans in the tent. Sometimes, due to differing opinions, they couldn't sleep until midnight.

“Today, those charging out are already barbarian soldiers, not barbarian slave soldiers. This suggests that there aren’t many remaining soldiers inside the city,” Luo Xin said, looking towards Pingzhou City.

“The trouble is Wuzhugu’s cavalry. Every time we prepare to attack, he leads his troops to raid our camp to tie down our forces,” Lei Ming frowned. “We can’t keep protecting the cavalry anymore. Now, we must make them directly confront the barbarian cavalry, otherwise, barbarian reinforcements will continuously arrive, and this place will be a bottomless pit.”

Lu Fei remained silent. Wuzhugu was very cunning. Using the mobility of his cavalry, he simply avoided direct confrontation with the musketeers.

Instead, he would seize every opportunity to charge whenever he found a disorganized formation.

“Thirty thousand men aren’t even enough to fill Wuzhugu’s cavalry’s teeth,” Lu Fei glared at Lei Ming. He said, “Now, all we can rely on is Qi Guangyi. I hope that fellow can create some major commotion to draw away the barbarian cavalry, otherwise it’s difficult.”

Luo Xin and Lei Ming exchanged glances upon hearing this. Luo Xin said, “Qi Guangyi is a courageous and resourceful man. Let’s hope so.”

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Jinzhou Camp. Qi Guangyi was formulating a plan.

Simple plunder and destruction were no longer enough to achieve the effect he needed. According to the information he had received, more barbarian troops were heading towards Pingzhou City, which was essentially ignoring his presence.

“Attack Jinzhou!” When Qi Guangyi announced his plan, the generals thought he had gone mad.

“Army Commander Qi, we are cavalry. Horses cannot fly up city walls,” a cavalry division commander said.

“Horses can’t fly up, but people can climb up,” Qi Guangyi’s gaze was deep. “There are three thousand musketeers and sixteen cannons in the camp. We only need one thousand musketeers and eight cannons to blast open Jinzhou’s city gate.”

Another cavalry division commander said, “But even if we blast open the city gate, Jinzhou is known as a massive city housing six hundred thousand barbarians. We simply cannot occupy it with just our men.”

“I never said I wanted to occupy Jinzhou City. Our goal is still plunder. It’s quite clear that our plundering in Jinzhou has spread, and many barbarians have fled into Jinzhou City. As you’ve seen, some villages are now clearing their fields and strengthening their defenses. In a few days, we will gain nothing,” Qi Guangyi reminded them.

The generals nodded upon hearing this. When they first arrived, they did indeed reap considerable rewards. Now, as time passed, the number of barbarians they captured was dwindling.

Now, they could only acquire captives by fighting reinforcements, but this resulted in heavy casualties.

Looking at the generals, he continued, "Moreover, the barbarians are now entirely focused on Pingzhou City. Jinzhou City appears formidable, but its defenses are actually very weak. Even if we cannot plunder more slaves then, it will still draw barbarian soldiers from Pingzhou City to reinforce it."

"Yes, Army Commander Qi."

The generals all nodded. Qi Guangyi's final words convinced them.

The next day, Qi Guangyi led his troops towards Jinzhou City. Having already seen through Jinzhou's weak nature, he was now unrestrained. Moreover, this action was more of a feint.

The army's movement immediately attracted the attention of barbarian scouts, who continuously relayed news to Jinzhou City.

Learning that the Great Yu Empire's musketeers and artillery had appeared near Jinzhou City, the barbarian flag leader of Jinzhou City was greatly alarmed. He immediately dispatched scouts to Pingzhou City to request reinforcements.

Because in his opinion, this was surely a feint by the Great Yu Empire. The Great Yu Empire's true objective was to attack Jinzhou City.

Compared to the barbarians' tension, Qi Guangyi was at ease. He led his cavalry to gather outside Jinzhou City, then had the artillery aim their cannons at Jinzhou City.

However, he was not in a hurry to attack the city. Instead, he prepared to put on a show for the barbarians. That night, he had a thousand musketeers leave under the cover of darkness, only to return the next morning, creating the illusion of continuous musketeer reinforcements.

The flag leader of Jinzhou City, witnessing this, was even more terrified. Scouts continued to depart for reinforcements.

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Pingzhou City. After a night's rest, the fighting here resumed as usual on the second day.

In the morning, Lu Fei received an order from Niu Ben, instructing them to capture Pingzhou City within three days.

In the order, Niu Ben mentioned that Luo Hong's army had already set off by ship for Jinzhou. They would rendezvous with Qi Guangyi, and the imperial decree would have Qi Guangyi feign an attack on Jinzhou with them to draw away barbarian forces.

"His Majesty is truly determined this time. I didn't expect him to even move half of Luo Hong's forces here," Lei Ming said excitedly. What they didn't know was that Qi Guangyi had already taken action ahead of schedule.

Now, the battlefield was in a state of stalemate. Luo Hong's arrival would formally break this deadlock.

However, to their surprise, less than a day after Niu Ben's order arrived, 30,000 barbarian cavalry suddenly headed towards Jinzhou. Only just under 90,000 cavalry remained in Pingzhou City.

Although they didn't know why, this was definitely good news for Lu Fei and the other two.

Lu Fei immediately ordered a fierce assault on Pingzhou City. Lei Ming personally led the cavalry into battle, while Luo Xin commanded the remaining chariots to form a chariot formation protecting the infantry's flanks.

Niu Ben's order gave them only three days. Now, they had to fight desperately.

Inside Pingzhou City, watching the Great Yu Empire army's sudden deployment, Beishan slammed his fist hard against the city wall.

Best said pessimistically, "The enemy you face is excellent in both weaponry and tactics. This timing for attacking Jinzhou is very opportune. If Jinzhou falls, you will be attacked from both sides."

"Shut up!" Beishan's chest heaved violently. Pingzhou City had attracted most of the Khanate's forces, and they were now very tired. The Great Yu Empire attacking Jinzhou at this moment was adding insult to injury for them.

Best was not intimidated by Beishan. He continued, "Pingzhou City is too small, and its city walls are not thick enough. The wise choice now is to retreat to Jinzhou City to recuperate."