

Mythical 631

Chapter 631: Still Have to Do It Myself

Ignoring Zhao Yun's current troubles, Chen Chi's army had already advanced towards Tian Feng's main camp using powerful crossbows and ballistae. However, Yuan Shao's soldiers were no pushovers. They were battle-hardened and, under the command of numerous middle and lower-ranking officers, they defended the camp, holding large shields and counterattacking with arrows.

"Boom!" A loud explosion echoed as a bolt, nearly as thick as an arm, finally pierced through the outer defenses of Tian Feng's main camp. This was soon followed by another volley of ballista bolts, creating a large hole in the perimeter fence. Compared to using ballistae to intimidate the enemy, destroying fortifications was the proper use of such weapons.

Chen Chi continued to deploy his soldiers, focusing their attack on the breached section of the camp. Meanwhile, commanders like Jiang Gong led their troops, carrying the remaining large shields and charging towards the breach in Tian Feng's camp.

"Hmph, if only my cavalry had arrived, your current formation would be in real trouble," Jiang Qi sneered as he ordered Zhu Han's unit to move forward and block the breach. The morale of the Hebei troops was not weaker than that of Liu Bei's forces, nor was their fighting spirit. Zhu Han led his troops to confront Jiang Gong's men at the breach in the fence, and the two sides immediately clashed in the narrow space.

"Simaji, Wang Fu, lead your units and tear down that section of the fence! Xu Chu, prepare to attack Tian Feng's camp!" Chen Chi waved his banner, sending two more units forward to exploit the breach and tear down Tian Feng's outer defenses.

"Order Zhu Han to fight bravely after the enemy reinforcements arrive, then feign weakness to lure them into a stronger attack!" Jiang Qi calmly issued new orders to Zhu Han after he had stabilized the breach.

"Yes, sir!" the messenger responded promptly.

“Liu Xian, Liu Yu, prepare to fight hard at that location. Do not push the enemy out. Fight and retreat as needed, making them believe the defense is faltering, but do not let the fence completely collapse!” Jiang Qi ordered Liu Xian and Liu Yu, maintaining his composure despite Jiang Gong’s breakthrough.

Soon, Simaji and Wang Fu led their units through Yuan Shao’s barrage of arrows and joined the battle. As expected, after these two units reinforced the breach, a few soldiers managed to break through, forcing Zhu Han to retreat step by step.

Just as Jiang Gong’s forces were about to break through Zhu Han’s defense, Liu Xian and Liu Yu arrived just in time to stabilize the line again. The battle turned into a brutal back-and-forth in the narrow space, with Liu Bei’s troops occasionally breaking in, only to be pushed back by Yuan Shao’s reinforcements.

The three units from both sides fought fiercely, with Liu Bei’s forces showing high morale and superior combat power. However, due to the narrow breach, only dozens of soldiers could fight at once. Although Jiang Gong and his men were on the verge of breaking through, they had no way to decisively defeat the enemy as Yuan Shao’s new troops continued to press them.

“This is getting tricky, but it’s manageable,” Chen Chi muttered, his face showing some frustration. Chen Xi had entrusted him with command due to his outstanding performance in the last battle, giving him an opportunity to prove himself. However, he hadn’t expected the enemy to be so difficult to deal with this time.

“Gongxi, you’re being too hasty. Don’t focus all your attention on one spot,” Chen Xi commented, listening to the reports from his messengers. He had a good understanding of the situation at the front lines and could see that the breach was being used to lure them into a stronger attack.

“It’s a trap, isn’t it?” Chen Chi’s face darkened as he quickly realized what was happening.

“Forget it, I’ll give you a hand. Leveraging the strength of the soldiers is one way to fight, but when the battle reaches a stalemate, it’s better to rely on the commanders. Order Xu Chu to draw upon the army’s cloud energy and launch a powerful attack!” Chen Xi said, rising from his seat. He couldn’t stand watching any longer.

Chen Xi acknowledged that Chen Chi had a good grasp of the soldiers' strength, but the enemy's commander was also skilled. At this point, relying solely on morale and willpower wasn't going to cut it. Yuan Shao's forces were no less determined than theirs.

"Drawing upon the cloud energy for an all-out attack? If we fail, our cloud energy will be depleted, and the overall strength of our army will decrease," Chen Chi said, turning to Chen Xi.

"Continuing this stalemate will cause even greater damage to our forces. We need a swift victory. General Guan drew Yan Liang away for this very reason. As for the loss of cloud energy, as long as we break through the enemy camp and crush their morale, it won't matter," Chen Xi replied coldly.

Chen Chi's command style wasn't suited for this type of battle. It was similar to the battle in Qingzhou. If it hadn't been for Guan Yu, Zhao Yun, Taishi Ci, and Zhang Fei shattering the Yellow Turbans' morale, even the elite Taishan army would have been worn down and defeated.

As for the time they drew upon the cloud energy to unleash super attacks, reducing the army's strength to 50%, so what? The enemy's morale was crushed, and even with just 30% strength remaining, victory was theirs.

"Pass my order to Xu Chu: draw upon the cloud energy and launch a devastating attack. Hit them hard within three strikes!" Chen Xi commanded the messenger. As for Chen Chi, he decided that future defensive battles would suit him better—offense wasn't his forte.

"General, Lord Chen orders you to draw upon the cloud energy and unleash a destructive attack. Hit them hard within three strikes!" the messenger relayed the command to Xu Chu.

"Brothers, grab your weapons! We're going in!" Xu Chu roared, drawing his nine-ring elephant trunk knife and channeling the army's cloud energy. With a powerful swing, a dark blade of energy, hundreds of meters long, slashed through the enemy's defenses.

"Ugh!" The black energy blade sliced through Yuan Shao's cloud energy, quickly dissipating but leaving the enemy's defenses significantly weakened.

"Not good!" Jiang Qi exclaimed in shock. He immediately tried to reinforce the weakened area, but Xu Chu's second strike followed swiftly, further shattering the defenses. Although the attack's remaining power only killed a few dozen of Yuan Shao's soldiers, the damage was done.

"It's too late. Forget it, order the entire army to attack!" Jiang Qi decided, seeing the breach in their cloud energy. He gritted his teeth and ordered a full-scale charge.

"Break through!" Xu Chu roared, mustering all his strength and energy for one final strike. The black blade, now five hundred meters long, slashed down, cutting through a large section of the fence and taking hundreds of Yuan Shao's soldiers with it.

As soon as Jiang Qi's orders were issued, all the archers within the fence unleashed a volley. Any of Liu Bei's soldiers hit by the arrows suffered severe injuries. With Xu Chu drawing upon the army's cloud energy, the soldiers were caught off guard, and their defenses weakened significantly.

"Full-scale charge! Order the hidden cavalry to flank from both sides and cut off Yuan Shao's forces!" Chen Xi ordered with a cold smile.

Chapter 632: Liu Beijun's Elite

After Chen Xi ordered, the handsome flag shook immediately, drumming a sudden change, and the cavalry hidden before the two wings rushed out.

"Order Xu Chu to inform Guan Yu to return and prepare for the second wave of left, center and right cavalry to crush Yuan Shao's army." Chen Xi ordered toward the herald soldiers, if he estimated it well, Xu Chu was absolutely close to the full force of the previous three hits. Now, he must be in a state of exhaustion. If he continues to order his charge, he will be trapped if he accidentally falls into the enemy's formation.

When the herald soldiers rushed to the battlefield to find Xu Chu, Xu Chu was vigorously wielding his sword and slashing the enemy, saying that Xu Chu's internal energy was indeed exhausted, but like his lords, his physical strength recovered quickly, and he lost the internal Anger, he is still a warrior, wielding a sword, and leading the guard, bringing a storm of blood and blood.

"General Xu, Chen Shuai ordered you to recall General Guan, and ordered General Guan to lead the school swordsman, you led the Tiger Guard, General Zhao led Bai Mayi from preparing to make the final

attack, and you will charge and get trapped, General Guan will expand his advantage, General Zhao Click to kill the enemy leader. "The herald soldiers passed the latest order toward Xu Chu.

"Okay, let me inform General Guan." Xu Chu stared at the situation from side to side, and after confirming that there were not too many problems, he immediately drove away.

Since the fence was broken, Yuan Shaojun immediately replaced it with an offensive and attacked Chen Xi's army. Relying on the advantage of the cloud, during the first wave of attack, he relied directly on a counterattack to directly suppress Chen Xi's advance. . Offensive, but soon Liu Beijun regained his tactics with more veterans.

"Liu Beijun seems to be a bit too elite, how is this possible, a soldier could actually launch an attack while avoiding the crossbow! How did this train out?" Jiang Qi commanded and observed Liu Beijun's strength. It turned out that the quality of Liu Beijun's soldiers was somewhat nonsense.

"It's really Liu Beijun's ordinary soldiers. After being broken up, he will move closer. Eight of the ten soldiers actually use more than three weapons, and they all know how to rebound the bow. How to train this soldier." Jiang Qiyue The more I was shocked, Liu Beijun 's soldiers seemed to be beyond description of a veteran. These soldiers seemed to find the best way to kill the enemy.

[Ca n't go on like this, Liu Beijun 's qualities are almost approaching Danyang soldiers. How did this training come out? After fighting so hard, it is likely that the other party will seize the opportunity and strangle all sides. Do you want to use it now? 】

Jiang Qi looked gloomy, and it was because he gave him the recommendation as commander in chief. He is good at analyzing and grasping fighters, and the army is not bad, but in this case, Jiang Qi can only say one thing. It is not his fault to lose. The opponent is not only a general, but also a soldier!

Some of Liu Beijun 's veterans were holding long spears, holding large shields, and some holding long knives. As long as possible weapons are complete, and fight is also a group of several, once someone falls, someone will immediately make up. It is rare for a person to fight alone, even if a foolish recruit wants to fight alone, he will be knocked down by the veteran. Then formed a lineup to kill together.

This kind of combat literacy that blinded Jiang Qi could only say a word. Most of these soldiers are veterans who have participated in more than ten times in size and have seen blood and survived. These soldiers are basically the backbone if they are placed in other princes.

Liu Bei basically has no such problems as tetanus and purulence. As long as the next battlefield is not dead, it will almost not die. The vitality of the soldiers is still very strong. After all, a good day has not passed a few days, and no one wants to die so early.

Veterans who have participated in about ten large and small battles, to be honest, even if they have problems with their brains, they know how to fight. Veterans who walk on the edge of life and death ten times have the same physical fitness. Their grasp is definitely not comparable to that of recruits, not to mention one dozen, basically there will be no problems with one dozen.

"The other party seems to have some poor skills." Chen Xi said with a smile, not caring that he said another idiom that is not this era.

"It seems that this is true. Yuan Shaojun's combat quality is indeed good. Now almost 20% of his casualties have been lost, but the morale has not decreased much, and the generals of the other party are also very good at grasping the commander of the army." Guo Jia nodded and said.

Liu Beijun's strongest point is that middle and lower-level officers have a lot of combat experience. As long as the above does not command randomly, the following can basically fight by themselves.

"But still be careful, is the other party tempting?" Chen Xi frowned, "It's clear that as long as they fight and retreat, even if our army is elite, it will be difficult for them to defeat the other party. , Yuan Shaojun's crash is sooner or later. "

"It's probably like knowing clearly the combat capabilities of our army. After all, this is the first time we have had a high-intensity conflict with the north. The other party probably also wants to get a good understanding of our army's combat power." Guo Jia thought and said, "However, the three-thousand soldiers should not move lightly."

"Well, that's for sure, Gongxi, you don't seem to be fit for an offensive. The three-thousand army is handed over to you. Once the other party carries out a strong counterattack, the front-line troops will be defeated, and you will go up, how?" Chen Xi turned away and said to Chen Chi.

"I must live up to Chen Shuai's trust." Chen Chi bowed his hand. Chen Xi's previous move seemed extremely adventurous, but he quickly broke the deadlock and brought the entire battle to his own rhythm. This ability is not what he has. of.

"Well, by the way, Gongxi, if the other party launches a strong counterattack, how do you plan to deal with it?" Chen Xi thinks that Chen Chi should be given a preventive shot first. Before that, Chen Chi's expression cannot satisfy him. He is conservative. .

"Naturally it's a big shield," Chen Chi said.

"Oh, you go, remember to prepare bed crossbow, strong crossbow." Chen Xi told Chen Chiding, and then said nothing.

After Chen Chi left, Chen Xi looked at Guo Jia, "This guy is too stereotyped."

"Don't you think he's good at resident defense?" Guo Jia said with a smile. "Not everyone can be like you."

"Don't, my army soldiers are all scum, only these soldiers respect me, and there are two lords, Zilong and they are present, they will follow the command in this way, as for breaking the deadlock, I can only say that it is because I know me How good the hand is, but the commander on the opposite side is very powerful. "Chen Xi sighed.

"Huh, what is the opposite side doing?" Guo Jia looked at the opposing army formation indifferently. I saw that for a while, the opposing army had been divided into two large fish scale arrays, launching counterattacks one by one.

Chapter 633: A Battle Beyond Comprehension

"Is he sending his troops to die?" Chen Xi asked in confusion.

"Fish Scale Formation—are they planning a head-on clash?" Guo Jia was equally puzzled. However, unlike military generals who might rush headlong into a fight without thinking, Guo Jia furrowed his brows as soon as the enemy changed their formation.

"Something unusual is always hiding something sinister," Chen Xi said with a sneer. "They really think they can bait us with such a minor trick?"

"Do you know what they're trying to do?" Guo Jia asked in surprise.

"Of course I don't! If I did, would I need to guess?" Chen Xi rolled his eyes. He, too, was curious about what the opposing commander was trying to accomplish. From what they had observed so far, the enemy's troop command was quite capable.

"You'd better be cautious. I have a bad feeling about this. The opposing commander has shown excellent skills so far. You wouldn't want to get outplayed and end up boosting his reputation," Guo Jia said after carefully observing the battlefield for a while.

"A head-on clash with a Fish Scale Formation... He really has no retreat and can only dive deeper into battle. Does he truly have that much confidence?" Chen Xi frowned.

Seeing that Guo Jia remained silent, Chen Xi recalled an old saying, "The most important aspect of war is to prevent your opponent from achieving what they want before you accomplish your own objectives." With that thought, Chen Xi felt more certain about his next steps.

Having settled his thoughts, Chen Xi wasted no more time. "If they want a head-on clash, I won't give it to them! I want to see what the opposing commander is really planning."

"That's a more prudent strategy, though it doesn't quite seem like your usual style," Guo Jia nodded in agreement.

"Send orders to the front line. Form square formations for defense and suppression. Do not let the enemy breach our ranks. Slowly press them to death!" Chen Xi ordered the messenger.

Very quickly, Liu Bei's army stopped engaging Yuan Shao's troops in a direct confrontation and began forming square formations. They grouped together, advancing towards Yuan Shao's forces in an almost perfectly synchronized manner.

In an instant, the offensive and defensive positions of the two armies reversed. While Liu Bei's forces had initially been suppressing Yuan Shao's army, they were now being pushed back by Yuan Shao's more aggressive assault.

However, upon closer observation, it was clear that while Yuan Shao's forces surged forward like raging waves, Liu Bei's army stood as firmly as a cliff in the ocean. No matter how the waves crashed, they shattered against the cliffs, which stood tall and unyielding.

Jiang Qi, observing the situation, realized he had been too hasty. Had he waited to minimize casualties, Yuan Shao's forces and Liu Bei's army would have been locked in a stalemate. Once his secret weapon was deployed, it would have been difficult for Liu Bei's troops to retreat.

"I wasn't ruthless enough. I shouldn't have rushed to form the Fish Scale Formation. I thought the enemy would eagerly bite, but instead, they switched to defense, slowly pressuring my troops. Is the opposing commander mad? I haven't even revealed my full threat, and they already refuse to attack!" Jiang Qi muttered, half blaming himself for his impatience and half wondering if the enemy commander had lost his mind.

After all, Yuan Shao's forces were clearly inferior to Liu Bei's in terms of overall performance. Yuan Shao's initial goal had been to delay, while Liu Bei's army should have sought a quick victory. But now, the situation had flipped, with Yuan Shao's army launching a strong offensive and Liu Bei's troops on the defensive.

"It looks perfectly fine, doesn't it? Could they be stalling on purpose to provoke my suspicion?" Chen Xi frowned, voicing his concern.

"No idea," Guo Jia replied with a bitter smile. The current battle was becoming increasingly hard to understand.

"Whatever. Whether or not they have some hidden trump card, I'll crush them first! No matter what tricks they have, this time I'll smash them to pieces. I want to see what else they've got up their sleeve!"

Chen Xi said coldly. "Send word to my commanders: deploy Zhao Yun's left and right divisions, Guan Yu's saber troops, and Xu Chu's Tiger Guards. Launch a full assault and break them!"

Meanwhile, the fierce battle between Guan Yu and Yan Liang had been a stalemate, with neither able to gain the upper hand. Both were content with just trying to wear the other down, killing if possible, but primarily aiming to stall. After the peak of their battle, they began paying more attention to their respective army's situation.

When Liu Bei's forces pushed into Yuan Shao's camp, Yan Liang desperately fought to hold Guan Yu in place, fearing that Guan Yu's return would boost Liu Bei's army's morale. Similarly, when Jiang Qi drove Liu Bei's troops out, Guan Yu slashed at Yan Liang with all his might, not wanting him to stabilize Yuan Shao's defensive lines.

Thus, both Guan Yu and Yan Liang continued exchanging powerful strikes with their large blades, while also keeping an eye on the overall situation. Through this, they both gained a better understanding of the opposing armies.

It wasn't until Xu Chu smashed through the camp walls with three powerful strikes that Yan Liang cursed under his breath. He immediately tried to rush back to rally his troops for a counterattack, but Guan Yu wasn't about to let him go. The two clashed again, blade against blade. However, as Yuan Shao's army regained some ground, Yan Liang's anxiety eased.

Not long after, Xu Chu arrived, shouting from a distance, "General, Commander Chen orders you to return to the main force!"

With a final, powerful strike that forced Yan Liang back, Guan Yu turned his horse and departed, completely unconcerned about Yan Liang retaliating.

Sure enough, Yan Liang, seeing Guan Yu retreat, didn't make any attempt to attack. Xu Chu stood nearby, and while he wasn't planning to ambush him, Yan Liang knew that if he tried anything, Xu Chu wouldn't hesitate to retaliate.

As Guan Yu and Xu Chu left together, Yan Liang hesitated for a moment before also retreating. After Yan Liang had moved far enough away, Xu Chu turned to Guan Yu with a look of admiration and gave him a thumbs-up.

"General, you are truly formidable," Xu Chu said, his face full of respect.

Guan Yu remained silent. To be more accurate, he had no idea what Xu Chu was even talking about.

"The way you turned around earlier was incredibly commanding," Xu Chu said, sounding deeply impressed. "That level of confidence was astonishing."

Guan Yu didn't reply, maintaining his usual stern and dignified expression, but cold sweat had already soaked through his inner armor.

When Guan Yu had seen Xu Chu approaching earlier, he hadn't thought twice before turning to leave. Now that he thought about it, Xu Chu didn't have the internal energy to handle someone like Yan Liang. If Xu Chu tried fighting Yan Liang without internal energy, he'd better train until he reached Dian Wei's level first!

On the other side, Yan Liang had also come to his senses, letting out a long sigh. "Guan Yun Chang truly is a hero of this era!" he exclaimed before putting the matter aside and returning to his forces to await Jiang Qi's orders.

"It's nothing," Guan Yu said, his face still cold and aloof. In truth, Guan Yu's stoic expression never changed, and Xu Chu had never even considered that Guan Yu's actions had been purely instinctive, without any deeper thought.

"Commander Chen has ordered us all to lead our personal troops and prepare. I'll lead the charge, you'll break the enemy ranks, and Zilong will crush their morale," Xu Chu said, his tone becoming serious as he shifted to discussing the battle plan.

Chapter 634: Jiang Qi's Trump Card

Guan Yu did not hesitate to follow Chen Xi's orders. Ever since the Battle of Hulao Pass, Guan Yu had acknowledged Chen Xi's abilities. Although Chen Xi sometimes appeared overly lazy, which Guan Yu found puzzling, he absolutely recognized Chen Xi's competence. ☺

In Guan Yu's view, Chen Xi's strategy of defeating millions of Yellow Turbans by merging their bravery with his own cunning was enough to prove his capabilities. Guan Yu naturally held Chen Xi in high regard.

After Xu Chu returned to prepare, the messenger arrived at Zhao Yun's position. With the White Horse Volunteers' extraordinary mobility, they had perfectly fulfilled their mission of blocking Yuan Shao's left and right flanks. Upon receiving his orders, Zhao Yun turned his horse without hesitation, ready to break through the enemy's central army in one decisive strike.

Meanwhile, Yan Liang, after a ferocious bout of slaughter, rejoined Yuan Shao's forces and found Jiang Qi, who was dressed in the armor of an ordinary soldier. "Yihan, can you hold out?" he asked.

"It's not a problem," Jiang Qi replied, glancing at Yan Liang. "But keep your distance from me. I don't have your strength. If someone like Zhao Yun sees us together, he'll surely shoot an arrow our way. You might be fine, but I'd be dead for sure."

"Nonsense! With my protection and two thousand elite soldiers, Zhao Zilong could never kill you," Yan Liang declared confidently.

"That's just a saying. It means you shouldn't stand near the commander during a battle. Not everyone can wear such conspicuous armor and still avoid being killed," Jiang Qi said, all the while calculating the degree of entanglement between Liu Bei's and Yuan Shao's forces.

After a fierce exchange, Chen Xi's formations were no longer as stable, and several positions had been breached. As a result, Liu Bei's soldiers adapted to the situation and engaged Yuan Shao's troops in close combat.

"What's there to be afraid of?" Yan Liang said with a smile. "I underestimated Guan Yu a bit. His strength is on par with mine. My brothers are slightly behind him, but the gap isn't too large. However, his horse gives him a significant advantage. My Qingcong was a gift from the lord, one of the finest in the world, but against Guan Yu, it's important to be cautious. His horse is fast, and his blade is heavy. If we're careless, we might lose in a single strike!"

"I understand. Go to the rear camp and equip the gear I prepared to deal with Bingzhou's wolf cavalry. We've tested the enemy's strength enough," Jiang Qi waved, signaling Yan Liang to hurry. If Yuan Shao's troops continued fighting like this, the losses would be severe.

"Are you sure you can handle Bingzhou's wolf cavalry? You know, Zheng Li was nearly destroyed by their elite troops last time and still hasn't recovered," Yan Liang said, surprised by Jiang Qi's confidence. Jiang Qi had never mentioned having any secret weapons, but now he boldly claimed to have a countermeasure for the wolf cavalry.

"You'll see soon enough. This Yanzhou is indeed the heartland of the Central Plains—quite a valuable place. I've heard that one of Liu Bei's trusted generals is here. Taking down one of Liu Bei's mainstays would be a good outcome," Jiang Qi said with a cold smile. "I'm not skilled in charging into battle, but in commanding troops—thanks to Ju Gong's recommendation—I won't disappoint him."

At the moment Jiang Qi smiled, Yan Liang felt a chilling sensation in his heart and nodded without further questioning. He didn't even think to ask what equipment Jiang Qi had prepared.

After Yan Liang left, Jiang Qi issued his final order: a do-or-die counterattack. Success or death.

"Why does this situation feel increasingly strange? We should be the ones attacking, but now we're on the defensive. Yuan Shao's troops, who should be holding back, are now attacking with everything they've got. Do they think they can overwhelm us with a temporary surge in morale?" Chen Xi asked, perplexed.

Chen Xi regretted his initial assumption that this battle would be easy. He had planned to use it as an opportunity to train new commanders, letting Chen Chi lead the central army while Guan Yu and Zhao Yun filled in the gaps. However, they had encountered unexpected difficulties.

"Something isn't right. Have you noticed that Yuan Shao's troop numbers seem off?" Guo Jia said, frowning.

At this moment, Xu Chu had already led the Tiger Guard into Yuan Shao's forces, creating a sharp breach in their lines. Guan Yu, leading the Sword and Shield Troops, furiously expanded the breach, and within a quarter of an hour, they would likely split Yuan Shao's army in two.

"It seems like they're missing three to five thousand soldiers," Chen Xi said, furrowing his brow. "If they were a reserve force, they should have appeared by now. Once Xu Chu and Guan Yu split Yuan Shao's army, Zilong will undoubtedly unleash a devastating attack with his cloud energy," Chen Xi said, puzzled.

"If it comes to that, with the White Horse Volunteers charging in, even if the enemy has reserves, they won't be able to turn the tide. The only outcome for their entire army would be collapse. Even if they're launching a desperate counterattack now, their morale can only last for one wave of the drums," Guo Jia analyzed quickly.

"You mean they're confident they can eliminate Zilong and the White Horse Volunteers within that wave of drums?" Chen Xi asked, frowning. "Zilong is no rash general like Gongsun Bogui, and this is open terrain, not like Jieqiao."

"Jieqiao?" Guo Jia froze, then suddenly realized, "Zichuan, quickly order Zilong to retreat! Don't let him charge in—there's a chance they're recreating the special terrain of Jieqiao. They might actually pull it off!"

"Damn, it's too late! Quickly, send a message to Gongxi!" Chen Xi's face changed as he realized what was happening. The enemy might indeed be creating a situation similar to the one at Jieqiao. Although it would only last a few breaths, Chen Xi dared not gamble on it. A few breaths might be enough to turn the tide.

The White Horse Volunteers were indeed fast, but after Xu Chu breached the enemy lines and Guan Yu expanded the advantage, Zhao Yun would be the one to shatter their formation. However, in reality, once the enemy's formation broke, Yuan Shao's troops would be surrounded on both sides, even if they were on the verge of collapse.

If the enemy really could turn the tide within one wave of the drums, the collapsing Yuan Shao troops on both sides would become like the walls of Jieqiao. A single squeeze would be enough to trap the White Horse Volunteers inside. Without their speed, the White Horse Volunteers would be no better than regular infantry—that's a lesson learned in blood!

"Liangyu, climb up and see if Tian Feng's camp has any fortifications other than the outer fence," Guo Jia suddenly asked, scanning the area.

"Reporting to Advisor Guo, Tian Feng's camp has only the outer fence. After the earlier battles, even the outer camp has been destroyed. The front of the camp is flat and clear," Ruan Liangyu replied after climbing up to survey the situation.

"As I thought," Guo Jia sighed bitterly. "Zichuan, we may be facing the greatest defeat we've ever encountered since following our lord."

"Defeat?" Chen Xi raised an eyebrow. "I don't believe we will lose!"

Chapter 635: Where Are My Oxen?

"Everything the enemy did earlier was to either latch onto us or make us latch onto them. Now, we can no longer retreat. Our forces are entangled with the enemy's, and Yanzhou's flat terrain is perfect for such a battle," Guo Jia said with a bitter smile.

"I don't understand what you're saying. How does this relate to us losing? You're just spouting nonsense," Chen Xi replied.

"We don't have time for that now. If my guess is correct, the three to five thousand troops that seem to have disappeared on the enemy's side have likely gone to prepare war chariots. As for Tian Feng's camp, it only has an outer fence with nothing inside, making it a perfect stretch for several hundred paces of acceleration!" Guo Jia said with a pained expression.

Yanzhou was indeed too flat. In ancient times, during the Spring and Autumn Period, countless battles had taken place here, with war chariots as the primary weapons of warfare. Unfortunately, those days were long gone, and time had erased all traces of those battles. Even the wisest strategists had forgotten what once occurred on this land.

When it comes to war weapons, if heavily armored cavalry with saddles and stirrups are killing machines, then war chariots, despite their limitations, would certainly make those cavalrymen reconsider their might.

Of course, it's undeniable that war chariots, due to their many limitations, had long since been phased out of history. But in a large-scale battle on flat terrain, once these chariots gain momentum, they can be deadly. In terms of impact force, even against heavily armored cavalry, five hundred war chariots would be enough to crush a thousand of them.

Generally speaking, the more limited a weapon's use, the greater its power. And war chariots were certainly among the most powerful.

"Slow down, slow down..." Chen Xi muttered, praying that Xu Chu would take his time. He hoped that his crossbowmen would have enough time to position themselves properly.

If the crossbowmen weren't ready and they had to face war chariots, even if Yuan Shao's chariots were inferior and could only charge three thousand meters, it would still be enough to deal a crushing defeat. This was simply not a battle on the same scale.

"Hurry, gather the rain clouds from all directions. The biggest weakness of war chariots is their wheels. Yanzhou is flat and perfect for large-scale battles, but for chariots, flat terrain is just the minimum requirement!" Guo Jia said, trying to steady himself.

As he spoke, Guo Jia began to take action. Whether he succeeded or not was uncertain, but doing nothing would only lead to a disastrous defeat. If they engaged the war chariots head-on, both infantry and cavalry would be doomed. However, chariots and cavalry were not immune to crossbow fire.

"Gather the rain clouds, but control it so that the rain doesn't fall," Chen Xi instructed, also starting to take action. In an instant, a strong wind began to blow, stirring up dust that caused Yuan Shao's troops to squint. In that brief moment, many of his soldiers were knocked down.

At this time, Yan Liang had already mounted his war chariot, ready to charge. When he first saw the five hundred chariots in the rear camp, he was startled but quickly realized that this was Jiang Qi's trump card. In this kind of battlefield and terrain, these chariots were enough to tear through tens of thousands of infantry.

During the Spring and Autumn Period, the power of a nation was measured not by its infantry or cavalry but by the number of war chariots it possessed. This wasn't a joke. On flat terrain, facing infantry and cavalry head-on, over a thousand chariots could decimate any opposition. Such battles were completely one-sided slaughters.

What Yan Liang regretted was that these chariots had been modified from supply wagons and couldn't withstand too much strain. After this battle, these five hundred supply wagons would likely be destroyed.

Because these were merely supply wagons, neither Lu Bu's scouts nor Guan Yu's scouts took them seriously. If they had been real war chariots, any knowledgeable person would have seen through the ruse immediately.

However, Jiang Qi had brought these wagons as part of a supply convoy, and the thousand oxen used to pull the inferior chariots had been mostly slaughtered as rations for the troops. Although Yan Liang knew about chariots, he wasn't deeply familiar with them.

Originally, each chariot should have been pulled by two oxen and three horses, carrying five combatants and a charioteer. But now, with half the oxen slaughtered, they had to make do with one ox and three horses per chariot. What more could they do, given that the oxen had been eaten?

Even so, with five hundred chariots and three thousand well-prepared soldiers, Yan Liang felt victory was within reach.

The more Yan Liang observed, the more confident he became. He couldn't help but feel a surge of joy—defeating Liu Bei's army in the first encounter was a good omen.

Soon, the chariots were fully equipped, and Yan Liang laughed wildly as he ordered the troops to prepare for battle.

While Yan Liang had only a superficial understanding of chariots, Jiang Qi knew better. However, Jiang Qi was still commanding the front lines and had only sent a deputy to relay instructions. After all, in a flat terrain battle against non-chariot forces, using chariots was usually a straightforward strategy—as long as they didn't make any grave mistakes, victory was almost certain.

"Charge! Break through their lines!" Yan Liang shouted excitedly as he led the chariots to the center of the camp. Seeing that the battle was turning against them, he didn't wait for Jiang Qi's orders and impulsively gave the command.

Under Yan Liang's orders, all the chariots began to accelerate, quickly reaching the speed of ordinary cavalry and roaring past Jiang Qi.

"What the..." Jiang Qi was stunned to see Yan Liang charge ahead and nearly cursed aloud.

Jiang Qi's plan had been to wait until Liu Bei's forces were on the brink of collapse before unleashing the chariots. But seeing Yan Liang already in full charge, he swallowed his anger and focused on coordinating his infantry to follow and crush the enemy. Disobedience could be dealt with later—right now, victory was the priority.

"Where are my oxen?!" Jiang Qi nearly spat blood.

Before Jiang Qi could order his troops to follow, he noticed that all the chariots under Yan Liang's command were pulled by only one ox each, carrying six men and dragging a chariot. How could a single ox and three horses maintain high speed for ten miles?

Without two oxen, the horses' endurance was meaningless. Even with better horses than in the Spring and Autumn Period, they still had their limits!

It was also Jiang Qi's oversight. To maintain secrecy, he hadn't informed anyone of his plans. The thousand oxen that came with the supply convoy were mistaken for rations by the quartermasters, who didn't think twice about slaughtering them. After all, feeding soldiers with beef was common practice, especially when there were plenty of cattle near the northern borders.

Out of the original thousand oxen, only five hundred remained after nearly a month of rationing. This was already a testament to the quartermasters' frugality—if they had been less restrained, all the oxen would have been gone in just ten days...

Chapter 636: The Kind of Teammate You'd Rather Not Have

While Jiang Qi was nearly vomiting blood in frustration, Yan Liang, leading the chariot charge out of the camp, felt victory was within his grasp.

In fact, when Yan Liang, at the forefront, drove the first chariot into the flatlands of Yuan Shao's camp, Ruan Liangyu had already reported this to Guo Jia.

“They’re coming. This move was indeed unexpected. It just goes to show that there’s no such thing as a useless weapon of war, only people who misuse them,” Guo Jia sighed as he turned to Chen Xi. “I’m almost certain now—we’re the ones taking the hit meant for Lu Bu.”

“Of course we are. You didn’t even need to say it—I already knew we’re taking the blow meant for Bingzhou’s wolf cavalry. It’s infuriating. I nearly got killed by Lu Bu before, and now we’re shielding him again. But fine, bring it on. I’m not going to lose!” Chen Xi responded, his expression dark. Even a fool could tell that this was a setup meant for Lu Bu.

“Get ready. Victory or defeat depends on how we handle this. If we time it right, we could not only win but even decide the entire battle in one stroke. But are you really this confident?” Guo Jia asked, taking a deep breath to steady his nerves as he stared at Chen Xi.

“I trust Zilong. He won’t miss that slim chance,” Chen Xi nodded, though internally, he was cursing the situation.

“It’s not just about the timing—it’s also about strength!” Guo Jia sighed, mentally preparing himself for the critical moment when the weather might change.

“Boom, boom, boom!” The frantic drumbeats of Yuan Shao’s army couldn’t stop Xu Chu’s Tiger Guards from advancing, nor could they halt Guan Yu’s saber-wielding troops from cutting through the enemy. And they certainly couldn’t deter the White Horse Cavalry from weaving through the battlefield with agility.

Finally, Zhao Yun broke through Yuan Shao’s army, while Guan Yu completely shattered the right flank, causing it to collapse. Xu Chu’s Tiger Guards also devastated the right side of Yuan Shao’s forces, and in that moment, the blood-soaked clouds above, which had been suppressing them, split open.

Guan Yu, Zhao Yun, and Xu Chu quickly regained their full strength. If Yuan Shao’s army had no hidden trump card, the breach in their formation would become the source of their defeat. The clouds above would continue to dissipate as Yuan Shao’s troops were divided and scattered.

If Chen Xi could get just one more round of drums, Yuan Shao's army would crumble, and although Liu Bei's forces would become disorganized from the pursuit, their cloud energy would also gradually dissipate.

But at that moment, Yan Liang, roaring with battle cries, led his chariots into the fray. The overwhelming momentum of the charging chariots instantly reignited the fighting spirit of Yuan Shao's exhausted troops. The cloud energy that had started to disperse now began to coalesce again.

Xu Chu was filled with dread as Yan Liang's chariots barreled toward the breach they had just created. In no more than thirty breaths, they would reach the battlefield, and the broken clouds above were already starting to close, reapplying their oppressive force.

"This isn't good!" Zhao Yun realized with alarm, but it was too late to retreat. If they were surrounded, the White Horse Cavalry would suffer the same fate as at Jieqiao, where the sand was stained with blood. Retreat was almost impossible now, given how far they had charged ahead.

"Everyone, get out of my way!" Zhao Yun's mind was flooded with memories of his fallen comrades from the White Horse Cavalry and the grim description of Jieqiao's tragedy by Xue Shao. The tragic memories surged back as Zhao Yun recalled Xue Shao's calm recounting of the battle.

Originally, Xu Chu's Tiger Guards led the charge, with Guan Yu widening the breach and Zhao Yun breaking the enemy's spirit. But now that they had penetrated Yuan Shao's army, Zhao Yun was at the forefront.

With a sweep of his silver spear, Zhao Yun unleashed a wave of inner energy, a silver-blue blossom blooming beside him. In an instant, the surrounding Yuan Shao soldiers were cut down, but as they sensed the powerful reinforcements behind them, they fought on with reckless abandon.

"Charge with me!" Zhao Yun shouted, slashing through the enemy ranks with his spear in one hand and sword in the other. Just before Yuan Shao's forces could close the encirclement, Zhao Yun broke through, followed by the White Horse Cavalry, and then, a torrential downpour began.

"Strategist, General Zhao has broken through. Commander Chen is leading the crossbowmen to the front. They'll reach the battlefield in another quarter-hour," Ruan Liangyu reported from atop the carriage.

“We’ve won,” Chen Xi laughed heartily. “Zilong truly is invincible. Beat the drums and keep up the advance! Chariots may be fierce, but their greatest strength is also their greatest weakness—reckless charging. I don’t know why the enemy acted prematurely, but they’ve played right into our hands. Well done, hahaha!”

“The enemy was too hasty. If they had waited for one more round of drums to scatter our front line and shatter our cloud energy before attacking, we would have been defeated. But instead, they attacked now—perfect!” Guo Jia laughed with a mix of relief and triumph.

As Yan Liang’s chariots picked up speed, the torrential rain began to pour down. It felt as though the heavens were collapsing, but Yan Liang didn’t care. Driving his chariot at full speed, he was confident that once he smashed through, the battle would be over.

In the next moment, Yan Liang saw Zhao Yun break through first, followed by the White Horse Cavalry. But in Yan Liang’s current state of excitement, it didn’t matter. He was confident that he would crush the White Horse Cavalry like ants beneath his wheels.

“Heaven bears witness, the White Horse bears proof!” Zhao Yun was the first to shout, followed by the rest of the White Horse Cavalry. They echoed his words as they veered sharply to the left, their speed incredible.

Yan Liang sneered, gripping the reins tightly. He could already see the White Horse Cavalry crushed beneath his chariot wheels.

“Die!” Yan Liang roared, as all the archers on the chariots fired arrows at the White Horse Cavalry.

Many of Zhao Yun’s soldiers fell, and some were unable to avoid the slippery terrain caused by the rain, falling to the ground. At the same time, several of Yan Liang’s chariots, due to the downpour and poor control, collided and overturned.

But Yan Liang, charging at the forefront, couldn’t see the chariots crashing behind him. All he could see was the path left open by Zhao Yun’s breakout, and the Yuan Shao soldiers being pressed back by Liu Bei’s advancing troops. The passage that Liu Bei’s forces had painstakingly carved out was now closing up again, bolstered by the morale from Yan Liang’s chariot charge.

Chapter 637: Zhang He Comes to Aid

Guan Yu's Blade Troops and Xu Chu's Tiger Guards were both trapped within Yuan Shao's forces. Due to being surrounded on all sides, they were continually pushed towards Liu Bei's forces by Yuan Shao's soldiers.

In front of Yan Liang's chariots, there were only Yuan Shao's soldiers. The rain and the earlier actions of Zhao Yun's White Horse Cavalry had completely obscured Yan Liang's judgment of the battlefield, leading to a tragic situation where he harmed his own forces before even reaching the enemy!

At this point, Yan Liang's chariots were out of control. In his haste to defeat Liu Bei's army, he had pushed the speed to its limit, and his earlier attacks on the White Horse Cavalry had led to a complete misjudgment of the situation behind him.

Meanwhile, Zhao Yun, leading the White Horse Cavalry, had completed a sharp turn. All the cavalymen had drawn their bows and were firing arrows towards Yan Liang's chariots, raining down arrows upon them.

Although the White Horse Cavalry was swift and nimble, Yan Liang's chariots, upon seeing Yuan Shao's soldiers blocking their path, could not stop their momentum.

"Not good..." Yan Liang cried out in despair. His lament was not due to Zhao Yun's arrows but because his chariots were now charging uncontrollably into his own troops. The greatest flaw of the chariots had become evident: they could not stop their charge or make sharp turns, only charge headlong.

At that moment, Jiang Qi's command sword slipped from his trembling hand, falling into the wet earth as the rain soaked him to the bone.

"It's all over..." Jiang Qi murmured, his eyes unfocused. The moment Zhao Yun broke through the encirclement, he had sensed that things were going wrong, but the reality was even more brutal than he had imagined.

However, Jiang Qi quickly reined in his despair, calming himself as he issued one final order: retreat. This was both to preserve his soldiers and to clear a path for the chariots.

As Yan Liang's chariots plowed into his own forces, the screams of agony were endless. Five hundred chariots thundered through Yuan Shao's troops, cutting down soldiers like wheat before a scythe, whether they were Yuan Shao's men or Liu Bei's.

"How could this happen!" Yan Liang was at a loss for words. When his chariots tore through Yuan Shao's forces, he was dumbfounded. He remembered this area being full of Liu Bei's troops—why were they all gone now?

The chariots tore through the battlefield, leaving behind countless mangled bodies. At that moment, Yan Liang finally realized the grave mistake he had made, but it was too late. He could see Guan Yu and his elite guards just ahead of him.

At the same time, he heard the sound of gongs being struck from behind. Yan Liang knew that his blunder had caused the defeat of this battle.

"Guan Yu, prepare to die!" Yan Liang roared, disregarding everything as he drove his chariot towards Liu Bei's forces.

Yuan Shao's troops were already shattered by the chariots' charge. The devastating rush had completely crushed their morale. The once-united Yuan Shao army had now fallen into chaos, with everyone desperate to flee at the sound of Jiang Qi's retreat signal.

The only force still charging towards Liu Bei's army was Yan Liang with his chariots. Having made a mistake, he now intended to bear the consequences. At the very least, he wouldn't run away—he would do everything he could to protect the soldiers under his command.

Having broken through Yuan Shao's forces, Yan Liang's chariots, drenched in blood, now charged wildly towards Guan Yu. His face was twisted with rage and regret—he hated himself for meddling in something he didn't understand and ruining what could have been a victory. He was furious!

But regardless of how much anger burned in Yan Liang's chest, he knew this wasn't the time for regret. It was time to fight. He would kill Guan Yu, drive his chariots deep into Liu Bei's army, and unleash a storm of blood and death. Only by doing this could he atone for his mistake and protect the soldiers whose lives were now at risk due to his error.

"Prepare to die, Guan Yu!" Yan Liang roared with unwavering determination, feeling like a failure for the first time in his life.

Without hesitation, Guan Yu dodged Yan Liang's oncoming chariot. He saw the resolute, death-defying look in Yan Liang's eyes. Fighting someone of that caliber, someone with a death wish, was madness—not even Lu Bu would engage in such a reckless battle.

"Kill!" Yan Liang didn't even glance in Guan Yu's direction as he continued his frenzied charge, not caring who stood in his way.

Chen Chi's crossbows fired a relentless barrage of arrows, but they couldn't stop the charging chariots. Yan Liang had no intention of surviving this; he only wanted to kill as many enemies as possible. Whether he lived or died, he no longer cared—he had failed Yuan Shao.

Under the hail of powerful crossbow bolts, many of Yan Liang's soldiers on the chariots were killed. Horses were struck, and many chariots crashed into each other as their drivers were shot down, causing fatal collisions.

But nothing could stop Yan Liang's determination. He continued his mad charge, smashing into Liu Bei's ranks, slaughtering as many soldiers as he could. Everywhere he went, he left a trail of blood and carnage.

However, as the battle raged on, the chariots began to slow. The relentless downpour further hampered their movement, causing more chariots to flip over. Of the five hundred chariots that had started the charge, fewer than a hundred remained. Of the three thousand soldiers, two thousand five hundred had fallen.

After breaking through Liu Bei's lines, the remaining chariots continued to travel a few hundred more paces before coming to a slow halt. Yan Liang ignored the pursuing Liu Bei soldiers behind him.

"Go. Leave now," Yan Liang said to the few surviving soldiers after stopping his chariot.

The blood-soaked warriors exchanged uncertain glances.

"Go. While you still can," Yan Liang repeated. "This battle was lost because of my mistake. Let my death be the end of it. Tell our lord that I have failed him."

There was no fear of death in Yan Liang's words—only the sorrow of having failed Yuan Shao. He felt deep regret that he had not yet repaid his lord's kindness.

With that, Yan Liang turned his chariot around, preparing to charge back into the fray. To his surprise, many of the soldiers who had followed him turned their chariots around as well.

"We are willing to follow you to the end, General," said one soldier with an arrow lodged in his chest. "Lord Yuan has already provided for my family. What is there to fear in death?"

"Let's show them the strength of the men of Yan and Zhao!" another blood-soaked warrior laughed.

"Charge!" Yan Liang roared once more, leading the chariots back towards Liu Bei's army. But this time, Liu Bei's rear guard was fully prepared. A storm of arrows rained down, killing many drivers and causing more chariots to collide and overturn.

"General Yan, Zhang He is here to assist you!" A voice called out in the distance just as Yan Liang and his remaining forces charged into Liu Bei's army again.

Chapter 638: The Real Target

A series of urgent drumbeats followed, and the ground trembled as if it was truly the sound of ten thousand horses galloping. Yuan Shao's reinforcements had finally appeared, not from the left flank where Chen Xi had been guarding against, but from the rear.

"They've finally arrived. I was getting impatient. I prepared so many strong crossbows and ballistae, and now, at last, Yuan Shao's Bingzhou Wolf Cavalry has shown up! We took such a big risk, almost lost the battle, but we've finally hooked the fish we wanted!" Guo Jia slowly stood up and said.

The reason Chen Xi insisted on attacking Tian Feng's main camp was not out of anger. To be honest, if it was merely for revenge against Zhang He, after analyzing that Tian Feng had left and Yan Liang was holding the fort, Chen Xi would never have launched such a bold assault.

Even if he wanted to get revenge, Chen Xi would have waited for Tian Feng to return and relax his guard before launching a night attack, rather than leading a direct confrontation with Yuan Shao's army. Chen Xi wasn't that reckless.

In fact, when Chen Xi first mentioned attacking Yuan Shao's forces, it was more of an impulsive remark, made in the heat of the moment. However, Guo Jia believed that they had to launch a full-scale assault on Yuan Shao, with reasons so compelling that even Chen Xi had to agree, leading to their decision to face Yuan Shao's forces head-on.

"Yes, they've finally arrived. If they hadn't shown up, this battle would have been fought in vain," Chen Xi said with a smile. From the beginning, their target wasn't the soldiers in Tian Feng's camp, nor was it Yuan Tan, Yan Liang, or Jiang Qi. Their real target was Zhang He, specifically Zhang He's elite Wolf Cavalry.

After Lu Bu's departure, Guo Jia, with his keen understanding of human nature, quickly grasped Lu Bu's intentions. That's why Guo Jia had only made passing remarks about teaching Lu Bu a lesson if given the chance, rather than talking about killing him.

Guo Jia had already understood that Lu Bu would eventually abandon Yanzhou as a gift, and it would be handed over to them. Therefore, the logical next step was to drive Yuan Shao out of Yanzhou to pave the way for their future actions.

The greatest threat in taking Yanzhou would undoubtedly be Yuan Shao. Even if Xun Yu, who was currently in Chenliu, learned of this, he could only watch silently. No matter how wise he was, without the corresponding strength to back up his strategies, Yanzhou would ultimately be divided between Liu Bei and Yuan Shao.

Since that was the case, there was nothing more to say. Before Yuan Shao could react, they had to strike hard, making Yuan Shao dizzy with defeat. By the time he realized what was happening, Liu Bei would have already devoured most of the territory. Of course, this was the ideal scenario. It was unlikely they would be able to take everything. For future considerations, Chen Gong would likely inform Yuan Shao's forces after a few days, allowing them to reclaim some of Yanzhou's land.

If there was one significant advantage Yuan Shao had over Liu Bei, it was the number of cavalry under his command. Even if they were delayed by a few days, with Zhang He's large cavalry force stationed in Yanzhou, their faster speed compared to infantry would allow them to seize a significant portion of the land from Chen Xi and Guo Jia.

With this in mind, after determining that the ambush on Zhao Yun was carried out by Yuan Shao's cavalry, Guo Jia decided to use their own army as bait to lure out Yuan Shao's hidden cavalry in Yanzhou. Only by eliminating this threat could they secure a decisive advantage in the upcoming actions.

As the saying goes, "Man proposes, God disposes." First, Jiang Qi's command abilities exceeded expectations, and then the special weaponry meant to counter the Bingzhou Wolf Cavalry was used against Liu Bei's forces. The battlefield became chaotic, and a single misstep could have led to defeat.

But no matter how chaotic it became, everything eventually fell back into place according to Guo Jia's plan. Zhang He had finally arrived. Though he had come from an unexpected direction, he had still shown up, and that was enough.

At that moment, under the puzzled gazes of Zhang He and Yan Liang, a large banner bearing the character "Guan" was raised from what had previously been the vanguard, now the central army. Chen Xi and Guo Jia, stationed in the center, were overjoyed. The reason they had allowed Chen Chi to command earlier was not only to train him but also to deceive the enemy.

As Zhang He appeared, the entire army shifted. The center of the formation was turned over to Guan Yu, with both flanks consisting of Guan Yu's personal cavalry. The Tiger Guard, who had been leading the charge, were now positioned at the rear of the new formation.

Chen Chi, who had been ordered to equip his forces with crossbows and ballistae in the rear, now found himself transformed into the central guard, following behind the new rear army, which had now become the front line—a force entirely composed of archers!

Unfortunately, Zhang He had approached from the wrong flank, making Zhao Yun's earlier maneuver to the left side redundant.

"Charge from both flanks! All archers in the front, target their soldiers!" Guan Yu, now commanding the central army, issued the new orders.

The reason the army was able to adjust positions without falling into disarray was that Guo Jia and Chen Xi had held back Guan Yu's cavalry and the archers in the rear. They had been waiting for this moment, and these three units were specifically prepared to deal with the cavalry!

Zhang He led his charge toward Liu Bei's forces, but before he could even close the distance, the archers in the rear unleashed a volley of arrows at his troops.

This was followed by a torrent of bolts from the powerful crossbows and ballistae. Chen Xi had brought all the equipment he could muster for this battle, deploying more than eight thousand crossbows for the first time in a single engagement!

Arrows rained down like a storm, and on the slippery ground, already wet from the earlier downpour, Zhang He's Wolf Cavalry was thrown into disarray.

At the same time, the cavalry units that had been lying in wait on both flanks charged out, their goal now clear: to cut Zhang He's forces in half and ensure that at least half of Yuan Shao's cavalry would be annihilated by Liu Bei's forces.

"Charge!" Zhang He roared as he led his men toward Liu Bei's army. The moment he saw the archers in the rear reveal their weapons, he knew that Yuan Shao's forces had fallen into a trap. The enemy's goal had never been to capture the camp—they had always intended to wipe out his cavalry!

"Kill!" Sima Ju and others led their cavalry in a fearless charge, determined to cut through Yuan Shao's army and split it in two, even if it meant their deaths.

The Wolf Cavalry moved at incredible speed, and instead of searching for weak points to exploit, they charged directly into Liu Bei's archers. With no close-combat weapons, Liu Bei's forces suffered heavy casualties. However, this battle also marked the beginning of the end for the first Wolf Cavalry that Yuan Shao had acquired from Bingzhou.

Chapter 639: Zhang He's Defeat

Zhang He was a courageous and fierce warrior. Although shocked upon realizing they had fallen into an ambush, he quickly regained his composure. When two forces of over a thousand cavalry suddenly attacked from both sides, Zhang He knew that if he didn't break through within the time it took to burn an incense stick, he, Yan Liang, and the thousands of Bingzhou Wolf Cavalry would all be trapped here.

"Charge!" Zhang He roared. The clouds in the sky twisted violently and began to shift. For the first time, Zhang He revealed his legion's special ability to the world.

"What is this..." Chen Xi frowned as he observed the dark clouds gathering around Zhang He's forces.

"It's a legion ability. Although we don't know its exact nature, no matter how strong a legion ability is, the key still lies in the commander and the soldiers. They are the main force, while the clouds and the legion ability are merely supplementary," Guo Jia also frowned but felt somewhat reassured as he watched the arrows rain down on the enemy from the front lines.

"It seems to be a legion ability that enhances the agility of the entire army," Chen Xi speculated. This was the first time he had encountered such an ability, but it was clear that with this power, Zhang He's army could collectively perform maneuvers that would otherwise be impossible.

"It's not of much use here, but in large-scale battles, this kind of agility could significantly improve both the survival rate and combat effectiveness of the soldiers. However, it's having no impact right now," Guo Jia nodded, then chuckled. "Eight thousand strong crossbows—only a wealthy force like Taishan could afford this. Any other warlord would be hard-pressed to gather so many."

"Annihilate them, but it's a shame. Zhang He is indeed a clever strategist, unexpectedly attacking from the rear. My front lines won't avoid losses after all. Too much offensive power often leads to insufficient defense!" Chen Xi sighed.

Zhang He had no choice but to charge frantically toward Liu Bei's forces. After just one volley of arrows, at least several hundred of his men were killed, and many more were unhorsed. In just one round of shooting, Zhang He lost over a thousand soldiers to the eight thousand strong crossbows and longbows.

After three volleys of arrows, Zhang He led his forces into the front lines. The archers, armed only with short swords, were no match for the charging cavalry and were quickly cut down. The front lines turned into a scene of carnage, but Zhang He's main concern was that his Bingzhou Wolf Cavalry had been

intercepted by the cavalry led by Sima Ju and his men. Any further delay, and they would be completely surrounded.

“General Yan, retreat!” Zhang He fought his way to Yan Liang’s side. By this time, Yan Liang had been hit by several arrows, his armor stained with blood. Of the hundred or so soldiers who had been with him, only a few remained.

“Junyi, you go! Quickly!” Yan Liang shouted, seeing that Guan Yu was leading the central forces toward them.

“If you don’t go, we’ll all be trapped here. Do you want us all to die?” Zhang He shouted back. “The lord is still waiting for you to return. Do you want to leave him with regrets? Have you forgotten what the lord told you?”

“I...” Yan Liang hesitated, only to be struck by another arrow. He continued to swing his sword furiously at the surrounding enemies.

“General, retreat now!” Zhang He roared angrily. He had come to rescue Yan Liang, and now, with so many of his men sacrificed, if he couldn’t save Yan Liang, all his efforts would have been in vain.

“I...” Yan Liang struggled to find the words.

“Enough talk, Yan! The lord gave you a fine horse, a precious sword, and a beautiful woman—not for you to throw your life away! You need to return those things to him. Do you want these items to become the enemy’s spoils, for Liu Bei to wield them against the lord?” Zhang He shouted in frustration. “How will you repay him if you’re dead?”

Zhang He’s words struck Yan Liang like a gong.

“Let’s go! We’ll fight our way out. I cannot die before repaying my lord!” Yan Liang roared. The arrows embedded in his body were forced out as he regained his resolve.

The previously despondent will to die vanished as Yan Liang's roar echoed through the battlefield. Once more determined, he chopped down the frame of a nearby chariot and leaped onto his steed, Qingcong.

With Yan Liang at his side, wielding his mighty blade, the two of them hacked a bloody path through the enemy forces, escaping toward the north. Blocking their way, however, was Zhao Yun, who had just arrived after flanking from the left.

"Kill!" Zhang He roared as he fearlessly charged at Zhao Yun. He had fought Zhao Yun before and knew that only by fighting without fear of death could he withstand Zhao Yun's attacks for fifty moves.

As for what would happen after fifty moves, it would depend on whether Yan Liang could save him, though Zhang He didn't dare place all his hopes on that. Fortunately, this time he didn't have to hide the extent of his inner strength from Zhao Yun.

"Yan Liang, prepare to die!" Guan Yu, a flash of green light, shot across the battlefield from the central army. In that moment, he gathered all his strength into a single strike, aiming directly at Yan Liang.

"You will die!" Yan Liang's eyes were filled with determination. He could not die—at least not before repaying his debt to Yuan Shao.

With an unshakable resolve, Yan Liang poured all his strength into his blade and clashed with Guan Yu. In the collision between his resolve to win and Guan Yu's belief in invincibility, Yan Liang was sent flying, along with his horse, dozens of steps back, landing near Zhang He.

"Junyi, retreat! You are no match for him!" Yan Liang shouted, brandishing his Summer Dragon Sparrows blade and striking at Zhao Yun.

In that brief moment of direct combat with Zhao Yun, Yan Liang realized that Zhao Yun was on the same level as Guan Yu, perhaps even equal to Lu Bu, though his focus wavered.

Yan Liang's deadly strike was deflected by Zhao Yun's spear, followed by a flurry of spear thrusts, each accompanied by sharp bursts of energy. But Yan Liang, refusing to dodge, took the blow head-on, forcing Zhao Yun to retreat, despite his injuries.

Zhang He and Yan Liang managed to break through the White Horse Cavalry's lines, though they were left with only a few hundred soldiers. Compared to the initial overwhelming force of ten thousand horses, their current state was pitiful, but they had survived.

"Order the troops to clean the battlefield. No pursuit," Chen Xi commanded after seeing Zhang He and Yan Liang escape and observing Zhao Yun and Guan Yu's failed attempt to capture them.

In the brief battle with Zhang He, which lasted less than a quarter of an hour, about three thousand men had fallen on the battlefield, with many more wounded. As Chen Xi surveyed the scene, he couldn't help but acknowledge that the battle had been won, but the aftermath would be critical.

Once Chen Xi ordered the battlefield to be cleared, the bodies of Yuan Shao's fallen soldiers were buried on-site, and all the wounded were treated. By the time Guan Yu and Zhao Yun returned, their expressions told Chen Xi they hadn't managed to catch Yan Liang and Zhang He. These men were truly difficult to pursue.

"Unlucky," Guan Yu muttered with a sigh.

"What happened?" Chen Xi asked curiously, seeing Guan Yu's frustrated expression.

"We were about to catch up to them, but then we ran into Yuan Shao's main force," Zhao Yun added, equally exasperated.

...

Chapter 640: Local Specialty Troops

"Perhaps there are no less than twenty thousand of them, forming ranks and advancing toward us. Our troops have been engaged in fierce battle for nearly two hours, and the soldiers are exhausted. Moreover, it's getting late. How about we retreat, set up camp, and rest?" Guan Yu suggested to Chen Xi.

Chen Xi and Guo Jia exchanged a glance, both wearing expressions of surprise. "It can't be that bad. What banners are they flying?" Chen Xi asked.

"The central command banner bears the character 'Wen,' and there are secondary banners with the names Shen, Jiang, Wang, and Xia. They're marching in formation, all well-coordinated," Zhao Yun replied, feeling a bit helpless. "We should prepare ourselves. If we engage in another battle, it won't be easy."

"We've been deceived..." Guo Jia sighed. "To think they're marching in formation—Tian Feng is indeed a cunning strategist to have fooled two of our generals like this."

"Guo Jia, are you saying that the earlier troops were actually routed soldiers in disguise?" Zhao Yun, quick-witted as ever, immediately grasped Guo Jia's implication.

"Yes, they were routed troops, but their quality wasn't bad. Even in retreat, they didn't completely collapse. After withdrawing, they reformed ranks. I suspect they intended to masquerade as reinforcements, planning to attack us from both sides while Zhang He engaged our forces," Guo Jia explained confidently.

"If such a well-ordered enemy force had appeared while we were already in a chaotic battle with Zhang He, it would have been a significant blow to our morale. And in that situation, even if we realized they were just disguised reinforcements, it wouldn't have mattered," Chen Xi added.

If the main army had been entangled with Zhang He, and then Tian Feng ordered Yuan Tan to quickly reorganize his troops to look like fresh reinforcements arriving after Zhang He, it could have turned a defeat into a victory.

In truth, the disguised reinforcements wouldn't be any different in terms of combat ability, but they would exert a psychological pressure on Liu Bei's troops. If the troops that had already been defeated returned, Liu Bei's soldiers might think, "If we beat them once, we can do it again." But if they believed these were fresh reinforcements, the psychological impact would be entirely different.

The appearance of new troops would mean that they had been fighting against three separate forces in succession. After defeating the first, they would be exhausted, and while battling the second, they would suddenly face a third. This would undoubtedly cause a significant drop in morale. Once the soldiers lost their belief in victory, even if Chen Xi and Guo Jia knew the reinforcements were fakes, they wouldn't be able to turn the tide.

Guan Yu opened his mouth to speak but hesitated, leaving his doubts unspoken.

“General Guan, you’re probably thinking, ‘What if they’re real reinforcements?’ You want us to be prepared, right? Well, it’s certainly possible. Let’s send out scouts to confirm,” Chen Xi said, looking at Guan Yu. Guan Yu nodded slightly, confirming that was indeed his concern.

Guo Jia shrugged. He and Chen Xi were confident that the reinforcements were fake, primarily due to the time discrepancy. Zhang He led a cavalry force, and they had defeated him within fifteen minutes. Since time was of the essence, Zhang He would have charged forward at maximum speed.

Zhang He commanded some of the most elite cavalry in the north. If infantry could arrive on the battlefield just fifteen minutes after a two-hour-long cavalry charge, then cavalry would be practically worthless, especially considering they used the two-horse system...

Furthermore, both Zhao Yun and Guan Yu mentioned that the enemy was marching in formation. Marching in formation meant a significant reduction in speed. If they could still catch up with cavalry despite this, then that cavalry would be the slowest in the world...

Soon, scouts returned with a report: Yuan Shao’s troops had begun to retreat north, maintaining a well-organized formation, advancing neither too fast nor too slow.

“We’ve been tricked,” Guan Yu said coldly. “Let’s go after them!”

“It’s better not to. Given their orderly retreat, they’re probably prepared for such a move,” Zhao Yun, always quick to catch on, advised.

“That’s right. Let’s butcher those dead oxen and treat the troops to a feast tonight. Yuan Shao’s camp still holds plenty of supplies. We’ve already tested them for poison, so let the soldiers eat to their heart’s content. Zilong, you’ll have to work a little harder tonight. You and Zhongkang will take charge of the night patrol. We’ll likely spend the night in this camp,” Chen Xi instructed, nodding to Zhao Yun. He was impressed with the quality of Yuan Shao’s forces.

“As you command,” Zhao Yun replied, clasping his hands in a salute.

That evening, after reorganizing the army, and with all the officers and generals gathered, Chen Xi ordered food and wine to be served. As they ate and drank, he began the discussion.

“Let’s talk about your impressions of Yuan Shao’s troops,” Chen Xi asked, glancing around at the assembled officers.

“They’re truly formidable opponents. Unlike Cao Mengde’s hastily trained veterans, Yuan Shao’s forces, from officers to soldiers, are well-honed. Even in retreat, they didn’t collapse entirely. Under the command of their officers, they withdrew in an organized manner. Their combat quality is high, and there was little confusion,” Guan Yu said, putting down his wine cup and speaking first.

“Indeed, Yuan Shao’s forces are brave from top to bottom,” Zhao Yun added. “They have their own convictions. Yuan Benchu’s Jizhou is not the same as the Jizhou I once knew.”

Chen Xi nodded in agreement. He had noticed as much when Yan Liang had returned to face death—more than half of his soldiers were willing to follow him. That spoke volumes.

To be honest, Chen Xi believed that if it weren’t for his presence, this version of Yuan Shao, who seemed almost invincible, would undoubtedly unify the realm. Through his tactics of dividing and winning over the noble families of Jizhou, Yuan Shao had completely consolidated his control over the region. More importantly, through land reforms, Yuan Shao had gradually gained the support of the common people in Jizhou.

“Their officers are also very capable and know when to advance and retreat,” Sima Ju pointed to the wound on his chest. “It feels like some of them fought like bandits. Their tactics were similar.”

“Dezu once advised Yuan Benchu to ease the management of Jizhou’s population. As long as they didn’t commit serious crimes, they could be pardoned for military service,” Chen Xi sighed, acknowledging Ju Shou’s strategy.

“Local hooligans and thugs were rounded up for labor reform. Roving swordsmen were recruited into the ranks as lower-level officers based on their skills. Bandits and marauders who were willing to turn over a new leaf were allowed to join the army as lower-level officers, with their past crimes forgiven. Afterward, they could be promoted based on military merit,” Chen Xi explained with a smile. Ever since

the concept of labor reform had emerged, advisors from all over had urged their lords to spare lives and focus on reform.

“No wonder that guy wielding a blade fought like a horse thief!” Zhou Cang said angrily. He had been wounded in the leg by a man named Peng An, who had ambushed him.

As soon as Zhou Cang spoke, the room erupted in complaints. Yuan Shao’s army had many former bandits and horse thieves, just as Liu Bei’s army had many former Yellow Turbans. It was simply a local characteristic...

“All right, all right, calm down. Enjoy your food and drink. Tomorrow, we’ll move to Linyi. We’ll be stationed there for a long time,” Chen Xi said, raising his hands to quiet the room. He didn’t want the conversation to devolve into more grumbling. He’d rather analyze Yuan Shao’s army on his own later.