

Starlit Path 162

Chapter 162: Issuing the Heavenly Decree

Battlefield

Tang Baiyun's eyes brimmed with despair. Behind him, Tantai Xuan and Jiang Li's combined forces; before him, the ferocious West Command army led by the Overlord. His South Command army, already broken and demoralized, lacked even the courage to fight. Tang Baiyun, facing such odds for the first time, felt his heart sink. Why had West Command joined the fray? This was supposed to be Jiang Li's execution, not his army's doom.

Was it the barbarians? He doubted mere barbarians could unite North and West Commands. It had to be a plot—Tantai Xuan and the Overlord had schemed to devour his ten thousand. Recalling his father's orders to kill Jiang Li to destabilize the world, Tang Baiyun realized South Command's hopes were shattered. Without this army, even their wealth couldn't sustain their bid for dominance. His own survival now consumed him.

"Kill!" he roared, sword raised, charging West Command to carve an escape. The Overlord, axe and shield on his back, marched with his Xiang Clan Army, wielding heavy axes. "Colluding with barbarians—crime one! Using them to kill Great Zhou's hero—crime two!" he bellowed, slamming his axe into the ground, blasting dozens skyward, their bodies bursting in midair.

Tang Baiyun froze, pale. The Overlord's reputation was no myth. "Who gave you the gall to ally with barbarians?" the Overlord thundered. "Tantai's right—not of our kind, their hearts differ! You dare target Jiang Li? Come at me, Xiang Shaoyun!"

A demonic aura surged as he charged alone, unstoppable, a primordial war god. "Lu Ping'an said it well," he roared. "Alliances and schemes are signs of weakness. With strength, who needs them? One man can break ten thousand!" South Command's soldiers fell like wheat before him.

“South Command Army, stop him!” Tang Baiyun screamed. His cultivators, using a simplified Eight Meridians

, blocked the Overlord. But with one swing, his axe cleaved them in half, blood spraying. Tang Baiyun trembled, blood splattered on his face. The Overlord ignored him, locking onto the barbarians. “The Five Hu tribes ravage Great Zhou, bringing slaughter. Internal strife is one thing, but allying with outsiders is treason. At Hurao Pass, my West Command men die guarding against invaders, yet you collude!”

He charged the barbarians, his axe merciless. The Chilian tribe’s young priest, enraged, cursed Tang Baiyun for exposing them. None could withstand the Overlord, who showed no mercy to outsiders. Tantai Xuan, watching West Command tear through like wolves, revealed, “I sent word to the Overlord when I learned of the barbarians. He blocks their retreat. Traitors pay a price.”

His eyes burned with hatred for the Hu tribes, his sons buried in the desert fighting them. “Kill!” he ordered, leading North Command’s charge. Jiang Li, sword drawn, joined him. South Command’s fate was sealed, Tang Xiansheng’s plans crumbling.

The Chilian priest begged for mercy, but the Overlord’s axe ended him. Tang Baiyun tried to flee, but Chi Lian leapt, pinning him with a dagger to his throat. South Command surrendered, their barbarian allies slaughtered. As dawn broke, the battlefield reeked of blood. Tantai Xuan and the Overlord met, the latter smirking before leading his army away. “Truly the Overlord,” Tantai praised. Jiang Li nodded, awed by the cultivator’s battlefield dominance.

Bound, Tang Baiyun faced them, pale and unsteady. “Tang Xiansheng took a gamble, but you, his foolish son, ruined it,” Tantai said. “You shouldn’t have revealed the barbarians so soon. You don’t understand our generation’s hatred for outsiders.” Tang Baiyun laughed bitterly, realizing his error. He didn’t beg; he knew his father wouldn’t ransom him after this failure. “I was so close,” he muttered, glaring at Jiang Li.

Tantai's blade flashed, severing Tang Baiyun's head. "Send it to South Command," he ordered. "Let Tang Xiansheng see the cost of treason." He departed with his prisoners. Jiang Li, with Chi Lian and his remnants, watched him go. A carriage approached, surrounded by soldiers. Mo Beike emerged, and Jiang Li, smiling, signaled his men to lower their weapons.

Beiluo, Lake Island

The South Command's defeat surprised Lu, though it made sense. Tang Baiyun's folly, not his father's cunning, doomed them. The loss of cultivators—South Command's army, Black Dragon Guards—irked Lu. Each cultivator's growth fueled his spiritual energy commission, now diminished by their deaths. "Cultivators in war change its rules," he mused, frowning. "It's becoming a clash of cultivators, slowing the world's transformation."

He didn't want his painstakingly nurtured cultivators dying pointlessly. They needed to focus on growing stronger. As his chair glided silently, Lu found Lü Dongxuan brewing tea, savoring the island's spiritual ambiance. "Quite the leisurely life," Lu remarked.

Lü Dongxuan, startled, nearly spat his tea, his gold chain gleaming. "Young Master!" he grinned. "Tianji Pavilion's busy, I swear, gathering intelligence daily!" Lu, unconvinced, noted Lü Mudui fishing nearby. "Tianji Pavilion should do something," he said.

"Anything, Young Master! We'll do it perfectly!" Lü vowed.

"No trouble," Lu replied. "Issue a Heavenly Decree: a three-month ceasefire across the world."

Lü froze. "Can we enforce that?" he asked cautiously.

Lu's chair rolled toward the pavilion. "Issue it. If anyone objects or disobeys, let them come to Baiyujing."

South Command, Nanjiang City

After a grueling journey, Tang Xiansheng returned, exhausted, his clothes disheveled. Tang Yimo, fever subsided but still pale, followed. The Tang Manor's eerie silence unnerved Tang Yimo, who rushed to his mother and sister's quarters. Tang Xiansheng, catching his breath, heard Tang Yimo's icy roar: "Tang Xiansheng!"

The teacup nearly slipped from his hand. In the disheveled room, Tang Yimo pinned a servant, demanding, "Where are my mother and sister?" His pale face flushed with rage. Tang Xiansheng's heart sank. A bloodied soldier stumbled in, clutching a box, crying, "Lord, South Command... is defeated!"

Tang Yimo froze. Tang Xiansheng, pale, took the blood-dripping box with trembling hands.