

I. Dynasty 140

Chapter 140: The Power of Poetry

A cool breeze rustled through the treetops.

Luo Xin glanced at Lu Fei, who showed no reaction to the poem he had just recited. Luo Xin sighed inwardly. Born into a military family for generations, yet I'm no match for a man of humble origins, he thought with some bitterness.

Lu Fei, on the other hand, was confused by Luo Xin's intense gaze. He had only understood the general meaning of the poem and hadn't felt the same deep emotion as Luo Xin.

"You're not leaving?" Xiao Ming asked with a smile. These days, he'd been training military scribes to boost morale in the army and found himself speaking more like a political instructor than a prince.

"I only wish to be a general defending the borders," Luo Xin said seriously. "But as for Captain Lu, I can't forgive him."

Lu Fei rolled his eyes.

Luo Xin added, "Unless Your Highness gives me a full set of plate armor so I can fight him fairly."

Xiao Ming sighed in frustration. So the two of you want to settle your grudge, and I'm the one who has to pay for it? But as a prince, it was important to show respect and kindness toward talent. That was how one attracted capable people to serve. In ancient times, reputation was everything, and many talented men only pledged loyalty to those known for valuing scholars and warriors.

Luo Xin was indeed a capable commander, and since he was also related to Grand General Luo, it wouldn't be right to send him away in shame. After all, the man had shown nothing but loyalty.

"Fine, I'll give you the armor," Xiao Ming said. "But if either of you stirs up trouble again, I'll punish you according to military law."

"Yes, Your Highness!" both Lu Fei and Luo Xin replied in unison.

Xiao Ming had expected trouble as soon as Luo Xin arrived, and now it had happened. Still, with the issue resolved, he moved on.

Cangzhou City needed a capable commander to hold the fort, and there were still rogue nobles hiding in the mountains, causing trouble for nearby villages. According to Zhan Xingchang, many remnants of the noble clans had become bandits. While Zhan was good at planning, he needed someone strong and experienced to lead operations—Luo Xin fit the role perfectly.

Meanwhile, Lu Fei was set to return to Cangzhou to oversee the city's reinforcement and the construction of new cannon towers to boost its defenses.

Having settled the dispute between the two men, Xiao Ming returned to the prince's residence. That evening, he received a draft of the next day's newspaper from Fan Zeng.

Since the newspaper played a key role in communicating with the people, Xiao Ming always reviewed it personally to remove any inappropriate content.

But today, something in the paper truly surprised him. “Why is the poem I wrote at the military camp showing up in the newspaper?”

Standing nearby, Fan Zeng replied, “Your Highness, there are reporters in the military camp. Commander Luo carved the poem into the camp wall, and a journalist saw it and copied it down for publication.”

Fan Zeng added, “I believe this poem is bold and powerful. Now that the barbarians are preparing to march south, publishing it could inspire the scholars and civilians in your domain.”

Xiao Ming nodded. It made sense. It was like a wartime anthem—not just a poem, but a rallying cry. In the right context, it could stir hearts and strengthen resolve.

“Alright, publish it then,” Xiao Ming said casually. I’ve already time-traveled—why bother clinging to principles like literary originality?

Fan Zeng left in high spirits, thinking the prince was clearly pleased.

What neither of them expected was how quickly the poem would become a sensation.

“The moon of Qin, the passes of Han, A thousand-mile march—none return again. If only Dragon City’s general were still here, No barbarian horse would cross the Yin Mountains.”

In Wei’s Tavern, a scholar slammed his fist on the table and cried, “Heavens! Ten years of studying, and for what? I couldn’t write something half as grand as this!”

His fellow scholars at the table all shook their heads. “Remember those so-called ‘Four Great Talents of Qingzhou’? What nonsense. His Highness is clearly Qingzhou’s number one scholar!”

“Number one in Qingzhou?” another scoffed. “Let’s be honest—he’s probably the greatest poet in all of Great Yu!”

“I’m copying this poem and hanging it in my home,” someone declared. “Every day I’ll read it to remind myself to do better. If a prince can be so learned, what excuse do we scholars have?”

“No need to be discouraged,” another replied. “His Highness teaches at Bowen Academy. If you enroll, you might catch some of his brilliance.”

“Well said! If the prince is this talented, then the Bowen Academy must be a place of greatness!”

At the same time, a group of merchants sat at a nearby table. One of them, Merchant Sun, held a thick stack of newspapers.

“Brother Sun, why buy so many copies?” another merchant asked.

Sun smiled and leaned in. “Because, my friend, I’ve found a way to make money—and since we’re close, I’ll let you in on the secret.”

“Please, do tell,” the other merchant urged.

“This poem has taken Qingzhou by storm. The newspapers sold out because of it. I bet in Chang’an, where famous scholars’ writings sell for huge prices, this paper will be worth a fortune. I’m planning to ship these copies there. I guarantee they’ll sell like hotcakes.”

The other merchant was stunned. Why didn’t I think of that? No wonder he always made more money.

Unfortunately, Qingzhou’s newspaper printing was limited each day. Once they sold out, that was it. The man could only regret his missed chance.

Thinking fast, he pointed toward the back of the shop and shouted, “Look! The tofu beauty is coming out!”

Everyone turned to look—giving him just enough time to grab the newspapers and run.

“Ungrateful scoundrel!” Sun shouted as he chased after him. “I share my secret with you, and you rob me?! I’ll make you pay!”

At the same time, the poem and newspaper sparked a wave of enthusiasm throughout the other six prefecture. People across the land were reciting the poem, and many felt a surge of patriotic energy. Enrollment in local militias and armies surged in every county and province.

Now that the noble families were gone, ordinary citizens had received land and stability. Life was finally good—and they weren't about to let the barbarians take it away.

And it didn't stop there. Thanks to merchants spreading the papers, the poem eventually reached Chang'an, the capital of Great Yu.

This bold, stirring, battle-ready poem swept through the city's literary circles like wildfire. Newspaper prices skyrocketed. The capital's reaction was swift—and far-reaching.