

## **I. Dynasty 177**

### **Chapter 177: Cannons Open Fire**

The flames flickered inside the tent. Black shadows danced in the candlelight.

Beishan looked at Gurtai and said, "For this attack on Cangzhou City, the Huyan tuo Tribe must follow my orders completely."

Gurtai didn't like it, but he still nodded.

Beishan then asked, "How is Cangzhou's defense?"

Gurtai explained everything from the previous few days of attacks.

"Exploding gunpowder jars?" Beishan asked.

Gurtai nodded. "Yes, those jars are powerful. Hundreds of our archers were killed by the blasts."

He added, "Also, the defenders are wearing very strong armor. It looks like they're Prince Qi's elite troops."

Beishan frowned. "We attack tomorrow morning. I want to see it for myself."

Gurtai nodded again.

This time, Beishan had personally led fifty thousand elite barbarian soldiers. Alongside them were eighty thousand slave soldiers, and with Gurtai's own troops, the total number of slaves reached over a hundred thousand.

That number alone would be enough to keep Cangzhou's defenders constantly rushing around.

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A loud rooster's crow broke through the sky as the first light of morning fell on the battlefield, still covered with bodies.

Then came deafening shouts of battle, mixed with the sounds of exploding gunpowder jars.

Outside the city, a flood of slave soldiers surged toward Cangzhou. They carried hundreds of ladders, placing them every few meters along the wall.

Facing such a massive siege, every soldier on the wall tightened his grip on his steel blade, ready to strike as soon as the enemy climbed up.

The defense followed a routine: throw rocks, drop rolling logs, pour burning oil. But this time, the gunpowder jars were used immediately.

Fifty catapults kept launching the jars into the dense formations of slave soldiers.

Thick smoke rose. Blood splattered. Wave after wave of slave soldiers fell before they could even reach the wall. Arrows, stones, logs, and oil rained down from above. Soon, another thick layer of corpses covered the battlefield.

“They’re retreating!” someone shouted as the explosions of the first wave ended.

The slave soldiers began to fall back. Niu Ben looked puzzled.

“Another test attack,” Xiao Ming said as he looked toward the barbarian camp. His eyes fell on a tall figure who looked like a leader—and beside him stood a merchant with a Han Chinese face.

Xiao Ming touched the cannon beside him. He really wanted to fire at them, but he knew the cannon’s accuracy was poor. It was unlikely to hit its mark. Besides, now wasn’t the time to reveal the cannon as a secret weapon.

“How did Your Highness know?” Niu Ben asked.

Xiao Ming replied, "I heard that the Heavenly Khan himself is leading the army, and Beishan is here too. According to Wang Xuan, the Huyantu Tribe always supported the Grand Taiji Wuzhugu. Beishan won't fully trust Gurtai. He wants to see everything for himself."

"I didn't expect Your Highness to have such detailed intelligence," Niu Ben said, nodding in agreement.

Xiao Ming smiled. "It was luck. We just caught some shady traders from the steppe who gave us the info."

"Your Highness, look there. The barbarians seem to be assembling something big in their camp," Lufei came over and said.

From where Xiao Ming and Niu Ben stood, they couldn't see anything clearly, so they followed Lu Fei to his post.

Looking through the telescope, they saw many slaves in the middle of the barbarian camp moving parts and assembling something.

It had a massive base, at least ten meters long.

"That might be the Huihui Cannon. They say the barbarians learned to build these from the Western Regions," Xiao Ming said with a frown.

What he feared had come true. The barbarians had brought the Huihui Cannon.

From what he had learned, not only did the barbarians know how to use gunpowder, but if they had these cannons too, it would be a huge threat to Cangzhou.

Niu Ben, already briefed by Xiao Ming on the cannon's power and range, said, "Looks like they're determined to take Cangzhou this time."

Lu Fei cursed, "I don't care what kind of cannon it is. As long as I'm alive, they'll have to step over my dead body to take this city!"

Luo Xin walked over at some point, excited. "Your Highness, let me fire the first shot! I want to blast their camp to pieces!"

"Not yet. Let them build it a little more. Once it's halfway assembled, we'll give them a real surprise," Xiao Ming said.

It seemed the barbarians were stalling the attack while waiting for the Huihui Cannons to be assembled.

The two sides remained in a standoff for the next two days. By the third day, large machines over three meters tall were visible in the barbarian camp.

They rolled the half-assembled Huihui Cannons forward until they were just 500 meters from the wall, lining them up in formation.

“Your Highness, Beishan is clearly provoking you,” Niu Ben said.

Xiao Ming nodded. Beishan was known to be arrogant and proud of his talent—just like many other so-called geniuses. Setting up the cannons right in front of them was clearly a taunt, as if saying: Watch me break your city step by step.

“If that’s the case, it’s time we responded in kind,” Xiao Ming said. “Cannons—ready!”

The soldiers snapped to attention. Finally, they were going to use the cannons.

They had been waiting for this moment, to blast the barbarians into bits.

Luo Xin grinned. “Let’s see where these cowards run now. They always hide behind slave soldiers.”

Then he shouted, “Everyone to your positions—clean the barrels!”

Ever since Luo Xin lit the first cannon, he had taken charge like the official artillery commander. He also led the team to train at the machinery department.

Even though it had only been a month, Luo Xin was now an expert on cannon operation.

The soldiers pulled back the canvas covering the cannons, revealing the black metal barrels.

They aimed them directly at the Huihui Cannons being assembled 500 meters away.

Beishan thought his Huihui Cannons would give him a tech advantage, but he had no idea Xiao Ming was about to flip the script.

“Load the gunpowder!” Luo Xin gave the second order.

“Cannonballs!” came the third order.

Once everything was ready, Luo Xin looked to Xiao Ming, waiting for the final command.

“Target the five Huihui Cannons,” Xiao Ming ordered.

The goal of the first attack was to destroy those cannons. If they were fully assembled, they would cause massive casualties.