

I. Dynasty 188

Chapter 188: Ripples in Chang'an

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Along the Zhuque Avenue in Chang'an City, a young palace attendant galloped at full speed, shouting the news at the top of his lungs. It wasn't just Emperor Xiao Wenxuan who was thrilled.

Even though he was just a eunuch, often looked down upon and incomplete in others' eyes, he too carried the fate of the empire in his heart.

From the beginning of the battle for Cangzhou, Emperor Wenxuan had been unable to sleep at night.

If Cangzhou fell, and the fiefs of Prince Qi and Prince Wei were lost to the barbarians, then the imperial court would no longer be able to rein in the ambitions of the non-imperial princes.

But now, Cangzhou stood firm. The Seventh Prince of Great Yu, Xiao Ming, had slain 100,000 barbarians and forced them to retreat to Shanhai Pass.

From now on, the Great Yu Empire could proudly say no to tribute demands, no to territorial concessions, no to political marriages.

In the streets, merchants stopped in their tracks.

Scholars froze.

Officials halted.

Even commoners entering the city stood still.

“Great victory at Cangzhou!”

The words exploded in their ears like thunder—shocking and stirring.

“Did I hear that right? A great victory at Cangzhou? Prince Qi killed 100,000 barbarians?” a scholar asked his companion.

“That’s what it sounds like. Prince Qi? Killing 100,000? That’s ridiculous! Even Prince Zhao, the Tiger of the North, never pulled that off. This eunuch must be mad.”

Another scholar frowned. “Wait a second... that eunuch used to serve directly under the Emperor. He’s even delivered edicts to my home before.”

“He’s from the palace?!” the group went silent.

One whispered, “So it’s true? Prince Qi really won?”

Before they could answer, another eunuch rode by yelling the same message.

Then came palace guards on horseback shouting the news too.

Emperor Wenxuan, overflowing with joy, wanted the entire city to know. He sent wave after wave of messengers to announce the news.

“They say His Majesty loves glory,” one scholar remarked. “I guess that’s true after all.”

“Come now,” another scholar replied. “Decades of weakness—and now a true victory. His Majesty has every right to be joyful. But you, my friend, seem less thrilled. Why is that?”

The first scholar went quiet. His father served under Prince Zhao. His feelings were... complicated.

“Haha, regardless, this is worth celebrating! Who would’ve thought that the once-disgraced Prince Qi would hold off a 100,000-strong barbarian force? I’ll pay for everyone’s meal today—cheers to Prince Qi!” another scholar declared.

The others looked puzzled.

“How generous, Shao. That’s rare. Looks like we’re lucky to know Prince Qi.”

Scholar Shao replied with a deep voice, “You don’t understand. Unlike others, I know Prince Qi well. We were like brothers back in Chang’an, always together. I always believed he was destined for greatness—and now I was proven right. If only I had stood beside him in this battle...”

The group looked at him with envy. If this was true, then just having a connection to Prince Qi was a great honor.

Shao basked in their jealous looks, already thinking about writing a letter to Prince Qi—reconnecting over their “old Chang’an days.”

At the Luo Residence, home of the great general Luo Quan, one eunuch was stopped by none other than the general himself.

Startled, the eunuch pulled hard on the reins and just barely avoided crashing.

“General Luo, what are you doing?!” he asked, face pale.

Luo Quan didn't answer. He stormed forward, yanked the eunuch off the horse, and roared:

"What did you just say? Say it again!"

Terrified, the eunuch stammered, "G-General, what's the matter?"

"Say the first part again!" Luo shouted.

Finally understanding, the eunuch answered,

"Cangzhou was defended, General. Prince Qi slew 100,000 barbarians. It's a great victory!"

Luo Quan had heard the rumors earlier, but thought they were hallucinations.

When he heard it shouted again and again, he finally realized it was real.

"Victory! Victory! Victory!"

He trembled, repeating the word over and over.

Even though he hadn't fought in the battle, intelligence reports from the court had kept him updated.

He and other war-hawks had been extremely tense.

Now joy surged through him.

Then he asked, "What about my son—Luo Xin? Any news?"

"I'm afraid not. The message Prince Qi sent to the Emperor was brief—just the news of victory. But he promised a full report would be published soon and delivered to Chang'an."

"I see..." Luo Quan's joy turned to concern. There was still no word from his son.

"I must keep going, General," the eunuch said.

"Go borrow a horse from my stables," Luo Quan ordered. Then he jumped on the eunuch's horse and sped off toward the palace.

The eunuch gave a bitter smile.

“This victory has driven the general mad,” he muttered.

And then, walking toward the Luo Residence stables, he resumed shouting:

“Great victory at Cangzhou!”

In the Eastern Market, the center of commerce in Chang’an—

A group of merchants were gathered, excitedly discussing the news.

“With Cangzhou safe, Prince Qi’s lands are secure. Our business can continue without fear.”

One merchant sighed in relief.

He had been selling soap between Chang’an and Qingzhou, and the war had nearly ruined the supply chain.

Now that Cangzhou was safe, their livelihood was safe too.

“Praise be to Prince Qi. My entire family depends on my trade in Qingzhou.” Another merchant wiped away tears.

A third added, “No time to chat—we should go to Qingzhou and personally thank Prince Qi!”

“Right! He defeated Beishan—the best barbarian general. That proves Prince Qi is truly capable. Qingzhou will be a safe haven from now on.”

Just then, another merchant passed by, his cart packed with belongings.

“Where are you going?” they asked.

“Now that Prince Qi has secured Cangzhou, his land will be the safest place in the empire. It’s the perfect place for business—I’m moving to Qingzhou.”

“Wait for us—we’re coming too!” the merchants cried.