

I. Dynasty 253

Chapter 253: Surprise Attack

The stars in the night sky grew brighter as the evening deepened.

By midnight, apart from a few dozing sentries, most of the barbarian soldiers were already fast asleep. Their bonfires still burned quietly, with a few lazy guards slumped beside them, nodding off.

To them, the idea that Great Yu soldiers might venture deep into the grasslands alone was laughable. Their night guards were more for keeping wolves away from the livestock than for defending against humans.

At midnight, Lu Fei was nudged awake by Lei Ming.

Lu Fei rubbed his eyes, glanced toward the distant campfires, and muttered, "Wake everyone. Make sure their gear's ready."

"Yes, sir." Lei Ming immediately roused the soldier next to him, and soon the signal spread through the camp. One by one, the thousand soldiers were awake, fully armored and weapons drawn.

"Move out!" Lu Fei commanded.

The group crouched low, moving under cover of the tall grass—nearly a meter high—completely concealing their figures.

Lu Fei knew that a large-scale cavalry charge would startle the barbarians and alert them. It might still be a surprise, but many would escape in the confusion.

Instead, he would sneak in and take advantage of their armor in close combat, wiping out the entire camp without raising alarms or exposing their position.

“You two hundred take that side, and you two hundred go that way,” Lu Fei whispered from the grass.

The troops swiftly surrounded the barbarian camp in all directions. The night sentries were still sound asleep—completely unaware.

Lu Fei signaled Lei Ming. Lei Ming nodded and crept forward with ten men toward the snoozing sentries by the fire.

He smirked. Drawing their knives, they moved silently through the shadows. Lei Ming approached a sleeping barbarian, covered his mouth, and slit his throat in one quick stroke.

“Urgh... urgh...”

The barbarian’s eyes snapped open, full of fear. But with his throat cut and mouth covered, he could barely make a sound before his life faded away.

The others fell just as swiftly.

Lei Ming turned and gestured to Lu Fei—it was done.

“Attack!” Lu Fei ordered.

Across the perimeter, soldiers began to move, silently slipping toward the yurt-like tents of the barbarian tribe.

Every soldier had already selected their target. They moved like ghosts, weaving through the camp with cold determination.

And then, all at once—they struck.

The peaceful night was shattered by screams as soldiers stormed the tents.

Lu Fei charged into one yurt himself. It was close to the firelight, and he could clearly see a young barbarian woman inside.

She had just woken up, and her eyes were wide with terror as she shook her head pleadingly. She looked delicate and pitiful.

“...How the hell am I supposed to kill her like this?” Lu Fei hesitated, his sword pausing in midair.

But then he remembered Xiao Ming’s words—kindness to the enemy could be fatal.

In that moment of hesitation, the woman suddenly rolled off her bed and grabbed a curved dagger hidden under her pillow. She lunged at Lu Fei’s lower body with a cold glint in her eyes.

His instincts flared—he broke into a cold sweat. But there was no time to dodge.

Just then, Lei Ming lunged in from behind and kicked the dagger from her hand.

The blade scraped across Lu Fei’s thigh armor with a flash of sparks.

Shaken, Lu Fei didn’t hesitate again. He drove his sword into her chest.

“Want me to save a prettier one for you, sir?” Lei Ming joked.

“Get lost! Kill every last one of them!” Lu Fei snapped, his face pale and drenched in sweat.

Now he understood exactly what Xiao Ming meant. This wasn't a war of mercy—it was kill or be killed. Holding back would only cost lives.

His eyes hardened with resolve.

The barbarian camp had been completely unprepared for an attack at night. Most were slaughtered in their sleep.

After half an hour, the soldiers regrouped by the fire, torches in hand. They had searched every tent, making sure no one was left alive.

"Sir, we hit the jackpot! There are tens of thousands of cattle and sheep in the pens, and thousands of horses too. Should we bring them back to Cangzhou?" Lei Ming asked.

Their mission on the grasslands was to raid, burn, and plunder. This camp was just unlucky—it was their first target.

Lu Fei made a quick decision.

"Kill all the cattle and sheep. Eat what we can, burn the rest. Send the horses back with a few men."

Lei Ming nodded. The horses could be herded quickly, but the livestock would slow them down too much.

He gave the orders, and the soldiers stormed the animal pens, killing and butchering, then grilling meat by the fires.

At dawn, they packed up and moved on, leaving three experienced riders to drive the horses back safely.

“Burn it!” Lu Fei barked as they prepared to leave.

The soldiers tossed torches into the yurts. Some threw in the carcasses of the animals they’d just killed.

They left the barbarians nothing to eat for the winter.

With a cold smile, Lu Fei turned and led his troops deeper into the grasslands.

Meanwhile, Niu Ben’s unit had also traveled two days into the steppe.

They spotted a large barbarian camp ahead, where thousands of enemy troops were gathering. Niu Ben chose not to engage.

Through his telescope, he observed the gathering forces. Based on the timing, it was likely they had just received word of Cangzhou’s wall construction.

He was right.

This tribe had just been ordered by Chagatai, the Blood Wolf Tribe's war chief, to send cavalry to attack Cangzhou.

Niu Ben ordered his soldiers to lay their horses flat on the ground—one of their practiced stealth techniques.

They waited quietly, the soldiers holding down the horses' necks to keep them still.

After about an hour, the enemy force departed.

"Mount up!" Niu Ben commanded.

The riders jumped into action, mounting their horses and unsheathing their sabers.

With most of the enemy force gone, only the old, the weak, and a handful of guards remained in the camp.

A thousand elite cavalry were more than enough to wipe them out.

“Attack!” Niu Ben roared, leading the charge himself.

The sound of hooves thundered across the plain. Barbarian women and elders looked up and saw a wave of silver-armored riders charging toward them.

Panic spread instantly.

“The Great Yu soldiers are coming!”

“Kill them all!” the troops shouted, unleashing their rage.

This was justice. For their fallen people, the enemy would pay in blood.