

I. Dynasty 261

Chapter 261: Crossbow Cavalry

Lu Fei and Lei Ming were causing trouble on the grasslands again. They acted like thorns in the enemy's side—always messing things up.

When the army of Great Yu showed up again on the grasslands, Chagatai (the barbarian commander) became so angry he almost broke his teeth from clenching too hard.

“Qishou, we should retreat!”

Inside Chagatai's tent, many Qishou of the tribes were kneeling. Their people had come to beg for help, and many soldiers no longer wanted to fight after hearing the news.

Chagatai suddenly felt very tired. He looked toward Cangzhou City and started to think: maybe the Golden Horde would never be able to capture it.

Because this wasn't just a city wall—it was protected by the clever Prince Qi of Great Yu.

The recent manhunts had already tired his army. And now there was trouble behind them again. With danger in front and behind, Chagatai felt hopeless like never before.

“Prince Qi, if you have courage, come out and fight us on the grasslands! You cowards from Great Yu!” Chagatai shouted inside his tent.

But no one inside Cangzhou could hear him.

As Chagatai struggled with his decision, a messenger arrived with news.

“Qishou, Taiji Beishan has ordered us to retreat. He said we must save our strength and not waste more troops on this city.”

Chagatai and the other Qishou inside the tent let out a deep sigh of relief.

“Taiji Beishan is wise,” they said.

Chagatai placed his hand on his chest and saluted in the direction of the capital, Shengdu.

Far away in Shengdu, Taiji Beishan didn’t know exactly what was happening in Cangzhou. But after hearing that their raid attacks weren’t stopping the wall construction, and that the army of Great Yu was ready to die defending it, he made a choice: don’t lose more men—wait until their cannons are ready.

He thought: “A strong wall just means we’ll use more cannonballs. But if we lose soldiers, we can’t replace them easily.”

So once Chagatai got the order from Taiji Beishan, he didn’t wait. He gave the order to retreat. He didn’t want to throw his soldiers into a fight that felt like a bottomless pit.

Next time, they would return with powerful fire weapons—and burn Cangzhou City to the ground.

“BOOM! BOOM!”

As Chagatai led his army away, the cannons on Cangzhou’s city walls fired again. Chagatai looked back. It felt like the city was laughing at him.

His heart burned with anger. The Golden Horde had never been shamed like this. He swore: when Cangzhou falls, he would lead his iron cavalry to kill everyone in Prince Qi’s land—to wash away this humiliation.

On the walls of Cangzhou, the soldiers watched the enemy leave. They cheered loudly. Luo Xin excitedly ordered them to fire more cannon shots to celebrate.

The soldiers were happy. In their eyes, the barbarians weren’t scary anymore. With strong walls and cannons, they believed no matter how many times the enemy came, Cangzhou would never fall. Their families would stay safe behind the walls.

But not everyone was relaxed. Niu Ben and Xiao Ming were still worried.

“Your Highness,” Niu Ben said, “the barbarians have suffered too many losses because of our gunpowder. They are getting smarter. If they aren’t confident, they won’t try to attack again.”

Xiao Ming nodded. “The Blood Wolf Tribe’s retreat must be because of Taiji Beishan. They tried to stop us from building the wall at first. But now that we’re really doing it, he doesn’t want to waste troops. But what worries me most... is that maybe the barbarians have made real progress with their cannons. That’s why they dared to retreat so calmly.”

“If that’s true, then we’re in big trouble,” said Niu Ben. “The barbarians already have many advantages over Great Yu. If they also get cannons, how can we fight back?”

Xiao Ming frowned. “I’ve been thinking about this too. We don’t know how good the Ottomans’ cannon technology is. When I return, I’ll make sure our Imperial Guards get more cannons. But don’t worry too much. Making good cannons is hard. Even if they make some, they won’t be as strong as ours. Without our iron mold method, their production is slow. If Taiji Beishan only has a small batch, he’ll probably use them for revenge right away.”

“That might be worse,” said Niu Ben. He looked at Xiao Ming’s calm face and thought, How can he be so relaxed when danger is coming?

“Hahaha...” Xiao Ming laughed. “General Niu, I built this new wall for their cannons. When Taiji Beishan returns, he will realize this fortress cannot be broken.”

This wall was made of reinforced concrete—strong enough to survive even World War II cannons, let alone old solid cannonballs.

The steel inside gave the wall a strong skeleton. Even if the outside concrete was blown apart, the wall would still stand.

After celebrating the retreat, Xiao Ming gathered the workers to keep building.

The first 5 meters of the wall were done. Next was filling the inside with soil. Carpenters worked on holding up the wood frames, and ironworkers continued tying rebar.

Now that the enemy was gone, and Lu Fei and Lei Ming had worn them down, Xiao Ming could focus on finishing the wall.

After building the next layer, Xiao Ming handed the job over to Xu Changgui.

He had already explained everything to Xu using the blueprint. Now it was time for practice.

Lu Fei and Lei Ming returned to Cangzhou. Their raids had been very successful—they attacked more than ten tribes and stole over 10,000 warhorses.

With these horses, the Guan Ning Iron Cavalry could grow by another 3,000 riders—making a total of 8,000 soldiers.

Now, Xiao Ming thought it was time to give them new weapons.

The barbarians were great at shooting arrows on horseback. They learned from a young age. Great Yu couldn't match them in that skill. But Xiao Ming had another idea.

He would give the Guan Ning Iron Cavalry a special weapon—compound crossbows.

There were many designs in the tech library. Xiao Ming decided to build a three-string pulley crossbow. This kind of crossbow used less strength to pull back—only one-third the usual force. That meant soldiers could shoot while riding horses.

Xiao Ming had also thought about giving them triple-barrel guns. But those were weak and could only shoot three times. They weren't good for long battles. The crossbow was better.

The best weapon would be a flintlock rifle. But making one took a lot of time and skill. Without machines to smooth the inside of the barrel, it had to be done slowly by hammer.

So for now, the crossbow was the better choice.