

I. Dynasty 340

Chapter 340: The Eternal Sky

It was already summer, and the scorching sun was baking the city of Yunzhou.

But at this very moment, the people on the roads felt a chill in the air.

On both sides of the road, more and more Qingzhou soldiers were gathering, their eyes sharp as blades as they stared at the commanders of the Shan character battalion.

These Qingzhou soldiers had fought bloody battles on the front lines to resist the barbarians, earning peace for others. And now these people dared to shout and order them around?

“What are you trying to do? Rebel?” barked He Kui, commander of the Shan character battalion, his face instantly changing.

The guards who had rushed forward also stopped. They could sense a dangerous aura from these Qingzhou soldiers—an aura that only those who had truly seen life and death on the battlefield would possess.

If it had been in the past, Lu Fei would’ve already led his men forward and given these fools a proper beating. But now, he had to consider the bigger picture.

Even though they had just crushed the barbarian vanguard outside Yunzhou, that was only because the barbarians were caught off guard. The siege of Jizhou would still require the cooperation of all three armies.

He slowly said, "The barbarian army is just outside Jizhou. I, Lu Fei, do not wish to cause trouble between allies. But I hope the general can restrain himself. We are here to lift the siege on Jizhou. I believe you did not come here to stir up conflict with Qingzhou's army either."

With that, Lu Fei stepped aside.

He Kui sneered and led his soldiers into camp.

He had arrived with a stomach full of anger. No one in the Wei Prince's army wanted this cursed assignment. Every time he thought about having to face the barbarians, he would tremble with fear. The horrors of the barbarians had long taken root in the hearts of these commanders.

And with a unit like this—a hastily thrown-together, broken force—he was even more bitter, which was why he lashed out at Lu Fei.

After informing the Shan battalion of the next day's march, Lu Fei returned to camp to prepare.

Recently, more artillery units had been transferred to the army. They now had fifty cannons at their disposal.

In the camp, Lu Fei complained again to Niu Ben about the Shan battalion.

Niu Ben could only offer a bitter smile. “At this point, we can only make do. Once we meet up with the Imperial Guard, things will get better. At least I know that army can fight.”

He was well acquainted with Luo Quan, commander of the Imperial Guard, and knew their force was solid.

The next day, Niu Ben led the Qingzhou army toward Jizhou. Lu Fei positioned the musket soldiers in the center of the column. Flanking them were the carriages and cavalry in columns, so that if ambushed by barbarians, they could quickly form a defensive car formation.

The Shan battalion followed behind the Qingzhou army, taking responsibility for escorting the supply wagons—just as Niu Ben had expected.

He didn’t trust them in battle, but at least their presence helped. And with the Qingzhou army nearby, he could intervene quickly if needed.

Just thirty miles out of Yunzhou, the scenery on both sides of the road turned desolate.

Homeless refugees began to appear along the road.

They looked weary and bitter, dragging their families along as they trudged toward Yunzhou.

“Old sir, are you headed to the Great Prince’s domain?” Niu Ben asked one of them.

A thin old man looked up and replied, “Yes. We can’t survive in Jizhou anymore. A few days ago, we met a cavalry unit who said they were the Great Prince’s soldiers. They told us to go to Yunzhou. Said there’s food there, and we can find shelter. So the whole village decided to go.”

“We are also the Great Prince’s army. Go ahead, Yunzhou has already taken in many refugees.”

Niu Ben hadn’t forgotten one of their other missions—resettling the refugees.

The refugees’ eyes lit up with hope after hearing his words.

Smiling, Niu Ben continued onward with the Qingzhou army.

He had already sent Qi Guangyi ahead to gather refugees—and clearly, it was working. Along the way, he had seen at least thirty or forty thousand refugees heading toward Yunzhou.

The drought in Jizhou had brought immense suffering, and Lord Yong’s failure to respond had completely lost him the people’s trust.

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Outside the city of Jizhou, over two thousand barbarian soldiers knelt facing north, bound in ropes. Behind them, another two thousand stood holding scimitars, awaiting the command of Chagatai.

Jizhou had been under siege for more than half a month, but Chagatai continued to surround without attacking.

The local defenders had been repeatedly crushed, until no more dared to come to their aid.

Just as Chagatai waited confidently for the main force under Beishan to arrive, news came that Kuha's ten-thousand-strong cavalry had been utterly defeated—and that two thousand returning soldiers had been detained.

“A commander who abandons his troops—executed!”

“A soldier who abandons his commander—executed!”

“Anyone who retreats without orders—executed!”

Chagatai's chilling voice declared the unforgiving military law of the Golden Horde.

The kneeling soldiers looked numb. They had known they were doomed the moment they fled the battlefield.

They had been terrified by the Qingzhou army's strange weapons, which spewed fire and smoke—causing a rout the likes of which the Golden Horde had never seen.

Now, they were the shame of the Horde. Their families would live in disgrace.

The Golden Horde, built on mounted archery, treasured honor above all else. It was a value burned into their very bones.

Before Chagatai could speak again, one of the kneeling thousand-man commanders stood and faced him.

“Commander, we are the shame of the Horde. Please give us a chance to wash away our disgrace. Let us charge first in the next battle and shed our last drop of blood for the Golden Horde—better that than to die here.”

When the cavalry fled and returned, Chagatai was furious. In the Golden Horde, no soldier was allowed to return alive without his commander.

This was iron law—enforced through generations—and the key to their conquest of the northern territories.

Clenching his fists, Chagatai suppressed his rage.

These returning soldiers had described Qingzhou's strange formations and weapons. To him, it wasn't death they feared—it was this fire-spewing terror.

“‘Devil's weapon’...” Chagatai muttered.

The warnings of the shaman priest echoed in his ears: those slain by demons would never ascend to the Eternal Sky, while those who died with honor would find peace in the afterlife.

Golden Horde soldiers did not fear death—but they feared falling to demons.

In Chagatai's mind, it wasn't the weapon that broke them—it was panic that awakened ancient fear in their hearts.

Whatever the case, they must die.

But not here—not like this.

“That weapon is like a kind of cannon, not some devil's trick. Cowards... I will give you one more chance. Prove your courage with your blood.”