

I. Dynasty 351

Chapter 351: Takeoff

White smoke and fire flashed across the battlefield.

Another wave of charging cavalry collapsed in front of the Qingzhou soldiers.

At this moment, Guduo finally understood the despair that Kuha had faced on the battlefield.

After fighting fiercely for a whole day and night, his light cavalry had suffered heavy losses in battle with the Jinwu Guards. Both his troops and the imperial guards were constantly throwing in reinforcements to fight over the supply route.

But now that balance had been broken—the Qingzhou army had arrived, bringing weapons that spewed fire.

The barbarian cavalry, already exhausted, could no longer defeat them. Wave after wave of charges, and the barbarian cavalry kept falling.

“Quickly report this situation to Beishan Taiji!” Guduo shouted.

Covered in blood, he knew the barbarian cavalry wouldn’t retreat unless ordered to.

Although the Qingzhou army was terrifying, they were still slower than cavalry. As long as they didn’t get close, there was no danger.

Just as he finished speaking, cavalry in silver chest armor rushed forward. These armored riders maintained a tight formation, staying organized even under a barrage of arrows. If the ones in front fell, the ones behind would instantly fill the gaps—it was like an iron flood surging forward.

It was this kind of relentless attack that had caused such heavy losses. They had never seen such a method of assault before.

Guduo pulled his reins and swiftly retreated, avoiding direct confrontation.

At the same time, he saw the Jinwu Guards, under the protection of the Qingzhou army, regrouping to transport the grain to the imperial army camp.

This operation was being led by Qi Guangyi, who was helping the Jinwu Guards organize and escort the supplies.

When the barbarian cavalry attacked the supply line, the grain porters quickly formed a circle with the wagons and hid behind them.

Most of the fighting during that time had been between the Jinwu Guards and the barbarians. While some civilians had been injured, the casualties weren't large.

Now that the enemy had been defeated, there was no time to waste—it was the perfect moment to move the supplies to the main camp.

With the Qingzhou army escorting them, the previously chaotic supply convoy slowly started moving again.

Guduo watched the scene with frustration, but there was nothing he could do. He could only wait for reinforcements.

While Qi Guangyi was fighting alongside the musketeers and armored cavalry, behind a patch of trees, Zhan Xingchang was helping Liang Yubin and He Cheng heat up the hot air balloon, protected by 500 musketeers and 1,000 cavalry.

“This is the map. We’re roughly here. Jizhou City is 30 li directly north. Fencheng is 20 li to the northeast. Your first destination is Fencheng. Meet with Commander Niu Ben in the city and give him the current layout of the imperial army.”

Zhan Xingchang gave detailed instructions to Liang Yubin.

The battle was in a deadlock. Although both sides were holding back, it could erupt into full-scale war at any moment. So communication was crucial.

Liang Yubin nodded. The balloon was fully heated now. He and He Cheng boarded it.

The soldiers holding the balloon let go, and it slowly began to rise.

Jizhou was suffering from a drought. The sky was clear with hardly any wind. The balloon floated steadily northward.

Zhan Xingchang looked at the slowly rising balloon and sighed. He still doubted how useful hot air balloons were in battle.

After launching it, he turned to the surrounding soldiers. "Go help the imperial army transport the grain now. If we're late, the barbarian cavalry might come back."

This time, the barbarians had been cunning. They cut off the supply route six li from the main camp, leaving the imperial army helpless to stop it in time.

If the front lines fell into disarray, the barbarians would definitely launch a full assault, and everything would be lost.

Just after Zhan Xingchang gave the order, everyone on the battlefield saw something huge rising slowly from the forest.

The Qingzhou army had seen it before, but the imperial soldiers and barbarians stared at the floating balloon in shock, many even forgetting to fight.

The balloon hovered about 300 meters off the ground—not too high, but high enough to avoid all weapons, and low enough to clearly observe the ground.

“You barbarian dogs! Come hit me! Come hit me!” He Cheng shouted from the balloon.

At 300 meters, their voices couldn’t reach the ground, but their excitement couldn’t be contained.

As men from Qingzhou, how could they not hate the barbarians?

While venting, they kept adjusting their altitude, looking for the right wind current to move toward Fencheng.

“Brother Liang, how about we drop a powder canister?” He Cheng picked up an explosive canister, smiling.

“We can’t just drop them randomly. His Highness said to only throw them where the crowds are dense,” Liang Yubin replied.

Reluctantly, He Cheng put it down. Suddenly, a gust of wind blew from the south, pushing the balloon due north.

“We found a wind current,” Liang Yubin smiled. “Let’s look for a westward one once we’re further north.”

He Cheng nodded. The two kept adjusting their height, floating up and down, drifting with the breeze.

At the imperial army's main camp, the battle from the previous day had left over 10,000 dead or wounded. The barbarian cavalry had also lost thousands.

Both sides had stopped by nightfall to eat and rest.

To prevent surprise attacks, they ate in shifts while maintaining battle formations.

The next day, the standoff continued. At that moment, Luo Hong spotted a strange object drifting in from the sky. It was floating toward the barbarian side.

Chagatai also noticed the strange flying object. He was puzzled and even a bit scared.

Just as the object floated over their heads, a black canister fell from it.

"Boom!" Before they could react, a loud explosion erupted just a few dozen meters from Chagatai, engulfing a group of cavalry in flames.

Chagatai's face turned pale. He had seen it clearly—it was one of the Qingzhou army's explosive canisters.

That flying object was dropping bombs on them!

Chagatai suddenly felt a chill down his spine. What was that thing?

And it wasn't stopping. The balloon kept floating north with the wind—toward Beishan Taiji's silver tent.

Realizing the danger, he quickly sent someone to warn Beishan Taiji.

Meanwhile, on the balloon, Liang Yubin laughed loudly. As they passed over the barbarians, they had tossed a few canisters down—not many, since the wind kept them moving.

Just like the Prince of Qi had said, their main mission was still scouting and delivering messages. Dropping bombs was just to scare the enemy. If it caused chaos, even better.