

## I. Dynasty 355

### Chapter 355: The Battlefield Use of Hot Air Balloons

As night slowly fell, the sky darkened across the land.

After regrouping, the Jinwu Guards began cooking and preparing camp.

Zhan Xingchang explained how the hot air balloon worked, leaving Luo Quan absolutely stunned.

“This hot air balloon is incredible! We could even rescue people from the middle of an enemy army with it!” Luo Quan said in amazement.

Zhan gave a small, wry smile. “It’s not that simple. The balloon has a lot of limitations—it’s not easy to control.”

This time, the Prince of Qi had taken a big gamble. If Liang Yubin and He Cheng could deliver the message in time, it would be great.

But if they failed, the army would have no choice but to launch a full attack on the city.

As the two were talking, Luo Hong suddenly pointed to the sky. “Look! The balloon is coming back!”

Zhan looked in the direction Luo Hong pointed, and sure enough—a dark dot was drifting through the sky toward them.

Zhan then realized something: the wind had changed. In the morning it had been blowing from the south, but now it was blowing from the north.

‘Makes sense,’ he thought. ‘Autumn is coming, so it’s normal for the wind to shift.’

“Thank the heavens,” Zhan said joyfully.

Luo Quan and Luo Hong were also filled with excitement.

Meanwhile, Liang Yubin and He Cheng were piloting the balloon over Fencheng. Just like they’d done in Jizhou, they dropped a message into the city.

From above, they also spotted the Jinwu Guards camped outside Fencheng.

With their high vantage point, they could see the battlefield clearly, watching the entire enemy formation.

Liang Yubin controlled the balloon while He Cheng focused on drawing a detailed map of the barbarian troop positions.

The north wind kept strengthening, and soon they left Fencheng behind, drifting back toward the imperial camp. The journey had been tough—and they knew if they had to do it again, they might not be so lucky.

The balloon floated closer to the camp. As they approached, Liang Yubin shouted, “Quick! Drop the ropes or we’ll float past them again!”

They were still a li (half a kilometer) from the camp. Because the balloon couldn’t be steered accurately, it was about to drift past entirely.

He Cheng quickly put away the map and got the ropes ready.

“I hope Governor Zhan is already there—otherwise these soldiers won’t know what to do with us,” he muttered.

As soon as he said that, a signal smoke rose from the camp—and a hundred cavalymen came galloping toward them.

Seeing this, the two cheered. It meant the Qingzhou army had arrived. They immediately dropped four ropes from the balloon basket.

Each rope dangled from a different direction.

The cavalry chased the ropes. One rider managed to grab one—but the lift of the balloon was too strong and started pulling him off his horse!

Other riders rushed in, grabbing the other ropes. A few even grabbed the first rider to stop him from flying away.

Soon, all one hundred cavalymen dismounted and pulled the balloon back toward the camp.

With people holding it down, the balloon slowly drifted toward the encampment. At the same time, the observing barbarians confirmed once again that the flying device belonged to the Qingzhou army.

As the balloon reached camp, Liang Yubin and He Cheng turned off the burners. Slowly, the balloon began to descend.

The entire Jinwu Guards camp—soldiers and officers alike—stood frozen in awe. The hot air balloon was just too incredible for them to process.

Flying was something they never imagined possible.

“Governor Zhan, we delivered the message,” Liang Yubin said as he jumped from the basket.

“Excellent! After the battle, I’ll definitely recommend both of you to His Highness for a reward,” Zhan said excitedly.

The message was simple: once they saw three signal fires outside the city, it would mean it was time to launch the attack.

Luo Quan and the Jinwu Guards gathered around the balloon, pointing and marveling at it.

He Cheng stopped anyone from touching it. "Careful—don't mess with it. It's going back up tomorrow to scout the battlefield for you."

"Scout the battlefield? What do you mean?" Luo Quan asked.

Zhan explained, "It's like the saying—'the higher you are, the farther you see.' The balloon isn't just for sending messages. Before battle, we can send someone with flag signals up into the sky to observe troop positions. That way, we can clearly see where the barbarians have placed their forces. With so many troops fighting tomorrow, knowing the enemy's setup in advance is crucial. We can also locate their cannons and strike them first."

"It can do that?!" Luo Quan was thrilled. It was way better than a telescope. "Can I go up in it? That way, I can give orders from above and adjust our formations in real-time!"

Telescope view was still limited—any obstruction would block sight. That's why he was so excited.

"Well... I should go instead," Zhan said hesitantly. "There's still some risk. If something goes wrong, the balloon could fall."

Luo Quan frowned. "You're not afraid of danger, but you think I am? I've charged through thousands of troops—I'm not scared. And if we lose this battle, what's the point of surviving?"

"I'll go instead, Father!" Luo Hong offered quickly.

"Back off!" Luo Quan snapped, eyes glaring. "You all think I'm too old to handle it, huh?"

Zhan thought for a moment. The balloon was still risky, but this time they had soldiers holding the ropes, and they could pile hay underneath to cushion any fall.

"Alright then. General, you'll go up tomorrow to direct the battle," Zhan agreed.

The food supplies inside Fencheng wouldn't last long. The war couldn't be delayed—it had to be decided quickly.

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The next morning, just before sunrise...

The Jinwu Guards camp was already full of movement.

The soldiers looked serious. Everyone knew today's battle would be huge.

Zhan nodded as he watched the well-organized camp. These were truly elite troops.

According to Luo Xin, this army had been trained personally by Luo Quan and had fought the barbarians at the borders many times—a force hardened by countless battles.

Last night, Zhan and Luo Quan had finalized the plan: he would lead the musketeers and armored cavalry from the center and attack the south gate. Once they saw the signal fires, the Qingzhou army inside the city would break through from the south gate and join them.

The Jinwu Guards would support as the flanks.

To Zhan, whether they won or lost depended on how much firepower the Qingzhou army could bring to bear. The barbarians still had a numerical advantage.

Even though they technically outnumbered the enemy when including Prince Yong's troops, just like Xiao Ming had said—across the entire Great Yu Empire, the only people he could truly rely on were himself and Luo Quan with his Jinwu Guards.

If the other princes weren't stabbing them in the back, that was already a blessing.