

## I. Dynasty 359

### Chapter 359: The Great Rout

Wooooo...

As the unfamiliar rhythm of the horn echoed across the battlefield, Luo Quan felt as if he were dreaming.

The barbarian soldiers, locked in brutal combat just moments before, suddenly began to break formation and retreat. The collapse started near Fencheng and rapidly spread toward the center of the battlefield.

“That’s the barbarian retreat signal,” Luo Quan muttered in disbelief, mixed with a hint of joy. The battlefield clearly still favored them—why would the barbarians retreat now?

But it was real. The barbarian cavalry were abandoning their slave soldiers and pulling back in a frenzy.

Even the soldiers on the battlefield looked confused. The once-fierce barbarian warriors were now fleeing.

Out of caution, Luo Quan didn’t immediately order a full pursuit. The barbarians still had superior numbers—this might have been a trap.

But when he saw the barbarians dismantling their silver tent, he was certain—they were retreating for real.

He leaned over and shouted, “Beat the war drums! Send in the cavalry!”

Boom! Boom! The drums roared again. Jinwu Guard cavalry and the Qingzhou armored riders galloped forth, chasing the retreating enemy.

Some barbarian slave soldiers simply threw down their weapons and surrendered.

West Gate

Niu Ben, too, was caught off guard. The horn signaling retreat came out of nowhere, and the barbarian cavalry in front of them withdrew after just one charge.

“Commander, what’s going on?” Lu Fei scratched his head, puzzled.

He had expected this war to drag on for months. For the barbarians to retreat now was beyond baffling.

“Hold steady. Let’s see what they’re up to,” Niu Ben said, ever the cautious type—just like Luo Quan.

After watching for a while, Niu Ben frowned. The barbarian retreat was completely disorganized. Something big must have happened on their side.

He finally said, “Lu Fei, I think they’re really retreating. Pursue them and secure the victory!”

Lu Fei nodded and led his cavalry out from the wagon line, charging after the fleeing barbarians.

Outside Jizhou City

Chen Xinran also noticed the unusual movement. The barbarian cavalry and slave soldiers outside the city were retreating.

The once-tight siege was crumbling.

An hour later, all barbarian forces had pulled northward. That’s when a banner bearing the Great Yu Empire’s emblem came into view.

“Qi!”

Chen Xinran trembled with excitement.

“They’ve retreated... Prince Qi and the Jinwu Guards have won!” The thought rose in his mind, impossible to suppress.

After the Qi banner appeared, the flag of the Jinwu Guards followed soon after. That left no doubt—Chen Xinran immediately rushed to the Prince of Yong’s palace.

Outside Jizhou, Niu Ben, Luo Quan, and Zhan Xingchang met up.

They confirmed that the barbarians were truly in full retreat, and quickly headed toward the city, where the siege had already been broken.

“What happened?” Niu Ben asked. “Luo Quan, you had the high ground—did you see anything?”

Luo Quan shook his head. “The battlefield was chaos—I couldn’t see everything clearly. But this might be thanks to your side.”

“Forget credit for now. We need to figure out what happened,” Niu Ben replied, frowning.

Just then, Lu Fei returned, accompanied by two cavalymen—one of whom had a wounded barbarian slave soldier slumped over his horse.

“Commander! We figured it out—Beishan was hit by one of our cannonballs. He’s either dead or gravely injured. That’s why the barbarians broke ranks,” Lu Fei reported.

“Our cannonball?” Luo Xin, standing behind Niu Ben, gasped.

“Yes, yours!” Lu Fei replied, surprisingly without teasing this time. “Your gunners really earned their glory today.”

Luo Quan turned to Luo Xin with a broad smile, though his face remained serious. “That explains it. Beishan was the Taiji. If he’s dead or wounded, the barbarians are leaderless—they can’t continue the fight.”

Niu Ben nodded. He turned to Lu Fei. “Go meet His Highness and bring him to Jizhou. With Beishan wounded, now’s the perfect time to press our advantage. We might even retake Shanhai Pass.”

“Shanhai Pass...” Luo Quan’s body trembled.

That fortress had once been the northern gate of the Great Yu Empire.

If they reclaimed it, the northern frontier would finally be safe from barbarian invasions.

Niu Ben saw the look on Luo Quan’s face and laughed heartily.

"It's been five years since we last met, but you haven't changed," he said warmly. "His Highness was already planning a northern campaign this fall. Beishan just struck first by attacking Jizhou. Now that we've won, this is our chance to push back. I have no doubt Prince Qi will order the Qingzhou army to move north. The only question is—will the Jinwu Guards join us in retaking Shanhai Pass?"

Luo Quan's excitement dimmed with a sigh.

"I'm afraid not. His Majesty gave strict orders—our mission was to lift the siege on Jizhou. Now that the barbarians are defeated, we must return to the capital and report."

Niu Ben narrowed his eyes. "Is it really the Emperor's orders... or is he suspicious of you again?"

He remembered when Emperor Xiao Wenxuan's paranoia had led to his own exile in the mines. He could see the same pain on Luo Quan's face now.

"Serving a king is like walking on thin ice. We ministers can only tread carefully. With most of the Jinwu Guards lost in this battle, I imagine His Majesty and the court are finally satisfied," Luo Quan said bitterly.

"Bah! That pisses me off!" Niu Ben cursed. "I should've joined Prince Qi long ago. As long as those traitorous officials stay in power, loyal men like us will never see justice."

"Watch what you say," Luo Quan warned. "You represent Prince Qi now. If word of this gets back to Chang'an, it could hurt him."

Niu Ben's face paled. He looked around—fortunately, they were surrounded by trusted men. Still, he didn't dare speak further.

With a sigh, he changed the topic. "Let's talk spoils of war. I don't want Wei Wang and Yong Wang swooping in to claim the rewards."

At that, Luo Quan's eyes lit up. "You're right. The loot should be split between our two armies. Those two useless lords aren't getting a single horse!"

Everyone around them—Qingzhou and Jinwu alike—burst into laughter.

The retreating barbarians had left behind thousands of warhorses in Fencheng and Jizhou.

It was real, tangible wealth.