

I. Dynasty 365

Chapter 365: Breaching the Fortress

“Charge!”

Through the broken ruins of the wall, the Qingzhou army surged into Shanhai Pass like a tidal wave.

Lu Fei, sword in hand, led the charge. After the explosion, many defenders on the wall had been killed or injured, and those behind the wall were in complete disarray.

Some barbarian soldiers were frozen in shock. The slave troops dropped their weapons and knelt on the ground.

Climbing over the shattered wall, Lu Fei spotted more barbarian soldiers behind it. He shouted to the Qingzhou soldiers following him:

“Fire!”

Thousands of soldiers who had made it over the wall raised their flintlock muskets and fired a volley at the barbarians rushing toward them.

Screams echoed as the enemy fell, though some barbarians still charged forward fearlessly.

Qingzhou soldiers, standing on the broken wall, were quickly joined by more troops. They formed three ranks and used a rotating firing pattern to mow down wave after wave of enemies.

As more Qingzhou troops climbed up, the firepower on the wall grew even fiercer. Barbarian forces on that side of the wall grew thinner, while defenders from other parts of the fortress ran down to reinforce them.

Lu Fei calmly watched as the enemy was cut down. Under the cover of musket fire, he led a squad to the main gate and slowly opened it.

“Charge!”

The moment the gate opened, Qingzhou cavalry charged through. War wagons followed, pulled by horses, rolling into the city.

Some foot soldiers used the wagons as cover and launched a counterattack against the barbarian cavalry inside.

Luo Xin then directed the artillery to enter the city, turning their firepower on the enemy cavalry. The barbarian horsemen suffered heavy casualties.

“Lu Fei, these barbarians are charging around like headless chickens. It looks like no one’s commanding them,” Luo Xin said as they regrouped.

Lu Fei laughed,

“You might be right. Maybe their leader’s already dead.”

They didn’t know that Guduo, the commander, had been blinded by the lime bombs. He couldn’t give any orders, so the barbarian troops were fighting purely on instinct.

From the hot air balloon, Niu Ben also saw that the barbarians had lost all coordination. He ordered Liang Yubin to land the balloon, then headed into the city.

By now, the Qingzhou army had secured the wall. The fiercest fighting was taking place in the center of the military town.

Seeing the battle clearly, Niu Ben quickly ordered the scattered musket units to form three horizontal lines.

The musket troops reorganized immediately, forming neat rows. The drummers began to beat a steady rhythm.

“Advance!”

At Niu Ben's command, the three lines marched forward in perfect order.

Shanghai Pass wasn't a large town. The lines of soldiers stretched from one wall to the other.

With drumbeats echoing, the musket troops marched forward. They stepped around buildings and stopped to shoot when encountering enemies.

Barbarian troops, disorganized and in panic, fell one after another to the musket fire.

Meanwhile, catapults continued launching lime bombs into enemy ranks. Huge numbers of barbarian soldiers were blinded by the quicklime and taken out of the fight. The artillery switched to grapeshot, turning each blast into a deadly spray of shrapnel.

With lime bombs and grapeshot working together, the musket troops advanced steadily from south to north, sweeping the city clean.

Faced with overwhelming firepower, more and more slave soldiers surrendered. The 60,000 barbarian troops left in the city couldn't match Qingzhou's firepower or organization.

From dawn till dusk, both sides fought fiercely. By sunset, the few remaining barbarians finally fled Shanghai Pass, unwilling but defeated.

"We won! We won!"

A soldier shouted with joy as the last of the barbarians disappeared through the northern gate.

Other soldiers raised their weapons and cheered. Some even cried with joy. The battle was over at last.

“Hahaha... Commander, Shanhai Pass is ours again! We took it back!” Lu Fei laughed through tears.

After more than ten years, the strongest fortress in the empire was finally reclaimed from barbarian hands.

Niu Ben smiled. Like Lu Fei, he had grieved when the pass was lost. Shanhai Pass wasn't just a military fortress—it was a symbol of national pride.

“Let them cheer,” Niu Ben said hoarsely, eyes moist.

The officers and soldiers raised their voices in celebration. From Qingzhou to Jizhou, and now to Shanhai Pass, three months of hard battles had finally paid off.

Shanhai Pass was back. Youzhou Region was back.

As the cheering continued, Niu Ben kept his composure. He quickly ordered the officers to sweep the city, close the gates, and station guards on the walls.

Luo Xin rounded up some slave soldiers and had them haul cannons to the fortress walls to reinforce the defenses.

Shanghai Pass was easy to breach from the inside—but if the Golden Horde attacked from the outside, it would be a whole different story.

Now that it was fortified, even a massive barbarian army couldn't take it easily.

The Qingzhou army worked all night clearing the city of remaining enemies. They also detained over 30,000 surrendered slave soldiers.

These slave soldiers were originally from Youzhou. Once the barbarians lost, they had no reason to keep fighting for them. Some even helped Qingzhou troops during the battle.

That was why the barbarians fell apart so quickly. Without slave soldiers to act as human shields, they had to face bullets themselves.

At dawn, after a quick breakfast, Niu Ben began inspecting the fortress.

Now, 150 cannons were mounted along the wall. Some spots even had catapults. Soldiers patrolled the ramparts.

Looking down from the wall, Niu Ben felt a surge of pride. Beyond Shanhai Pass was barbarian territory.

As long as they kept this fortress garrisoned, it would become a thorn in the side of the Golden Horde. If the barbarians wanted to invade the Great Yu Empire, they'd have to take this pass first.

And if they tried to go around, Qingzhou's troops could cut off their supply lines from here.

Lu Fei and Luo Xin joined him on the wall. Their usual joking manner was gone. Both looked serious, deeply moved by the moment.

"Commander, if His Highness finds out we've taken Shanhai Pass, he'll be overjoyed," Lu Fei said.

Niu Ben laughed,

"Of course he will. Don't forget—His Majesty once promised His Highness that if he reclaimed Youzhou, it would be his."