

## I. Dynasty 801

### Chapter 801

“Son of Heaven’s Academy!”

In the imperial study, Xiao Ming personally took up his brush to inscribe the plaque. He had implemented this matter upon returning from Bowen Academy.

Just as with his previous actions, he was now aiming to ignite the students’ passion for science.

Putting away his brush, Xiao Ming said to Qian Dafu, “Take this plaque to Bowen Academy. Also, summon Yan Zhengyi and Huang Yanqing. It’s time to eradicate old malpractices now.”

Qian Dafu vaguely guessed what Xiao Ming was going to do. The Great Yu Empire’s technology was currently confined to Qingzhou Province. Outside the Great Yu Empire, it was still held captive by feudal ignorance. If this ignorance was not thoroughly eradicated, the speed of scientific popularization in the Great Yu Empire would be hampered.

Yan Zhengyi and Huang Yanqing diligently researched astronomy at Bowen Academy. They had now completely unveiled the mysterious veil of the starry sky.

Qian Dafu left. Half an hour later, he returned to the imperial study with Yan Zhengyi and Huang Yanqing.

Seeing the two, Xiao Ming said directly, “How are your preparations coming along?”

Yan Zhengyi and Huang Yanqing had been eagerly awaiting this day. The two said in unison, “We are ready. We can popularize astronomy at any time.”

Xiao Ming’s expression was strange. He said, “I will secretly send people to protect you, lest you be killed.”

Yan Zhengyi and Huang Yanqing, hearing this, appeared calm and unconcerned. He said, “I, your humble commoner, propagate true doctrines. How can I fear life and death?”

“Good,” Xiao Ming praised. “I entrust the Great Yu Empire’s Renaissance to you. However, you need not worry; I will always support you.”

Yan Zhengyi and Huang Yanqing bowed and said, “Yes, Your Majesty.”

Having said this, Yan Zhengyi handed a book to Xiao Ming. He said, “Your Majesty, this is the fruit of our study of astronomy. You just need to publish its content in the Qingzhou Daily.”

Xiao Ming took the book. The cover of the book read “Treatise on Celestial Bodies.” He opened the book, and it meticulously recorded the astronomical observations made by the two and their insights.

If this “Treatise on Celestial Bodies” were published in the newspaper, the two of them would become targets of attack by Confucian scholars.

And what Xiao Ming needed was precisely this effect: his purpose was to forge the two into champions of truth, thereby completely tearing apart the Confucian system.

Then, with the two charging ahead, and him providing support from behind, the Great Yu Empire's Renaissance would no longer be a problem.

"I will give it to the newspaper," Xiao Ming put away the book.

"Thank you, Your Majesty." The two bowed and turned to leave the imperial study.

Watching the two depart, Xiao Ming's face showed a contemplative expression. In fact, the Renaissance movement was not just about exposing ignorance in astronomy.

In fact, it was a subversion of the existing cultural system by a new cultural system. For example, in 14th century Europe, European culture was dominated by Catholicism.

Social culture revolved around Catholic theology.

Later, with the development of productive forces, the rising bourgeoisie became dissatisfied with the Church's control over the spiritual world. So, a group of people, under the guise of reviving ancient Greek and Roman culture, subverted Church culture.

And this subversion reached its peak in the 16th century, gradually forming an independent cultural system, whose core was humanism.

Its core emphasized being human-centered rather than god-centered, affirming the value and dignity of humanity, advocating that the purpose of life was to pursue happiness in real life, promoting individualism, opposing ignorant and superstitious theological ideas, and believing that humans were the creators and masters of real life. Overall, this was a shift in humanity from deification to secularization.

Xiao Ming also needed Confucianism to descend from its pedestal and become secularized.

However, if he now used Yan Zhengyi and Huang Yanqing as weapons to destroy the Great Yu Empire's old cultural system, he would need a completely new cultural system to replace the old one.

The reason he took so long to have the two prepare for the path of the Renaissance was that he had been agonizing over this new cultural system problem.

In his contemporary life, compared to the humanism of the West, which was centered on freedom, equality, and self-worth, the country he belonged to adopted a party-based culture after its old cultural system was destroyed. Strictly speaking, it was the ruling party's governing philosophy.

And under the party-based culture, the traditional cultural system still existed. The combination of the two was a characteristic of his era.

Stepping out of the imperial study, Xiao Ming looked at the setting sun, gradually sinking in the west.

After Yan Zhengyi and Huang Yanqing acted, he would also seize the opportunity to establish the Great Yu Empire's cultural system, or rather, its core values.

After this period of contemplation, he believed that the Great Yu Empire's traditional culture was sufficient to support the social cultural system, but some drawbacks needed to be completely eradicated.

His ultimate goal was for Confucianism to purify itself, like the Western Reformation, and to acknowledge science, oppose ignorance, and advocate ideas such as equality for all in terms of culture.

This way, the Great Yu Empire's cultural system would be rebuilt, and historically, every monarch had followed this path.

After reviewing historical materials, he found that historically, Confucianism experienced various schools of thought, such as the Mengzi-Xunzi school, Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism, the School of Mind, the School of Qi, the New Text school, the Gongyang school, chenwei (prognostication and apocrypha) theology, the Old Text school, and exegetical studies. Overall, Confucian culture varied in each dynasty, indicating that Confucian culture had always been developing and changing.

And Confucianism sometimes made corresponding changes to cater to the monarch, meaning Confucianism was still very adaptable to current affairs.

Every time a dynasty changed, the Kong family would always switch allegiance to the new ruler promptly. Xiao Ming had also been waiting for the Kong family to send someone over, but there was still no news.

Although he knew the Kong family had been observing the situation, it was now time for them to make a choice. If they still didn't adapt, he would have to act.

Thinking of this, Xiao Ming sneered twice. He summoned Qian Dafu and had him deliver Yan Zhengyi and Huang Yanqing's "Treatise on Celestial Bodies" to the newspaper office, instructing the newspaper to publish it tomorrow.

He didn't believe the Kong family could sit still after this. Since he had become emperor, he would redefine the rules for the Great Yu Empire.

Taking the "Treatise on Celestial Bodies," Qian Dafu immediately went to the newspaper office.

At this point, Fan Zeng had not yet returned. Upon seeing the "Treatise on Celestial Bodies" sent by Qian Dafu, Fan Zeng was momentarily stunned.

After a long silence, he said, "This is truly unprecedented. If published, it will surely cause a huge uproar."

"You just do as the Emperor commands. If anything goes wrong, His Majesty will naturally bear the responsibility," Qian Dafu frowned. He knew that this Fan Zeng was an old Confucian scholar, with some deeply ingrained ideas, so he couldn't help but speak more sternly.

Fan Zeng's forehead beaded with light sweat. He nodded and said, "Yes, your humble servant will have it printed immediately."

Nodding in satisfaction, Qian Dafu turned and left. He had supported Xiao Ming from beginning to end. It was by following Xiao Ming that he saw the Great Yu Empire move towards prosperity. Although this "Treatise on Celestial Bodies" was somewhat shocking, if it couldn't create a stir, how could it bring about earth-shattering changes in the Great Yu Empire?

## Chapter 802

Early in the morning, accompanied by a loud cock-a-doodle-doo, Qingzhou City seemed to come alive.

In the civilian homes, some wealthy families carried their own coal stoves into the courtyard and began boiling water and cooking. Those who were reluctant to spend silver on coal stoves, meanwhile, sent up long plumes of cooking smoke.

The streets of Qingzhou also became lively. Vendors set up stoves by the roadside, selling flatbreads, fried dough sticks, and tofu pudding to passing merchants. The snack stalls along the street were filled with people.

Amidst this clamor, the newsboy's voice rang out as usual.

Merchants and scholars on the street, out of habit, bought the day's newspaper to learn about the changes happening in the Great Yu Empire. After all, due to limited information, they rarely knew what was happening outside.

"Treatise on Celestial Bodies? What is this?"

The tofu pudding stall in front of the Chamber of Commerce was packed with merchants. The content of the newspaper quickly caught their attention.

“The Earth is round, rotating around the sun. The solar system also has nine planets...” The young merchant read the content of the newspaper word by word. The other merchants eating all pricked up their ears and listened.

“There’s no Chang’e on the moon. The shadows on its surface are merely lunar seas. There is no life on the moon...”

As the young merchant spoke, more and more people were drawn in. They stopped, pricked up their ears, and their eyes widened in surprise.

“There are no immortals on the moon?” A passerby exclaimed.

The merchants looked at each other. An older merchant said to the young merchant, “Han Zheng, is that truly what the newspaper says?”

“No mistake. I’ve read for a few years; I can still recognize the characters,” Han Zheng sighed. “Has this Qingzhou Daily gone mad? If there are no immortals on the moon, and the sun is not a golden crow, and there are no immortals in heaven, wouldn’t that mean His Majesty is no longer the true Son of Heaven?”

At this, the older merchant stretched out his leg and kicked Han Zheng. “Are you seeking death, boy? Shut up!”



The older merchant was Han Zheng's uncle. However, Han Zheng not only didn't shut up but retorted, "The newspaper clearly states that, and it's said that this newspaper was reviewed by His Majesty. Perhaps this is exactly what His Majesty means."

The merchants fell silent. Soon after, a merchant said timidly, "This might lead to big trouble."

Everyone looked at each other, no longer discussing the issue, but silently eating and waiting for developments.

Compared to the discussions on the streets, the Confucian scholars in Qingzhou City who revered Confucianism were in an uproar. A group of Confucian scholars, holding newspapers, rushed to a residence in Qingzhou City.

The plaque above this residence bore the character "Ge."

Inside the courtyard, an old man was practicing the Five Elements Fist, looking serene and elegant. He seemed unconcerned by the group of Confucian scholars bursting in.

Although Bowen Academy's influence grew day by day in Qingzhou Province, a large number of Confucian scholars in the Great Yu Empire still lived in old ways of thinking. After years of arduous study, they were unwilling to start anew and had been seeking to restore the imperial examination.

The leading Confucian scholar, named Yu Yuankun, looked at the old man and said, "Elder Ge, what time is it that you can still remain so calm? Now His Majesty wants to destroy the foundation of our Confucianism! If you and Lord Cui Hao do not step forward, thousands upon thousands of Confucian scholars in the Great Yu Empire will have no way to live!"

The old man, referred to as Elder Ge by the Confucian scholars, was none other than Ge Yiren.

A year after Prince Zhao was driven out of Chang'an, he had not received any appointment from the imperial court. Unable to bear it any longer, he brought his entire family to Qingzhou Province to scout out opportunities. At the same time, bearing the title of a great Confucian scholar, he was welcomed by Confucian scholars upon entering Qingzhou City, and even reopened a Confucian academy to lecture.

"If the Emperor is not anxious, why are you? Confucianism has been passed down for thousands of years. Since the Han Dynasty, it has been exclusively revered and flourished, enduring five dynasties unshaken. How can you understand the reasons for this? You may return for now; I will enter the palace myself to remonstrate with His Majesty," Ge Yiren's eyes flickered.

The Confucian scholars, hearing this, all showed excited expressions. Yu Yuankun said, "Then we shall rely on Elder Ge to step forward."

Ge Yiren nodded and said to his butler, "Send the scholars back."

After the Confucian scholars departed, two figures emerged from behind the rockery in the courtyard. They were Yu Zhiyong and Ni Kuang.

Glancing in the direction the Confucian scholars had left, Ge Yiren said, "Elder Ge, these Confucian scholars have little ability but are very noisy. Getting too close to them will inevitably lead to trouble."

“That’s right. His Majesty’s grand gesture this time is precisely aimed at these stubborn Confucian scholars. If we get too close to them, the three of us will likely never serve in officialdom,” a person said.

Ge Yiren gently stroked his beard. After reading today’s newspaper, he had already made a decision. He said, “Today’s events are an opportunity for the three of us to become high-ranking officials. Have you two not seen through it yet?”

“What do you mean by that?” Yu Zhiyong and Ni Kuang looked puzzled.

Ge Yiren said, “The current Emperor is no ordinary person. This ‘Treatise on Celestial Bodies’ is meant to destroy the foundation of our Confucianism, but it also denies his status as the true Son of Heaven. The reason he dares to be so reckless is only because his authority is now supreme, and no one can shake his imperial throne. So, the time has come for a Confucian reform. If the three of us can seize this opportunity, we will surely achieve great success, and at the very least, live a life of wealth and prosperity.”

“Confucian reform.” Yu Zhiyong and Ni Kuang exchanged glances. As great Confucian scholars, they understood the history of Confucianism very well.

Throughout history, Confucianism had always been subservient to imperial power, serving as an instrument for imperial rule. Precisely because of this, Confucianism had been able to endure for a thousand years.

When Xiao Ming ascended the throne, they mistakenly believed that the Great Yu Dynasty would still follow the old system. But now it seemed that this Emperor’s ascension was tantamount to a dynastic change.

If that was the case, they would need to reconsider.

“Elder Ge’s vision is indeed far-reaching, beyond what the two of us can compare to. In that case, we should collectively seek an audience with His Majesty,” Ni Kuang said.

Yu Zhiyong also suddenly understood. He said, “Precisely, precisely.”

“Good. In that case, I will have the butler prepare a carriage. The three of us will go to the palace gate to request an audience with His Majesty. In my opinion, the current Emperor is exceptionally intelligent and will certainly grant us an audience.”

Ge Yiren said loudly.

With that, the three took a carriage and headed towards the imperial palace in the south of the city.

Outside the palace gate, they were stopped by imperial guards. After an announcement, they were granted permission to enter.

The three were overjoyed. Following Qian Dafu, they walked into the palace. Along the way, the three excitedly observed the facilities within the imperial palace.

For over a year, they had been sidelined from court and it hadn't been easy. Now, they secretly resolved to seize this opportunity.

Following Qian Dafu, they soon arrived in front of the imperial study. At this point, Qian Dafu let the three enter.

Ge Yiren straightened his clothes, then cautiously entered the imperial study with Yu Zhiyong and Ni Kuang.

At this time, Xiao Ming was standing with his back to them. After they paid their respects, Xiao Ming slowly turned around.

#### Chapter 803

The morning glow in the eastern sky was as splendid as blooming flowers.

Xiao Ming turned around and first looked at the morning glow for a while before looking at the three. In Chang'an, he had met Ge Yiren, Yu Zhiyong, and Ni Kuang a few times, but they were not very familiar, though they did know each other.

According to Fei Ji and Pang Yukun, these three were opportunistic, swaying with the wind. But now, for him, he needed such people to promote and carry out this Renaissance.

"What important matter do you have to seek an audience with me?" Xiao Ming's expression was cold. Strictly speaking, he could have treated the three as convicted criminals, for they had worked for Prince Zhao, and it would not be an exaggeration to call them rebels.

Although all three families performed meritorious deeds during the attack on Chang'an, it was merely kicking a dog when it was down.

Precisely because of this, these three were merely commoners in front of Xiao Ming. Coupled with his intention to chastise the three, his attitude was naturally a bit indifferent.

Ge Yiren, Yu Zhiyong, and Ni Kuang exchanged glances. Ultimately, the two looked at Ge Yiren, motioning for him to speak.

After a moment of hesitation, Ge Yiren said, "Your Majesty, early this morning, I, your humble commoner, saw this 'Treatise on Celestial Bodies' in the newspaper. For a moment, I was astonished by its divine theory. The world is ignorant, unaware of the principles of celestial movement. Now, Your Majesty's making it public truly awakens us mortals."

"Indeed. We are truly enlightened, finally knowing the wonders of the universe," Yu Zhiyong said with a cheerful smile.

Ni Kuang then said, "Inspired by this, we believe that Confucian legal principles are somewhat too outdated and should adapt to the times. However, as Confucianism is the state religion of the Great Yu Empire, this is a matter of great importance. Thus, we specifically came to seek an audience with Your Majesty to inquire about your imperial will."

Qian Dafu, standing to the side, gently shook his head upon hearing this. The shamelessness of these three had reached its peak.

Xiao Ming's eyes showed a hint of a smile upon hearing this. When he learned that Ge Yiren sought an audience, he was secretly pleased. This indicated that his judgment was correct.

This way, he would not have to be an enemy of all Confucian scholars under heaven. He only needed Confucianism to adapt to the Great Yu Empire's changing circumstances. This way, Confucianism would not only cease to be an impediment to the Great Yu Empire but would instead become an aid in popularizing science.

So he said, "Do the three of you truly believe so?"

"Yes, Your Majesty. Precisely because I felt such inspiration, I, your humble commoner, came to the palace to seek an audience," Ge Yiren said with a fervent expression, clearly implying a desire to break ties with the old Confucian establishment.

Xiao Ming laughed heartily. He said, "Good! Confucianism, after all, still has some sensible great Confucian scholars. Since that is the case, do you three have any good strategies to deal with the agitated Confucian scholars?"

"Naturally, we do," Ge Yiren said. "We, your humble servants, are willing to lecture in the Confucian academies to clarify the essence of the new Confucian learning."

"New Confucian learning, hmm, not bad." Xiao Ming looked at Ge Yiren. Now he understood that he still needed these scholarly figures who were skilled at flattery around him.

After a moment of contemplation, he said, "Now that the three of you have come, I will speak frankly. This Confucian learning must change. Firstly, its ignorant doctrines must be eliminated, making scholars across the land embrace the path of science. Secondly, it must advocate the theory of industry and commerce strengthening the nation..."

Facing the three, Xiao Ming articulated all his thoughts. Broadly speaking, he intended for Ge Yiren to remove the dross and extract the essence, for Confucianism was not entirely without merit.

Ge Yiren listened attentively, basically understanding Xiao Ming's meaning. After a moment of thought, he said, "Your Majesty, these matters are quite difficult to handle. Even if we lecture on these topics in the Confucian academies, it might be very dangerous."

Xiao Ming smiled. He knew that Ge Yiren was bargaining. After all, no one in this world was willing to do thankless tasks, especially an old fox like him.

However, he had already made up his mind. He casually said, "Currently, there are only two Grand Secretaries in the Grand Secretariat's Nine Pillars; seven positions are vacant. I will reserve one for you. If you can bring about significant changes in Confucian learning, this position will be yours. How about it?"

Ge Yiren's heart trembled. This was what he had been longing for. He quickly bowed and said, "Thank you, Your Majesty, for your immense grace."

Xiao Ming nodded, "However, before that, I should also bestow upon you official positions for your security. How about this: effective immediately, I will enfeoff you all as Grand Academicians of the Hongwen Hall?"

Yu Zhiyong and Ni Kuang had initially been worried that Xiao Ming would only grant an official position to Ge Yiren and not to them. Upon hearing this, they were immediately overjoyed and quickly expressed their gratitude.



Ge Yiren was very satisfied. The position of Grand Academician of the Hongwen Hall had long existed in the Great Yu Empire, overseeing the compilation of classics and serving as imperial advisors.

However, if favored by the Emperor, this position commanded immense power; if ignored by the Emperor, it was merely a nominal title. But even so, it brought great honor to one's name.

Moreover, Grand Academicians of the Hongwen Hall had always been renowned scholars.

Now that the benefits were given, Xiao Ming's hope was that Ge Yiren would make it happen. He said solemnly, "The matter of New Confucianism is entrusted to the three Grand Academicians. I do not wish to see only scholars who cling to the Four Books and Five Classics throughout the land."

"Rest assured, Your Majesty. With your old servant present, I will ensure that Confucian learning adapts to the times," Ge Yiren said. After a pause, he continued, "Your Majesty, there is one more matter I need to clarify."

"Speak."

"Qufu Kong family," Ge Yiren said.

Xiao Ming's gaze sharpened. The Qufu Kong family could be called a millennium-old clan. Regardless of dynastic changes, they lived peacefully and prosperously generation after generation.

After a moment of contemplation, he said, “Since you are a Grand Academician of the Hongwen Hall, go and visit the Kong family. Take two items for me: the first is this ‘Treatise on Celestial Bodies,’ and the second is my Shang Fang sword.”

Ge Yiren felt a sudden chill down his spine upon hearing this. He secretly congratulated himself for having arrived so promptly.

The Emperor’s instruction to send these two items was simply too direct. The “Treatise on Celestial Bodies” naturally demanded that the Kong family adapt to the times, while the Shang Fang sword had a dual meaning.

Firstly, if they were ignorant of the times, it was a sword of execution. If they were sensible, it was a sword of prosperity.

Swallowing, Ge Yiren said, “I have noted it. I will personally deliver these two items to Qufu.”

For these great Confucian scholars, Qufu held the status of a sacred place. To increase their influence, many great Confucian scholars would often visit Qufu to establish their reputation.

Having made his stance clear, Xiao Ming dismissed Ge Yiren and the other two, waiting only for the three to create some stir in Qingzhou Province.

Watching the three depart, Xiao Ming had Qian Dafu prepare a carriage. He intended to visit the military machinery department.

Attacking Pingzhou had exacted a considerable price, making him realize that if he continued fighting this way, his national strength would also be severely depleted.

Therefore, the explosive shells with fuses and landmines from the military machinery department were extremely important this time. As long as these two items were sent to Pingzhou City, the situation in Jinzhou City would become much easier.

Especially landmines. Burying these items on the inevitable path of cavalry would surely produce unexpected results.

Chapter 805

“Now, take my imperial decree to the Imperial Guard’s grand camp and dispatch some troops to quell this chaos.”

Seeing that the security forces were no longer able to maintain order in the city, Xiao Ming gave the order. As for the cause of the chaos, it would be investigated later.

Qian Dafu responded and took Xiao Ming’s military tally to the Imperial Guard’s camp. Meanwhile, Xiao Ming returned to the imperial palace under the protection of his guards.

Outside the palace gate, Fei Ji and Pang Yukun were waiting for Xiao Ming. Upon seeing Xiao Ming return, the two immediately approached him.

Before the two could speak, Xiao Ming said, “Whatever it is, let’s discuss it in the imperial study.”

With that, he dismounted from the carriage, leading the two into the imperial study.

Sitting down in a chair, Xiao Ming looked at the two. He said directly, "I know your purpose in coming here. It's about the chaos in the city, isn't it?"

Fei Ji said, "Precisely. An article about the 'Treatise on Celestial Bodies' in the Qingzhou Daily sparked this chaos. For this reason, I specifically read that article; it is truly astonishing."

"Elder Fei exaggerates. It's not astonishing, merely stating some facts." Pang Yukun seemed unconcerned. Having spent a long time at Bowen Academy, Pang Yukun's thinking was now no different from that of the students who specialized in technology.

Xiao Ming had not discussed the "Treatise on Celestial Bodies" with the two, which was why this matter caught them somewhat off guard. After a moment of contemplation, he said, "Since you both know about it, what are your thoughts now?"

Fei Ji was the Emperor's family and also a Grand Secretary. What he cared about most was naturally Xiao Ming's imperial authority. Other matters were negotiable, but if anyone threatened Xiao Ming's position, he would immediately confront them.

After a moment of thought, he said, "Your Majesty, your old servant worries about giving others a pretext. In the future, they will make an issue out of this. Your Majesty, please do not forget that the threat of the Prince of Chu has not been resolved, and the Third Prince is still in Yizhou."

"The Third Prince? Haha, Elder Fei worries unnecessarily. My administration of the Third Prince in Yizhou is superficially management, but in reality, it is exile. Moreover, the secret guards have been monitoring his every move. At the necessary moment, I know how to deal with him," Xiao Ming said.

Pang Yukun and Fei Ji exchanged glances. Pang Yukun said, "Your Majesty, what Elder Fei truly worries about is the Prince of Chu. If the imperial throne is not derived from heavenly mandate, wouldn't that align with Chen Sheng and Wu Guang's words, 'Are kings, princes, generals, and ministers born with special lineage?' This might cause powerful officials to covet the imperial throne."

Xiao Ming squinted at Fei Ji and Pang Yukun. He understood their meaning; the two had ulterior motives.

"Are you worried about the army?" Xiao Ming frowned.

Fei Ji bowed and said, "Your Majesty, indeed. Although the army has the Chief Clerk to restrain it, what should be done if the Chief Clerks and generals collude?"

"Since ancient times, the most taboo thing has been when a large army is abroad and returns triumphantly. If the generals harbor ill intentions, it would be extremely dangerous. Now that the 'Treatise on Celestial Bodies' is out, the concept of a ruler's mandate from heaven will become a thing of the past. The greatest fear is that the generals will become unrestrained," Fei Ji said earnestly.

Pang Yukun did not oppose Fei Ji this time, clearly agreeing with him on this matter.

Historically, there were countless instances of armies abroad disobeying imperial orders, which was the root of their concern.

Hearing this, Xiao Ming sighed slightly. What the two said was not unreasonable, but he could not again revert to emphasizing civil authority over military authority just because he worried about a military rebellion.

He said, "I understand what you two Grand Secretaries mean. Precisely because of this, I have kept the most elite Imperial Guard to protect the capital. Moreover, under the current premise of civilian control of the military, the army is responsible for fighting, and the imperial court is responsible for logistics. An army without provisions will achieve nothing. Furthermore, the power to mobilize the army is now in my hands, so there will be no problem for the time being. After the main army returns to the capital this time, I will also change the commanders of the Huben Army, so that they cannot turn the army into their private force."

Fei Ji and Pang Yukun merely used this matter to remind Xiao Ming again. Seeing that Xiao Ming already had a good strategy, they were much relieved.

Especially Xiao Ming's last point put them at ease. Currently, the Huben Army was divided into the 1st Army, 2nd Army, and 3rd Army, plus the Shenji Army. Xiao Ming meant that the commanders of these four armies would regularly rotate positions. Lu Fei would not permanently stay in the 1st Army but would serve for two or three years according to the system and then go to the 2nd Army.

This way, generals would be unable to establish deeply rooted power within the army.

"Your Majesty is wise," Fei Ji and Pang Yukun said in unison, feeling somewhat relieved.

Xiao Ming smiled. He was indeed managing his army using modern methods of army management. Of course, Fei Ji and Pang Yukun also had good intentions. Even in modern times, there were situations where military governments overthrew ruling parties, let alone in this era of backward information.

Setting that topic aside, Xiao Ming said seriously, “The most important thing now is the ‘Treatise on Celestial Bodies.’ Ge Yiren, Yu Zhiyong, and Ni Kuang have already met with me. The three of them are sensible and have promised me that they will quell this matter and also promote the New Confucianism. So, you two need not worry. You only need to appease the officials in court. I do not wish to see any officials causing trouble by siding with the Confucian scholars.”

After a pause, Xiao Ming emphasized, “Any official who dares to criticize the ‘Treatise on Celestial Bodies’ will be immediately dismissed. This time, I am determined to correct the corrupt practices in the Great Yu Empire.”

Fei Ji and Pang Yukun both felt a tremor in their hearts. This time, Xiao Ming was serious. If the current situation in the Great Yu Empire did not make drastic progress, it would surely fall behind others.

The two responded with a “Yes” and left after bidding farewell to Xiao Ming.

After seeing the two off, soon, Qian Dafu returned from outside, reporting the situation in the city.

“Your Majesty, this matter was indeed caused by a fight between Confucian scholars and merchant’s sons. Now, merchants are very fond of the ‘Treatise on Celestial Bodies,’ and they are actively promoting it, showing considerable influence.”

Xiao Ming nodded. The reforms concerning merchants over these past few years had begun to show results. Now, after the scholar class, a merchant class had emerged, and this nascent class was contending with the scholar class for its own interests.

For Xiao Ming, this was a good phenomenon. Although he had never harbored much affection for capital, it had to be said that this force was the primary driver of reform.

“Your Majesty, the Imperial Guard has now arrested several hundred people and imprisoned them. They are now awaiting Your Majesty’s disposition,” Qian Dafu said.

“Who started the fight?” Xiao Ming asked.

“It was a Confucian scholar.”

“That makes it simple. All merchants involved in the brawl are to be released. Let the Confucian scholars think carefully in prison and ponder over it. The Great Yu Empire of today is no longer the world it used to be,” Xiao Ming said calmly.

In fact, he had made up his mind on the way back. No matter who started the fight, he would release the merchants and punish these pedantic Confucian scholars.

Because he wanted to convey a message to the common people of Qingzhou Province: that he firmly stood on the side of the “Treatise on Celestial Bodies.”

Chapter 804

“Your Majesty, these are the first batch of explosive shells equipped with fuses.”



In the military machinery department, Chen Qi led Xiao Qi to the warehouse. On the ground, which was piled with many firearms and ammunition, he immediately spotted the neatly arranged explosive shells in a corner.

Due to the matter of explosive shells, Xiao Ming had Lu Fei delay the attack on Jinzhou, but the army outside was consuming heavily, and prolonged delay would be detrimental to everyone.

Furthermore, with Japan eyeing them from the Korean Peninsula, he needed to end the northern war as quickly as possible to open up opportunities for the Great Yu Empire's colonization.

Chen Qi then picked up an explosive shell from the ground and said to Xiao Ming, "Your Majesty, these explosive shells still use hollow iron balls, but the wooden plug fuse of the iron ball has been replaced with the current mechanical fuse."

Black cat, white cat, a good cat is one that catches mice. Xiao Ming ordered, "Now, have the artillery demonstrate it. I want to see how it performs."

"Yes, Your Majesty." Chen Qi nodded, ordering someone to move the cannonballs from the ground.

The group went to the firing range. Under Chen Qi's command, the artillerymen replaced solid shot with explosive shells. The loading sequence was completed. With a roar, a cannonball shot straight towards a pile of rocks five hundred meters away.

The powerfully launched explosive shell struck the rocks. The firing pin in the fuse violently struck the fulminate of mercury, instantly detonating the cannonball. With a "boom," flames enveloped the rock pile, blasting rocks everywhere.

Xiao Ming nodded in satisfaction. Previously, only mortars could fire explosive shells, but now all smoothbore cannons could fire explosive shells.

Especially for the navy, their method of combat would fundamentally change.

Previously, warships merely shot solid shot, riddling enemy ships with holes, which rarely caused warships to sink. But now it was different. If naval cannons were loaded with these explosive shells, it would undoubtedly be a nightmare for the enemy; the explosive shells would directly sink the enemy's warship.

"After the first batch of shells is sent to Pingzhou City, you are to immediately send these explosive shells to the navy," Xiao Ming said, gently frowning. He vividly remembered the previous encounter between the Great Yu Empire warship and the British warship at sea.

If British warships once again engaged them at sea, he guaranteed that the Qingzhou warships would reduce the enemy to ashes.

After the first test fire was successful, Chen Qi proceeded to test fire six more rounds. All six cannonballs exploded, indicating that the reliability of these cannonballs was still good.

"Where are the landmines I asked you to manufacture?" Xiao Ming asked at this point.

Chen Qi picked up a hollow shell from a box that was different from an explosive shell. The hole in this hollow shell was significantly larger, and the fuse was also larger than that of an explosive shell, protruding high above the shell's surface.

“Your Majesty, this is it. To make it easier for barbarians and horses to step on and detonate landmines, I have made the landmine fuses much more sensitive. The weight of a soldier or a horse is enough to detonate it,” Chen Qi said seriously.

Lu Tong was responsible for providing the fulminate of mercury, but the manufacturing of the shells depended entirely on him. However, with the maturation of iron mold technology and the use of steam engines, their production was much easier than before.

Xiao Ming smiled in satisfaction. History proved that changes in weaponry led to changes in the nature of warfare. Previously, the West conquered the world using naval guns. Now, it was time for the Great Yu Empire, under his leadership, to formulate international rules.

Just like the explosive shells, Xiao Ming also had Chen Qi demonstrate it for him. At this point, Chen Qi called over an artisan and had him bury the landmine under the soil. Then, another artisan stood far away, throwing an iron block towards the buried landmine.

As the iron block landed on the landmine, the ground suddenly exploded, sending soil and flames flying.

“Very good. How many cannonballs and landmines can you produce in a month now?” Xiao Ming asked.

“Three thousand of each is feasible,” Chen Qi said. “Currently, the military machinery department produces firearms, cannons, and ammunition, so we are short on manpower.”

Frowning, he surveyed the military machinery department's courtyard. The military machinery department, established back then, had grown wildly. In his opinion, with the modernization of weapons, the military industry should also become more regularized.

So he said, "I will allocate another batch of people to you. You and Song Changping will be responsible for separating the firearm, artillery, and ammunition workshops, each performing its own duties. This way, the efficiency of all three workshops will improve."

Chen Qi immediately grinned. He had been envious of the vigorous slave tide, but being busy with the research and development of fuses, he had overlooked this matter.

Now that Xiao Ming said so, it naturally pleased him.

The rapid progress of the new cannonballs also put Xiao Ming in a good mood, as it meant he could more easily defeat his enemies and acquire more markets for the Great Yu Empire.

After inspecting the cannonballs, Xiao Ming then toured the firearm workshop and the artillery workshop. Production in these two workshops was now very stable.

The firearm workshop had been continuously producing and modifying Conqueror Muskets, while the artillery workshop focused on producing field cannons and naval guns. However, in addition to this, they had also been continuously designing and researching the next generation of firearms and cannons.

However, it would still take some time for the products to be released.

“Oh, by the way, your military machinery department can now dispatch artisans to Pingzhou to train soldiers and teach them how to use these two types of weapons. Once your first batch of cannonballs arrives, the Jinzhou campaign can begin,” Xiao Ming said.

“Yes, Your Majesty. I will arrange it now.”

Satisfied with the current production progress, Xiao Ming and Qian Dafu left the military machinery department and returned to Qingzhou City.

As soon as the two entered the city, they found the streets of Qingzhou in chaos. The streets were now filled with merchants, Confucian scholars, and common people. Amidst the chaos, he occasionally heard curses, cheers, and sounds of fighting.

“What’s going on? Go ask,” Xiao Ming said to Qian Dafu.

“Yes, Your Majesty.” Qian Dafu responded and walked to a guard who was maintaining order. He asked sternly, “What is your security bureau doing? Why is the city so chaotic?”

The guard, seeing Qian Dafu, looked nervous. He said, “Chief Steward Qian, this is not the fault of the security bureau. The chaos in the city was caused by a dispute between merchants and Confucian scholars.”

“Confucian scholars and merchants?” Qian Dafu was startled for a moment, vaguely guessing something.

The guard continued, "Yes, originally it was just a fight between two people, but now it has turned into chaos throughout Qingzhou City. Merchants and Confucian scholars have both gathered large numbers of people to fight in the city."

Qian Dafu understood. He returned to the carriage and explained the cause of the matter to Xiao Ming.

Hearing this, Xiao Ming looked thoughtful. Among these merchants, there were indeed some with unique foresight. For the rising capital, the "Treatise on Celestial Bodies" would undoubtedly completely break the shackles that had bound them for thousands of years.

Precisely because of this, they would so strongly support the "Treatise on Celestial Bodies."

Chapter 806

Ge Yiren looked at the still-being-repaired Confucian academy, feeling satisfied.

Now, as a Grand Academician of the Hongwen Hall, and potentially entering the Grand Secretariat in the future, this was a sign of achieving a very high position.

It could be said that his purpose for coming to Qingzhou Province had been achieved.

However, he also knew very well that all this was given by Xiao Ming, and Xiao Ming could also take it away. To preserve all this, he had to fulfill his promise to the Emperor.

Yu Zhiyong and Ni Kuang scrutinized the hung plaque. The four gilded characters “Confucian Academy” were particularly striking.

Beside the two, Yan Zhengyi and Huang Yanqing frowned, wondering what these three intended.

Today, they were proclaiming the “Treatise on Celestial Bodies” in the East Market. The three, under the title of Grand Academicians of the Hongwen Hall, invited them to this Confucian academy.

“Grand Academician Ge, this is a Confucian academy. I wonder what your intention is in inviting us here a second time? We speak of celestial science, not Confucian classics,” Huang Yanqing was the first to speak.

Ge Yiren’s face was beaming. He said, “You two need not be anxious. Who says a Confucian academy cannot teach celestial science? My purpose in reopening the academy this time is to adapt to the times and harmonize with them.”

Yan Zhengyi and Huang Yanqing exchanged glances, becoming even more bewildered.

Yu Zhiyong was impatient. He directly said, “You two need not worry. We three are acting under orders and will not harm you. You just need to explain the ‘Treatise on Celestial Bodies’ to us, then we can also let the Confucian scholars in the academy shed the old and embrace the new.”

Huang Yanqing’s expression softened upon hearing this. He gradually understood. So he said, “That is possible. However, the Confucian scholars and merchants in the city are in chaos. Do the three Grand Confucian scholars not intend to manage them?”

Ge Yiren appeared confident. He said, “No need to manage, and cannot manage. I know these people very well. The more you pay attention to them, the more arrogant they become. Let them suffer a bit this time, and then they will reform and study New Confucianism with the three of us.”

“So that’s it.” Huang Yanqing looked at Ge Yiren. ‘This one is indeed as thick-skinned and cunning as the legends say,’ he thought. “If that’s the case, then we will not bother with this matter. Now, we will explain the ‘Treatise on Celestial Bodies’ in detail to the three Grand Academicians.”

Ge Yiren and the other two, being great Confucian scholars, were exceptionally intelligent. Once they accepted the “Treatise on Celestial Bodies,” they grasped it very quickly. After Yan Zhengyi and Huang Yanqing finished explaining, they basically understood.

The three then looked at the sun above their heads and sighed with emotion, “Truly, listening to your words for a while is better than reading books for ten years. So, what’s above our heads is just a big fireball, and the ‘heavenly dog eating the moon’ is actually just the moon being blocked.”

After a pause, he asked, “To enlighten the Confucian scholars, we need your two telescopes. We hope you two will cooperate, and also hope you can provide more examples to prove this.”

“Grand Academician Ge, rest assured. As long as you two can spread this among the Confucian scholars, we two will certainly speak freely,” Huang Yanqing said with some excitement.

In fact, common people and merchants were more likely to believe them, while Confucian scholars were reluctant to believe. Now that Ge Yiren had stepped forward, they were naturally happy to save themselves trouble.



Ge Yiren nodded. Although he had agreed to Xiao Ming this time, in his opinion, the promotion of New Confucianism was still arduous. This New Confucianism basically destroyed the foundation of old Confucianism.

So, in addition to having Yan Zhengyi and Huang Yanqing assist, he also planned to personally go to Qufu. As long as the Kong family agreed, the matter of New Confucianism would basically be settled.

Because the ultimate questions of Confucianism were answered by the Kong family. If the Kong family did not deny it, then whatever he said would be correct.

Thinking of this, he decided to make a trip to Qufu. However, he was not in a hurry to go. He was waiting for the day Jinzhou City would fall. This way, he believed his trip would be easier, and delaying for a while would be worth it.

At the same time.

The military machinery department dispatched a group of artisans to Pingzhou City. These artisans would be responsible for teaching about the new type of shells. After seven days of traveling, they arrived in Pingzhou City, bringing the first batch of shells and landmines to the army.

“New type of explosive shells!” Luo Xin’s eyes almost popped out when he heard the news.

He was from the artillery and cared deeply about artillery shells. The moment the people from the military machinery department arrived, he was the first to rush over, walking arm-in-arm with the artisans from the military machinery department, not at all like an army commander.

The artisan in charge of teaching said, "These explosive shells are different from the ones fired by mortars. They can be used directly with field cannons."

Luo Xin, hearing this, was as anxious as if he were holding his urine, his heart pounding. He immediately pulled the artisan to the outskirts of the city for a demonstration.

At this point, Lu Fei and Lei Ming also arrived, gathering around to watch the spectacle.

Although the artisans from the military machinery department held no official rank or position, they were always highly respected in the military. Even the generals were polite, fearing to offend the people from the military machinery department and cause problems with their weapons.

Facing a group of famous Great Yu Empire generals, the artisan remained calm and composed. He had the artillery demonstrate the power of the new explosive shells.

When the explosive shells detonated in the distance, Luo Xin and the others immediately gasped in surprise. And when they witnessed the power of the landmines, they were so delighted they couldn't stop smiling.

"Forget Jinzhou, I can take Shengdu as well!" Lu Fei laughed heartily.

Luo Xin sighed, "This military machinery department is truly impressive! They can even produce such cannonballs. But these cannonballs must be expensive, right?"

“That’s natural. The price of one fuse alone is equivalent to a previous cannonball. And because of the complex structure, the production speed isn’t fast. You should use them sparingly.”

Lei Ming said happily, “No fear! Once Jinzhou City falls, we’ll have as many slaves as we want. We won’t worry about manpower.”

“We don’t trust barbarian slaves. If they learn this, you’ll be in trouble,” the artisan shook his head.

The three exchanged glances upon hearing this.

Having verified the new ammunition, the three, on the next day, brought out the artillery and began training them to use explosive shells. At the same time, a reinforced company of over three hundred men was selected.

These soldiers were trained in laying landmines. They were responsible for secretly laying landmines at night to surprise and strike the barbarian cavalry.

A month later, the first batch of ammunition from the military machinery department arrived. After over a month of production, the military machinery department had manufactured 4,000 explosive shells and 3,500 landmines.

In this Battle of Jinzhou, they would unleash a barrage of solid shot and grapeshot.

On May 18th, the Battle of Jinzhou, delayed by a month, officially began.

That night, Lu Fei ordered his soldiers to lay landmine fields near Jinzhou City and also allocated explosive shells to the artillery specifically for dealing with cavalry.

After the three armies were integrated, the main army advanced towards Jinzhou. The region outside the pass, which had been peaceful for two months, was once again covered by the clouds of war.

Upon learning that the Great Yu Empire army had marched to Jinzhou, Wuzhugu and Beishan within Jinzhou both felt a pang in their hearts. The failure at Pingzhou City had made them no longer dare to underestimate this once weak enemy.

#### Chapter 807

The sky was grim, just like the mood of the barbarians in Jinzhou City at this moment.

In just seven years, the Golden Tent Khanate's fierce offensive against the Great Yu Empire had turned into the current defensive stance.

Now, Wuzhugu deeply regretted not launching a full-scale war against the Great Yu Empire after returning from the Western expedition. Otherwise, why would the Golden Tent Khanate be suffering such a calamity now?

"Great Prince, the cavalry has assembled outside the city, ready to attack the Great Yu Empire army at any moment," a barbarian myriarch said to Wuzhugu.

Beishan and Best also stood on the city wall, their expressions serious as they looked at the Great Yu Empire army setting up camp outside the city.

Especially Best. He no longer had the nonchalance he displayed in the Battle of Pingzhou; instead, he looked dejected. In fact, he could no longer play any role in this battle.

“Prince Beishan, the Golden Tent Khanate’s advantage is cavalry. If you simply hold the city, you will only suffer more and more losses. The only advice I can give you is to lead your cavalry back to the grasslands. Otherwise, this will be a tragedy.”

“Shut up, Best! This is a war between us and the Great Yu Empire. Jinzhou is our city; we will not abandon it.” Beishan frowned. If not for this British man’s understanding of firearms, he would truly have wanted to throw him to the wolves.

Best smiled bitterly and said nothing more. He looked at the well-disciplined Great Yu Empire army opposite him, and a shadow of gloom immediately fell over his heart.

He thought he must return to inform Parliament about what was happening in the Great Yu Empire. The Great Yu Empire was far from as weak as Parliament imagined. The current policy of containment was already inappropriate.

Outside the city, observation balloons were immediately raised in the camp.

When Lu Fei and the other two ascended the hot air balloon, they already had some understanding of the situation inside Jinzhou City. Unlike Pingzhou City, Jinzhou City was the largest city outside the pass. Its walls were high and thick, and the city’s size was comparable to the former Qingzhou City.

“Fortunately, the Emperor sent the shells, otherwise this battle would have been truly difficult,” Lu Fei sighed.

“Indeed. Not to mention Jinzhou City’s walls, even the number of soldiers inside the city is astonishing. However, the number of barbarian cavalry this time seems not to have increased much,” Luo Xin said, looking at the barbarian cavalry gathered outside the city.

Lei Ming knew the Golden Tent Khanate well. He said, “The remaining barbarian cavalry are all protecting Shengdu. Moreover, the barbarians have suffered continuous defeats, and I’m afraid Dolgor, the Great Khan, will also face dissatisfaction from other nomadic tribes. At this time, he would not dare to easily send his own tribe’s cavalry.”

Qi Guangyi, upon learning the news from Jinzhou, had already merged his cavalry with Lu Fei’s forces.

Now, the Great Yu Empire’s forces combined were even larger than the previous attack on Pingzhou City. Their cavalry alone reached over 60,000 men.

The musketeers also increased by 20,000 due to the arrival of two divisions from Luo Hong’s army.

“If that’s the case, you needn’t worry about the barbarian cavalry in this battle. Leaving them to me will be enough,” Qi Guangyi said with an easygoing manner.

He was a cavalryman by origin and was much more skilled in the use of cavalry than the other three. Although Great Yu Empire cavalry might not be a match for barbarian cavalry in single combat, he had no worries about them in a collective formation.

Because at that time, personal bravery could not determine victory or defeat.

Lu Fei, hearing this, smiled and said, "Good. The barbarian cavalry will be left to you this time. We must take Jinzhou!"

After saying this, he looked at the gradually darkening sky. It was almost dark today, and it was clearly not suitable for fighting.

"Attack the city early tomorrow morning!" Lu Fei said firmly.

The next day, as a sliver of dawn appeared in the eastern sky, columns of smoke rose from the military camp. Soldiers, having eaten their fill, gradually assembled outside the camp, preparing for the assault.

Qi Guangyi led his cavalry out of the camp in single file. This time, he would certainly not let the Great Yu Empire cavalry suffer losses like before.

"Have the sharpshooters prepare, find your positions! A hundred taels of silver for every barbarian chieftain killed, a thousand taels for every myriarch killed! If anyone can kill Beishan or Wuzhugu, I will dare to ask the Emperor for a peerage for him!" Lu Fei said loudly as he walked.

The sharpshooters were wiping their aiming scopes. Lu Fei's words made their eyes light up; these rewards were a huge incentive for them.

Upon reaching the artillery position, Lu Fei roared to the artillerymen, "Prepare all the explosive shells for me! When the time comes, hit them hard!"

"Yes, Army Commander!" The soldiers responded in unison.

The musketeers' formation in the open ground in front of the camp was largely complete. At this moment, Lu Fei looked at Jinzhou City, drew his ceremonial sword, and shouted loudly, "Attack!"

As his words fell, the plate-armored soldiers first charged towards the trenches in front of Jinzhou City. As before, the barbarians had also adopted this method.

However, Lu Fei was not prepared to fight a protracted war with the barbarians. They would no longer give the barbarians any breathing room, but would take Jinzhou City in one fell swoop.

While the soldiers charged, the field artillery began to pour fire on the city gate. An explosive shell struck the city gate, instantly shattering it, rather than just punching a hole as before.

At the same time, the sharpshooters quickly found suitable firing positions. They raised their Conqueror Muskets with aiming scopes, hiding in concealed corners. Through their aiming scopes, they searched for the barbarian generals commanding on the city wall.



This time, they would shoot down all important barbarian generals.

Best and Beishan were still standing on the city wall when the Great Yu Empire army launched its charge, completely unaware that they were being targeted by hundreds of Conqueror Muskets.

Facing the first wave of over twenty thousand charging men, Beishan ordered the slave soldiers to hold the trenches to the death.

No sooner had he issued his order than he suddenly felt a cold wind pass by his ear. Turning his head, he saw several places on Best's body bleeding.

Best looked at the Great Yu Empire army opposite him in disbelief. The musketeers were clearly still three or four hundred meters away. How did they manage to shoot?

But he merely thought this before he fell, his consciousness plunging into darkness.

A chill suddenly surged in Beishan's heart. He could no longer care about anything else. He turned and ran down the city wall. He had barely left his previous position when he heard the sound of bullets striking the battlements.

At this point, a bullet struck his arm squarely. With a sharp pain, Beishan fell directly to the ground. He dared not get up, scrambling and rolling to escape down the city wall.

A barbarian general had not yet recovered his wits when a sharp pain suddenly pierced his chest. Looking at the city below in terror, he slowly fell.

“Well done! These sharpshooters are truly a miracle troop!” Lu Fei said, slapping his thigh and laughing as he held his telescope.

Due to the accuracy limitations of the Conqueror Musket, the sharpshooters were divided into groups. Each group consisted of ten soldiers, and they were collectively responsible for one target, ensuring firing efficiency through numbers.

#### Chapter 808

Beishan had never been so terrified. He clutched the wound on his arm, stumbling and rolling down the city wall. However, in just a moment, two more corpses of generals were carried down from the city wall.

“What in the world is going on?”

Beishan muttered to himself. He hadn’t seen any Great Yu Empire soldiers firing, but the facts were before his eyes: the generals on the city wall were continuously dying.

Since birth, he had never experienced anything so bizarre. This feeling of being able to be killed at any moment made his body tremble slightly.

He glanced at the city wall and suddenly found he lacked the courage to climb it again. A sense of despondency suddenly enveloped his heart.

“Is the Golden Tent Khanate doomed?”

A thought flashed through Beishan’s mind. He became increasingly pessimistic and despairing.

As he was still in shock, a series of explosions rang out outside the city. Amidst the explosions, he heard the dying wails of warhorses and the screams of soldiers.

The sound of these explosions definitely did not come from the Great Yu Empire’s mortars; it seemed to originate from the ground.

Struggling, he endured the pain in his arm, crouching low and crawling up the city wall behind the battlements.

Upon reaching the city wall, he still dared not stand up. Instead, he moved along the battlements that could conceal his body.

At one battlement, he suddenly looked up. At this moment, he only saw the barbarian cavalry charging outside the city, toppling over with men and horses.

And wherever the cavalry passed, flashes of fire erupted. Each explosion could fell cavalry within ten meters.

Seeing this, Beishan quickly hid behind the battlement. His heartbeat gradually quickened. This war had already exceeded his comprehension.

After another glance outside the city, he decisively descended the city wall.

“Guduo, prepare the horses. We must leave this place,” Beishan said, his face ashen.

Guduo glanced at Beishan’s bleeding arm and said, “Prince, this...”

“Leave now! Jinzhou City cannot be held! All cities cannot be held! We must return to the grasslands! The glory of the Golden Tent Khanate is gone forever! Now, all we have left are the grasslands and the Western Regions!”

Guduo opened his mouth, but Beishan’s stern expression made him decide to obey.

Outside the city, the barbarian cavalry charging towards the Great Yu Empire fell into confusion. To boost morale, Wuzhugu led the charge, rushing towards the Great Yu Empire’s musketeers.

However, before them, their Great Prince Wuzhugu and his horse were blown to pieces, their flesh and blood splattering. The cavalry, unable to stop their horses, trampled over Wuzhugu’s corpse. Then, they faced even more explosions.

This explosion from beneath the ground plunged the cavalry into hysterical terror. They firmly believed in Shamanism.

At this moment, in their eyes, these explosions were nothing short of magic, and even more cavalry believed that Everlasting Hate Heaven had abandoned them.

Morale instantly plummeted. The barbarian cavalry became incredibly chaotic, with cavalry behind them pressing into those in front.

The cavalry in front wanted to retreat. Under this disordered state, the cavalry gathered in increasing numbers.

Luo Xin decisively seized the opportunity. He had the artillery turn their direction, aiming their muzzles at the barbarian cavalry who were dazed by the landmines.

“Fire!” Luo Xin ordered loudly.

Under his command, the soldiers loaded explosive shells. Accompanied by the roar of cannons, hundreds of explosive shells flew towards the barbarian cavalry.

Clusters of fiery blossoms immediately erupted among the gathered barbarian cavalry. The barbarian cavalry were blown apart in the explosions, their flesh and blood splattering.

At this moment, the barbarian cavalry could no longer endure. They frantically scrambled to escape.

Qi Guangyi looked at this scene, cold sweat beading on his forehead. He said to Lu Fei, "Are you sure the landmines were only laid in this direction?"

"No mistake. You can bypass this mine belt and pursue," Lu Fei swallowed. He too was greatly shocked this time.

After the barbarian cavalry charged into the landmine field, the ground exploded like fireworks. The massive cavalry force was literally blown to pieces.

And it seemed the landmines even killed the barbarian Wuzhugu, which surprised him somewhat.

"If any of my soldiers are injured by a landmine, I will definitely not let you off," Qi Guangyi warned Lu Fei. This thing was simply a cavalryman's nightmare.

With that, he led his forces around the minefield and pursued the fleeing barbarian cavalry. This time, they would maximize the casualties inflicted on the barbarian soldiers.

Lu Fei shivered. He looked at the Jinzhou city wall. Now, the barbarian cavalry was basically useless. All that remained was a solitary Jinzhou City. This siege warfare was perfectly to his liking.

"Blast open the city wall!" Lu Fei roared.

As his voice fell, cannonballs flew towards the Jinzhou city wall. In an instant, the Jinzhou city wall became a sea of fire.

The barbarian artillerymen on the Jinzhou city wall were annihilated in the endless artillery fire before they could even dodge.

The bombardment of the front city wall continued for a full ten minutes. Two thousand cannonballs landed on the Jinzhou city wall. When the sound of the cannons gradually ceased, the heavily damaged Jinzhou city wall finally collapsed with a “rumble,” for over fifty meters.

The barbarian soldiers on the city wall suffered heavy casualties from the cannonball explosions. The remaining barbarian soldiers were terrified and no longer dared to step onto the city wall.

In this situation, the Great Yu Empire army’s unique charge bugle sounded again. Accompanied by earth-shattering shouts of “kill,” the soldiers charged into Jinzhou City.

“Anyone within the city carrying a weapon is an enemy of the Great Yu Empire. Kill without mercy!”

After entering the city, orders were relayed to every army, regiment, battalion, and company.

Although they easily captured the city gate under the artillery bombardment, there were still a large number of barbarians and barbarian soldiers inside the city.

Lu Fei, Lei Ming, and Luo Xin were all former northern generals who had always detested the barbarians. Therefore, they were also very cruel towards the barbarians.

After the order was given, the Great Yu Empire soldiers no longer held back. Over one hundred thousand men rampaged through Jinzhou City. Resisting barbarians were killed one after another.

For a time, Jinzhou City ran with blood. This time, the barbarians finally experienced the cruelty they had inflicted upon the Great Yu Empire people.

The battle continued from morning until that night. The barbarians, who were practically being massacred, suffered heavy casualties.

Facing the Great Yu Empire soldiers, who were even fiercer than themselves, many barbarians raised their hands and knelt on the ground. From then on, they would bow to the Great Yu Empire.

Lu Fei and the other two entered the city at dusk. Everywhere they went, there were corpses of barbarian soldiers. As the largest city outside the pass, Jinzhou played a crucial role in the barbarian territory.

It could be said that as long as Jinzhou remained, the Great Yu Empire's army could not continue northward and westward, but now they had finally lost this city.

"Raozhou is northwest of Jinzhou City, Jianzhou is to the north, Yingzhou to the northeast. Now, only these three cities remain on barbarian territory. According to His Majesty's order, after taking Jinzhou, we are to conquer Yingzhou, which will completely cut off the barbarians' connection with Goryeo and Japan. After that, the main army will advance north to take Jianzhou, thus making the barbarians lose all



their land outside the pass. As for Raozhou, it is the gateway for attacking the grasslands. Taking it and stationing troops there will keep the barbarians under the constant threat of our cavalry.”

Reciting the Emperor’s orders, Lu Fei’s heart surged with excitement. After seven years of forbearance, they had finally flattened Jinzhou.

#### Chapter 809

Over the boundless grasslands, Beishan galloped wildly on his horse.

Behind him were the Great Yu Empire’s elite cavalry, relentlessly pursuing him. Not long after he escaped from Jinzhou City, the cavalry led by Wuzhugu completely collapsed, and he also received news of Wuzhugu’s death.

Although Jinzhou City was doomed to fall, this was irrelevant to Beishan. The real issue now was the Khanate’s throne. Wuzhugu was dead, and Bodo was also dead. The Great Yu Empire had removed the two most threatening princes for him.

For him, as long as he could return to the grasslands, the future position of Khan would surely be his.

However, his extravagant hope was shattered when the Great Yu Empire cavalry caught up. The disorganized Golden Tent Khanate cavalry were utterly helpless before the Great Yu Empire’s energetic and high-spirited cavalry.

At this moment, individual bravery could not play any role.

He could only watch as the Great Yu Empire cavalry drew closer, and barbarian cavalymen were cut down from their horses one by one.

Horses' endurance was limited. After galloping for dozens of li, many Golden Tent Khanate horses could no longer run. And because they were affected by the explosions, many cavalymen lost their other horses before Jinzhou City, and in their rout, many cavalymen were left with only one man and one horse.

The Great Yu Empire cavalry, meanwhile, were well-rested. They had four horses per man. When one horse tired, they immediately switched to the second, and quickly caught up.

As the numerous Great Yu Empire cavalry caught up, the barbarian cavalry were like pursued prey. Screams could be heard intermittently. Beishan's heart grew colder and colder. Unlike any previous battle, this time the Great Yu Empire cavalry showed a relentless determination to completely annihilate them.

Whips cracked. Beishan fled with increasing desperation.

But the horse he rode gradually lost its strength and suddenly collapsed. Looking at the Great Yu Empire soldiers right behind him, a hint of despair appeared in his eyes.

At this moment, Qi Guangyi was less than two hundred meters behind Beishan. He had been pursuing the scattered barbarian cavalry since yesterday morning. Today was the second day.

In a day and a night of pursuit, the disorganized barbarian cavalry appeared vulnerable for the first time. Barbarian cavalry killed along the way were everywhere. For him, this was the best opportunity to destroy the barbarian cavalry. He naturally refused to let go, especially when he saw Beishan, the barbarian prince who had committed heinous crimes against the Great Yu Empire.

Thus, he decided to pursue relentlessly, to kill this barbarian prince before he reached Raozhou City.

Seeing Beishan's horse gradually slow down, Qi Guangyi was overjoyed. He immediately switched to the last fresh horse he had, spurring his warhorse to charge at Beishan.

Other Great Yu Empire cavalry, seeing this, followed suit.

The two continued their chase on the flat grasslands. In just a short while, Beishan's horse finally gave out, abruptly collapsing to the ground.

Beishan fell from his horse, rolling several times on the ground before steadying himself. At this point, he looked up and saw the Great Yu Empire cavalry already upon him. The leading general among them fiercely brought down his saber.

The instinct for survival made Beishan immediately perform a roll. Qi Guangyi's saber narrowly passed over Beishan's head.

But before he could react, more horses passed by him, sabers flashing with silver light.

Guduo, who was still galloping, suddenly saw Beishan surrounded by Great Yu Empire cavalry. He immediately became anxious. He led the several hundred cavalry protecting Beishan to turn and charge back.

Qi Guangyi noticed this cavalry unit. He immediately commanded several hundred cavalry to meet them in battle, while he himself turned his horse and charged at Beishan again.

Beishan drew the scimitar from his hand. Seeing Qi Guangyi charging again, he dodged, and his scimitar struck Qi Guangyi's horse's leg.

The warhorse, injured, abruptly fell. Qi Guangyi was violently thrown to the ground by the horse's forward momentum.

As a prince, Beishan had received extremely rigorous training from a young age and was also an excellent warrior.

Seizing the moment before Qi Guangyi could get up, he charged at Qi Guangyi with his scimitar. He knew this general held a very high position, and killing him would be enough to cause chaos among the Great Yu Empire cavalry.

"Die!" In a blink of an eye, Beishan was before Qi Guangyi. He raised his scimitar high and brought it down on Qi Guangyi.

At this moment, Qi Guangyi rolled over, only to see a scimitar about to land.

Beishan watched with satisfaction as Qi Guangyi's eyes widened in panic, and he fiercely brought down his scimitar. But just then, Qi Guangyi, with lightning speed, suddenly pulled a short-barreled firearm from his waist and aimed it at him.

With a “bang,” fire and smoke erupted. Beishan’s body seemed to freeze. A bullet hole appeared on his forehead, and blood streamed from it.

“Can you be faster than a bullet?” Qi Guangyi rolled to his side and stood up. Beishan’s corpse slowly fell.

Reloading the short-barreled firearm and placing it back at his waist, Qi Guangyi blew a whistle. At this, the Great Yu Empire cavalry stopped their pursuit and converged on him.

Ahead lay Raozhou City. With Beishan dead, there was no need to continue the pursuit, as there were still some barbarian cavalry within Raozhou City.

Ordering his soldiers to carry Beishan’s corpse, Qi Guangyi took the reins from a soldier and mounted another horse. Now, they would return.

Jinzhou City.

After a day and a night of encirclement and suppression, the remaining barbarian army within the city was completely annihilated. The fierce resistance gradually subsided under the iron-fisted methods of the Great Yu Empire.

Now, the soldiers were clearing the barbarian corpses to prevent a plague after the great battle.

In addition to this, the soldiers were also scouring the entire city for gold, silver, and jewels. Over the years, the barbarians had plundered many things from the Great Yu Empire. As the largest city in the barbarian territory, many barbarian nobles would come here to enjoy themselves.

Therefore, Jinzhou City had always been very prosperous, and a prosperous city naturally held a large amount of wealth. This was a common experience among generals.

“Army Commander Lu, we have found the barbarian treasury in the city center.”

Lu Fei and the other two were discussing emulating Pingzhou’s policy of granting household registrations to slaves with Great Yu Empire bloodlines when a division commander walked in and reported to Lu Fei.

“A treasury! Excellent!” Lu Fei laughed aloud.

Since the New Year, the army had been campaigning abroad. Lu Fei knew very well the heavy burden this brought to the imperial court, because the Grand Council’s order was to completely seize every bit of wealth from the barbarian lands.

After all, the captured barbarians were all to be enslaved. Not taking this wealth would be a waste.

Luo Xin and Lei Ming's hearts also stirred. As they ventured further and further, supplies became increasingly difficult. If they could become self-sufficient on the spot, this would undoubtedly be good news.

The three followed the soldier and soon arrived at the central treasury.

This was an underground cellar-style treasury, accessed by stairs from the ground. The light from torches revealed piles of gold and silver artifacts, as well as considerable amounts of grain, furs, and cured meat. There were even white spirits, white sugar, and fine salt that the barbarians had smuggled from the Great Yu Empire.

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The flickering torchlight in the treasury made the figures of the generals flicker in and out of sight.

After seeing the reserves piled up in this treasury, Lu Fei said, "General Niu originally wanted us to wait for grain and fodder before attacking Yingzhou. Now it seems unnecessary. With the grain and fodder left by the barbarians, we can completely rest for a few days and then march on Yingzhou, completely cutting off communication between the barbarians and Goryeo."

Lei Ming said, "You're right. I'll send someone to Shanhai Pass to deliver a letter now."

"No need!"

As his voice fell, a slightly hoarse voice sounded from outside, and then Niu Ben arrived in Jinzhou City, surrounded by guards.

“General.”

The generals bowed upon seeing Niu Ben.

This northern expedition was led by Xiao Ming, and Niu Ben was the corps commander. His position was still a notch higher.

Niu Ben’s eyes swept across the generals. He said, “You all did well this time. It only took one day to capture Jinzhou City, which truly exceeded my expectations.”

“General, this is all thanks to the new shells, landmines, and sharpshooters. Without these, we would probably have suffered tens of thousands of casualties to capture Jinzhou City,” Lu Fei said seriously.

Niu Ben nodded. He had witnessed the power of these shells when he was in Shanhai Pass. Precisely because of this, he had rushed to Jinzhou City beforehand, but clearly, the speed of the siege was faster than he had imagined.

“Hahaha, you needn’t be humble. His Majesty said that it is the soldiers who determine the use of weapons, which means you have all trained your men well.”

With that, Niu Ben glanced at the piled grain and fodder. At a glance, the storehouse was filled with grain, fodder, and supplies. He then said, “Since we are no longer worried about provisions, I will issue new orders to you.”

“Yes, General.” The generals said excitedly. This triumphant momentum made each of them enthusiastically throw themselves into the war.



After inspecting the supplies in the storehouse with the generals, Niu Ben and the others returned to the main camp. He then said, "The battle for Jinzhou City has just ended. I will give you three days to rest. After that, Lei Ming will command thirty thousand infantry and set off for Yingzhou to capture Yingzhou with Ye Qingyun."

After a pause, Niu Ben continued, "Luo Xin, you will lead forty thousand musketeers and thirty thousand cavalry towards Raozhou City. Lu Fei, the northernmost Jianzhou City will be entrusted to you."

"Yes, General. I've always liked gnawing on tough bones," Lu Fei laughed heartily.

Among these three cities, Jianzhou was undoubtedly the most difficult to attack. Unlike Raozhou and Yingzhou, Jianzhou was located in an extremely cold region. Even in spring, it was very cold.

According to the map provided by Xiao Ming, 1,600 li north of Jianzhou was the labeled Siberian snowfield. Attacking this city not only required long-distance travel but also defense against the cold winter.

This was also one of the reasons why the Grand Council decided to launch the northern expedition in spring. It was now June. If they delayed until winter, their soldiers would not be able to adapt to the harsh climate.

After all, most of their soldiers came from south of the Great Wall.

Having settled the next strategy, the generals began to prepare for battle. Niu Ben then took charge of the household registration affairs in Jinzhou City.

The Emperor attached great importance to the territories outside the pass, and also to the Guandong people who had regained their freedom.

These soldiers, who lived in the harsh and cold land, had adapted to the climate here and were very suitable for fighting in this area.

Although they had successively captured the barbarian cities in a very short time, they were currently unable to completely encircle and suppress the barbarians' grassland forces. Now, they needed soldiers to protect these six cities outside the pass.

Clearly, the Guandong people were most suitable for this role.

Moreover, they had an even grander plan: to turn the far northern Siberia into the Great Yu Empire's territory. But before that, they had many things to do.

The next day, the Great Yu Empire cavalry, who had pursued the barbarian cavalry for a day, returned to Jinzhou City under Qi Guangyi's command.

Upon seeing Beishan's corpse, a huge cheer erupted within Jinzhou City. All three of the Golden Tent Khan's most formidable princes had perished. This alone was enough to cripple the barbarians.

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Shengdu, the formerly peaceful, prosperous, and strong Golden Tent had become restless.

The aftershocks of the news of Pingzhou's fall had not yet dissipated when the loss of Jinzhou City struck the banner chiefs of the grassland tribes like a bolt from the blue.

"I will not waste the lives of my tribal warriors by cooping them up in cities to fight the Great Yu Empire. This is utterly foolish."

The Golden Tent was filled with banner chiefs from the grassland tribes. Unlike the joyous atmosphere of previous land divisions of the Great Yu Empire, now every banner chief's face was extremely grim.

"Beishan, Bodo, Wuzhugu—they destroyed everything of the Golden Tent Khanate! Now, less than thirty percent of our tribal cavalry have returned. If we continue fighting like this, only women and children will be left in the tribe! This war cannot go on!"

"We can't fight any longer! The Great Yu Empire has occupied Jinzhou! How can we fight now?!"

"..."

The banner chiefs in the Golden Tent argued fiercely.

Dolgor sat on the Khan's throne. He slammed his fist down hard. "You only lost soldiers! Now, my three beloved sons are all dead! Are you still satisfied with that?"

The continuous stream of death notifications almost drove Dolgor mad. Those were his sons. Although he was harsh on them on normal days, this was entirely a father's way of spurring his sons on.

But now, everything had become fleeting clouds.

His eyes held deep-seated hatred. A voice roared in his heart, 'Revenge!'

But this hatred gradually subsided amidst the timid words of the banner chiefs. Revenge? Did he still have the ability to seek revenge now?

"Everyone shut up!" Dolgor roared.

The banner chiefs, intimidated by Dolgor's voice, all fell silent.

At this point, Dolgor said, "We cannot just give up. Once we leave this place, I'm afraid we won't be able to return."

As his words fell, a strong tribal banner chief stood up. He looked directly into Dolgor's eyes. "Continue? Dolgor, do you not feel ashamed? It is you who led the Golden Tent Khanate to its demise! My tribe will no longer obey your orders! You are no longer fit to be called Great Khan!"

"Geltu is right! We will no longer dispatch soldiers to follow you to their deaths! The soldiers are terrified! They would rather die on the grasslands than die in a cold city! Our grasslands and the Western Regions still have vast territories! These territories combined are larger than the Great Yu Empire! This is where we should defend!" another banner chief joined in the clamor.

Dolgor looked at Geltu. He was the banner chief of the Grassland Grey Hawk Tribe, and also the only large tribe that could stand shoulder to shoulder with the Blood Wolf Tribe. Ever since the Blood Wolf Tribe suffered heavy losses in the Battle of Jizhou, Geltu had been rebellious. After the Blood Wolf Tribe's heavy losses in the Battle of Jizhou, he became even more arrogant, subtly showing that he did not regard Dolgor as the Great Khan.