

"그대는 요즘 어디서 지내고 있는가?"

"나는 지금 호분중랑장 자리에 있네. 그런데 그보다 더 기쁜 소식이 있어 이렇게 찾아왔지."

여포는 눈썹을 치켜들었다.

"무슨 일인가?"

이숙은 손을 들어 장막 밖으로 신호를 보냈고, 곧이어 붉은 보자기로 싸인 말 한 필이 끌려 들어왔다.

"이 말, 이름하여 적토. 하루에 천 리를 달리며, 물을 건너고 산을 타도 바닥을 딛는 듯하네. 특별히 그대에게 바치고자 가져왔지. 장군의 호랑이 같은 위세에 이 말이 더해진다면, 세상에 누구도 당할 자 없을 것이야?"

여포는 말없이 일어서서 그 붉은 말을 바라보았다.

말 한 마리, 그러나 그 자태는 범상치 않았다.

붉은 털은 마치 활활 타오르는 숯불 같고, 머리부터 꼬리까지 한 자루 창처럼 길쭉하고 날렵했다. 흠집 하나 없이 완벽한 균형. 네 다리는 산을 박차듯 힘 찼고, 울부짖는 그 소리는 마치 천둥 같았다. 허공을 박차면 하늘로 오를 듯했고, 바닷물이라도 가르며 달릴 수 있을 듯했다.

그기세, 그 형체 -여포는 첫눈에 마음을 빼앗겼다.

후세 시인은 이 말을 두고 이렇게 읊었다.

천리를 달려 흙먼지를 가르고,
산을 넘고 물을 건너자 자줏빛 안개가 갈라진다.

With his trusted blood kin and sworn brothers now gathered under one cause, Cao Cao set to work. The quiet village that had once been a sleepy hamlet soon pulsed with the heartbeat of a rising army.

He began mobilizing the troops, assigning roles, drilling formations, and preparing for what lay ahead. The fields became training grounds. The hills became watchposts. Blacksmiths labored day and night, and the clanging of hammer on iron rang out like the beat of war drums. Horses neighed under the weight of fresh saddles and new armor. Flags bearing the twin characters for "Loyalty" and "Righteousness" flew proudly from every corner.

And all of this was made possible by one man's faith.

Wei Hong— the noble scholar of Chenliu - emptied his coffers without hesitation. He sold his lands, opened his storehouses, and turned his home into a supply depot. Armor, spears, bows, shields, and banners were forged from his fortune. Silk for banners, iron for blades - whatever was needed, he provided, asking nothing in return but that justice be done.

The People Answer

And then something remarkable happened

Grain caravans began arriving from the distant corners of the land — not by order, but by will. Ox carts creaked into

camp, overflowing with sacks of rice and millet, barrels of salted meat, baskets of dried fruit. Farmers, merchants, even wandering monks came bearing food and firewood. They came not for reward, but for righteousness.

There was no counting them. No census could record the tide of supplies that flowed in. It was as if the heavens themselves were pouring blessings upon the cause.

Cao Cao stood atop a makeshift watchtower, overlooking the bustling camp. Soldiers trained, officers shouted commands, banners waved in the wind, and at the center of it all, the fire in his heart burned brighter than ever.

He turned to his advisors and said, "With warriors at my side and the people at my back, who can stop us now?"

The Edict of Vengeance: When Tyranny Burns, Heroes Rise

When the forged imperial decree reached the hands of Yuan Shao— the ambitious warlord of Bohai and heir to noble lineage— his eyes narrowed as he read the words, heart pounding with a fire he had long restrained.

The message was clear. The time for hesitation was over.

With banners unfurled and war drums echoing like thunder across the plains, Yuan Shao summoned his entire command. Advisors, strategists, generals, and couriers stood shoulder to shoulder as he declared:

"The Empire is broken-but not beyond saving. We ride to war not for power, but for justice!"

He mustered an army of thirty thousand men, shimmering like a sea of steel beneath the sun, and marched eastward to meet with Cao Cao in a sworn alliance. The two warlords—once rivals in ambition- now stood together, bound by blood-inked words and a shared fury against tyranny.

The Proclamation of Righteousness: Cao Cao's Rallying Cry to the Realm

Even as Yuan Shao marched, Cao Cao wasted no time. He penned and dispatched a series of proclamations to every province, every garrison, and every heart still beating for justice. These were no simple letters—they were fire set to parchment, thunder in written form. They bore the weight of heaven's wrath and the fury of the people.

The message read:

"From Cao Cao and the Loyal Commanders, to all provinces and people under Heaven -

Let it be known, in the name of righteousness and the sacred order of the Han:

Dong Zhuo, the usurper, has defied heaven and trampled the earth. He has murdered the rightful sovereign and cast the empire into darkness. He has defiled the sacred halls of

「丞相、百姓の心は水の如し。ひとたび驚かせば、大洪水のごとく治め難し。もし都を悪せば、民は騒ぎ、世は安からずなりましょう。」

それは最後の忠言であった。だが、董卓の怒りはついに臨界を超えた。

「民？小民どもがどうなろうと、際の計に何の関係がある！天下のため、些末の憂いなど惜しむに足らず！」

その場で、董卓は命を下す。

「楊、黄琬、爽——この三名、政を乱す逆臣なり！即刻、職を罷免し、庶民に落とせ！」

殿中に戦慄が走る。三公が一瞬にして追放されるという暴挙に、誰もが言葉を失った。だが董卓の瞳には、もはや誰の忠言も映ってはいなかった。

その眼差しの先にあるのはただ、かつて王者たちが夢見た都——長安。その地に新たなる覇を築くという、狂気の如き野望だけであった。

「血に染まる都落ち——董卓、洛陽を焼き捨てる」

玉座を離れ、黒漆の戦車に身を預けた董卓が城門に差し掛かったその時、二人の男が車の前に立ち、深々と頭を下げた。

その姿を見て、董卓の瞳が細く鋭く光る。

「おお、周に伍……貴様らか。何用だ。」

尚書・周が静かに顔を上げ、涼やかな声で語り出す。

「永相、都を長安へ遷すと聞きました。我ら、洛陽を捨てることは百害あって一利なしと考え、命を顧みず諫言に参上しました。」

その言葉が終わるや否や、董卓の顔に血潮が噴き出すような怒りが走った。

「貴様ら.....！思い出したぞ。かつて我に袁紹を推したのは貴様らではなかつたか！ その袁紹が今、我に牙を剥いた。すなわち、貴様らは謀反の一味だ！」

その怒声に震え上がる間もなく、董卓は手を振り下ろした。

「武士ども！ この二名を都門の外に引き立て、即刻斬首せよ！」

無慈悲な命が下り、血が石畳を染めた。都人は声もなくそれを見届け、誰も逆ちおうとはしなかった。

その日のうちに、蓬卓は正式に「遷都合」を発布。翌日、洛陽を捨てて長安へ発つと宣言した。

だが、問題は資金と兵糧であった。

季が静かに進み出て囁く。

「永相、洛陽には金銀財宝を蓄えた富商が数多おります。中でも袁紹に通じた者どもを逆臣と断じ、家財を没収すれば、巨万の資が得られましょう。」

董卓は即座に頷き、五千の鉄騎を市街へ放った。

彼らは各地を巡り、旗を富豪の家々に突き刺し、その旗には血のような赤でこう書かれていた――

「逆臣の一党」

告げる間もなく、富豪たちは引き立てられ、洛陽の城外にて次々と斬首された。その数、数千家に及び、死徴は野に界々と重なった。

金銀財宝はすべて官庫へと運び込まれたが、そこに人の温もりはひとかけらも残されていなかった。

さらに李催と郭温は、董卓の命を受け、洛陽士の民を無理やり動員した。

老若男女問わず、数百万とも言われる民を、軍勢と交互に配置して長安へと移動させる。

「百姓一隊、軍隊一際」

この非情な構成は、もはや選部ではなく、“強制流刑”そのものであった。

道中、飢えと疲弊により命を落とす者が次々に現れ、谷や崖には無数の遺体が転がった。地には絶望の呻きと、母を求める子の泣き声が満ちあふれた。

飢えた兵たちは、民の家に押し入り、女を犯し、食糧を強奪し

誰が泣いても、誰が助けを乞うても、軍の背後には三千の軍――白を手にした無慈悲な死神が控えており、一步遅れればその場で首をねられた。

遷都という名の地獄行軍――天が泣き、地が震えるほどの悪