

I. Dynasty 284

Chapter 284: Skirmish

“Fire!”

At the exact moment the heavy crossbows were loosed, Yue Yun shouted loudly.

“Fire!” Voices relayed the command below deck, and the prepared gunners immediately lit their match cords.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

In a line, the three galleons erupted with bursts of firelight. Smoke from the ignited gunpowder filled the area around the muzzles, as seventy-five grapeshot rounds sprayed into the air, scattering into a rain of deadly pellets.

The barrage fell upon the three Atakebune like a storm.

Standing at the bow, Xiao Ming could clearly hear the sound of cannonballs piercing wooden planks—it was as sharp and clean as a finger punching through paper.

In an instant, the three Atakebune were riddled with holes, wood splinters flying everywhere. The wokou aboard were shredded into pulp, blood mist bursting across the decks.

This single volley rendered all three Atakebune incapable of continuing the fight. Most of the wokou were already dead.

“Starboard turn!” Yue Yun shouted again.

As the command rang out, the galleons began shifting position. After firing from the port side, they now brought their starboard cannons to face the enemy.

“Fire!”

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Another round of cannon fire shook the decks. In Xiao Ming’s eyes, the three enemy ships had become sieves, slowly beginning to sink.

These Atakebune had only been meant to harass the fleet. The main force of the wokou was still onshore.

With the three ships sunk, the fleet sped toward the coast.

Yutai Village

Yamada Ichiro slowly pulled his katana from the body of a villager, bloodlust in his eyes. Just then, he turned around and stared in disbelief at the sight of the sinking ships.

Other Japanese raiders also paused their massacre, looking in horror toward the battlefield at sea.

“This can’t be!” Yamada Ichiro stammered, then barked, “Search the village! Find Meng Youliang—he must still be here. He couldn’t have gone far!”

He glanced again at the Great Yu flags fluttering on the warships. Then he stepped on the body of an elderly woman and viciously stabbed her in the leg with his katana.

“Speak! Where is Meng Youliang?”

The old woman was already soaked in blood. She spat a mouthful of blood in his face and laughed coldly, staring at the approaching warships.

“That ship... must be my son. He’s come. He’ll kill all of you dogs!”

“Stupid! You Chinese pigs!” Yamada Ichiro roared as he drove the blade into her chest.

Blood splattered. The old woman grimaced in pain, but her eyes still held a smile as she gazed at the towering ships drawing near.

Screams echoed through the village as Yamada Ichiro trampled over corpses in a mad search. “Meng Youliang, you coward! Are you really going to let them die in front of your eyes?”

He seized a barely-breathing, half-naked woman—already brutalized beyond recognition—and shouted again: “Come out! Or I’ll slaughter every last person in this village!”

The Great Yu flags flew closer. Yamada Ichiro spiraled into madness.

His ships had sunk—he could never have imagined that Great Yu’s warships could annihilate them so swiftly. Now he had no way out. He had to find Meng Youliang fast.

Slashing the woman’s throat, Yamada Ichiro continued his frantic search. He didn’t intend to escape—they were suicide warriors. If the mission failed, returning home meant death anyway.

“Land!”

The Qingzhou docked near the shore. Yue Yun couldn’t wait. He leapt from the deck with his men, wading through waist-deep water as they stormed the beach.

Xiao Ming, flanked by Zhao Long and Zhao Hu, also jumped down and charged forward with more than six hundred soldiers into Yutai Village.

The wokou hadn't left. They were still searching for something.

Seeing the troops land, two hundred wokou warriors shouted in Japanese and charged.

Yue Yun and the sailors were already blood-eyed with rage. Corpses of their fellow villagers lay everywhere, blood staining the sea red.

"Kill them!"

Xiao Ming saw the corpse of a baby hacked in two—and his fury erupted. The shame his people had suffered in this life and the last surged from his chest as uncontainable wrath.

'You savages—how dare you trample on the dignity of Huaxia!'

"Kill!"

A thunderous roar came from the sailors as they charged like an iron tide. Their blades flashed, cutting down heads one after another.

The wokou wore kimonos and wielded katanas, no match at all for armored sailors. Two hundred enemies were instantly broken apart by six hundred Great Yu troops. Xiao Ming and Yue Yun fought side by side.

In that moment, Xiao Ming was no longer a prince. He was just another soldier, a man burning with hatred for the invaders of his homeland.

Living in such a brutal age, Xiao Ming had never neglected his martial skills. His predecessor's training left him with a solid foundation.

He dodged a blade slashing toward his side, spun around, and slashed his sword across the enemy's throat. Blood gushed out as the warrior collapsed.

Zhao Long and Zhao Hu fought by his sides, blocking other attacks.

Though only two hundred strong, the wokou fought with suicidal tenacity. Xiao Ming could feel that these were battle-hardened veterans.

But sheer numbers and superior gear made a difference. Before long, most of them were dead or dying.

Suddenly, the sound of another battle came from the south of Yutai Village.

Xiao Ming looked up to see Dengzhou's army banner fluttering—it was the reinforcements.

The remaining wokou realized they were surrounded. With solemn expressions, they gathered together and drove their katanas into their own stomachs.

“Your Highness, Dengzhou’s Commander Ye Qingyun reports—apologies for arriving late!” A middle-aged general hurried forward and knelt before Xiao Ming.

“You should be ashamed!” Xiao Ming roared. “Yutai Village was under attack, and you come this late?”

Ye Qing replied, “Your Highness, the moment we heard of the wokou presence, I gathered troops and marched here. But Dengzhou has no cavalry—we had to come on foot. I was burning with anxiety the whole way.”

Xiao Ming sighed heavily. At that moment, the sound of sobbing echoed nearby. Looking over, he saw Yue Yun weeping bitterly as he held the body of an elderly woman.

Xiao Ming recognized her—Yue Yun’s mother. His heart ached.

Nearby, over thirty sailors from Yutai Village were searching through the bodies, trying to find their family members.

Crying gradually filled the air of Yutai Village.

The other sailors looked solemn and sorrowful. Scenes like this were all too common. In Dengzhou, which relied on fishing, who didn't have a loved one taken by the wokou?