

## I. Dynasty 306

### Chapter 306: Yue Yun's Ordeal

“Your Highness, I’m not thinking about that. I’m just wondering... now that the Qingzhou Army has engineers, logistics troops, and even a navy—these are military branches the Great Yu Empire never had before. But you seem so confident in reforming the army. I just don’t understand.”

Xiao Ming smiled. The Great Yu Empire’s military system was still stuck in the age of swords and spears. Now that he was shifting to the age of firearms, of course many people opposed it.

But Xiao Ming had no choice. Western armies were already using firearms and had started organizing professional engineer and logistics units.

He was simply trying to catch up.

He said, “Back in Chang’an, I explained to Father about where cannons came from. The idea to reform the army also came from warnings by a Western missionary. The Great Yu Empire is no longer a powerful nation. We’re poor and weak, easy for foreigners to bully. If we want to rise again, we must dare to reform. Shang Yang changed laws when the Qin was in danger—now it’s the same situation.”

Pang Yukun stayed silent. It was Xiao Ming who had developed cannons in a time of crisis and used them to defend Cangzhou City.

He suddenly realized his knowledge couldn’t keep up with this prince of the Great Yu Empire. Perhaps the things he worried about were just petty in Xiao Ming’s eyes.

And facts had shown Xiao Ming’s actions were correct. After hesitating, Pang Yukun decided to trust him.

"I was overthinking it. This reform affects a lot of things, but I believe Your Highness is doing this for the people of your territory," Pang Yukun said seriously.

Xiao Ming nodded. "I feel at ease knowing you trust me. I just don't want officials and generals coming to the palace to argue and slow me down."

Pang Yukun laughed. Xiao Ming was clearly worried he'd once again lead a group of officials to stop the reforms, just like he did in Chang'an.

Back then, he'd strongly opposed such dangerous changes—no wonder Xiao Wenxuan disliked Pang Yukun so much.

"Things are different now. You are a wise ruler!" Pang Yukun said, his eyes showing a deeper meaning.

Xiao Ming immediately sensed it. He looked at Pang Yukun, who only smiled back.

In Pang Yukun's eyes, Xiao Ming saw hope—the kind of hope loyal ministers have when they ask a worthy prince to fight for the throne.

Maybe Pang Yukun never dared think like this before. But now that Qingzhou was growing strong, he couldn't be sure what other officials and generals were thinking either.

Realizing he may have said too much, Pang Yukun suddenly changed the subject. “Your Highness, it’s been over a month since Yue Yun set sail. I wonder how he’s doing?”

“Yes,” Xiao Ming replied, worried. He was most concerned about Yue Yun’s fleet. Were they alive or dead?

At that very moment, Yue Yun—still sailing on the sea—sneezed.

A sailor came up behind him and said, “Captain, the red-haired foreigner has woken up.”

“Call the translator,” Yue Yun said as he rubbed his nose and looked out at the ocean.

Since leaving Dengzhou, they had been heading toward the Strait of Malacca. Along the way, they encountered many pirates. But each time, they used cannons to destroy them.

However, the further west they sailed, the more dangerous the pirates became. Some even had ships with cannons.

This shocked them. To complete Xiao Ming’s mission, they avoided fighting when possible.

The pirates also didn’t want to attack them—they were heavily armed and not worth the risk.

Aside from pirates, they also saw many broken warships drifting on the sea. Today, they saw more than ten wrecked sailing warships.

Dead bodies floated everywhere. These people wore strange red clothes and looked different from people of the Great Yu Empire.

At that moment, Yue Yun truly understood that Xiao Ming wasn't just making things up—there really were Western nations out there.

These foreigners also had sailing warships, cannons, and even strange stick-like weapons.

Passing through what seemed to be a battlefield at sea, they had fished up many odd objects. That stick-like weapon was one of them.

Inside the cabin, Yue Yun saw the now-awake Westerner.

The translator arrived too. He and Yue Yun exchanged a glance, and the translator asked a question in English.

The man in the red uniform replied quickly.

“What did he say?” Yue Yun asked eagerly.

“He said he’s from Great Britain, part of the Third Fleet, and is a navy officer. They were attacked by the Dutch in this area. He’s asking if we can take him to the nearest colony in India.”

Yue Yun began to sweat. He picked up the stick-like object and asked the translator, “Great Britain—isn’t that the England His Highness talked about? Ask him what this thing is.”

The translator spoke again, then looked strangely at Yue Yun before replying, “He said it’s a flintlock gun. If you like it, he can give you many, as long as you take him to India.”

Yue Yun’s heart sank. Xiao Ming had told him about many things before they set sail—and now all of it was proving true.

“Tell him we can take him to India, but he has to answer some questions,” Yue Yun said, handing the translator a booklet with questions written by Xiao Ming.

The translator asked the questions one by one, and the British officer answered without hesitation.

After one hourglass of time, the translator returned the filled-in booklet to Yue Yun.

Yue Yun's face turned grim after reading the answers.

He said, "Tell him we don't want flintlock guns. But can he give us seeds of potatoes, peanuts, and corn instead?"

The translator asked, and the British man smiled and answered.

"He said that's easy. There's plenty of food in the colonies of India, including potatoes, peanuts, and corn," the translator reported.

Yue Yun thought for a moment. "Take him to India. If we get what His Highness needs, we'll sail back right away. Ryukyu is now occupied by the Dutch, and the Dutch are also trading with Japan. We have to return and report to His Highness."

Everyone nodded. Their goal wasn't to explore the world—it was to gather information.

Now that they had what they needed, there was no point in continuing the voyage. The further they went, the more dangerous it became.

They had to protect Qingzhou's only three galleons.