

I. Dynasty 308

Chapter 308: Flintlock Test Fire

The ocean waves slammed against the sides of the giant galleons. Strong winds howled around them.

In the distance, a dark cloud was approaching—a storm was on the way.

“Tch! Our prince doesn’t need support from scheming people like you!”

The translator’s words made Yue Yun spit in disgust.

The truth was now clear: Prince Chu had become a lackey of the Dutch. No wonder he had been acting more arrogant in recent years—he had foreign support behind him.

“What now?” the translator asked Yue Yun.

“Stick to the plan. Have his people trade for him. Both the Dutch and the British are no good.”

Looking at the sea, now dark under the clouds, Yue Yun felt heavy-hearted. Everything matched what Xiao Ming had taught them in the academy.

The Western powers were already pushing their influence into the Great Yu Empire. According to Wilson, flintlock rifles were already standard in the West, and sailing warships roamed the entire world.

In contrast, the Dutch had already given matchlock guns to Prince Chu's territory. That was serious—enough to deal a fatal blow to Prince Chu in court.

With a sigh, Yue Yun looked at the map, hoping Prince Qi had already started producing flintlocks in Qingzhou.

A loud crack echoed across the testing field—like firecrackers exploding.

Cheers broke out as the test concluded.

Xiao Ming stood on the field, holding a brand-new flintlock rifle, still smoking at the barrel.

It had a brown peachwood stock, a gleaming silver firing mechanism, and a long bayonet fixed to the barrel. The gun barrel was 107 cm long, with a .75 caliber and a total weight of 4 kg, including a 60 cm bayonet.

While they were also working on planting cotton these past few days, the first barrel had been completed. Zhang Liu rushed it to the military workshop.

With all the other parts ready, Song Changping assembled it on the spot—the first flintlock was born.

Xiao Ming, upon hearing the news, rushed over. Lu Tong brought the ammunition as well.

“Your Highness, where did that bullet go?” Chen Qi asked, staring into the distance, unsure what Xiao Ming had aimed at.

“No idea,” Xiao Ming said, pleased as he admired the rifle. “The flintlock isn’t very accurate. Its power comes from firing in volleys. I don’t know where that bullet flew.”

Although Song Changping’s team had managed to build the flintlock, they had no idea how to use it until Xiao Ming arrived. It turned out to be not that different from cannons, just with a flint mechanism at the back.

“So it’s worse than a bow?” Chen Qi frowned. “Why bother making this thing? It’s better for Song to help me make more cannons.”

Song had taken many workers to build muskets, which annoyed Chen Qi. Now seeing their poor accuracy, he tried to make his point.

“You may know how to make cannons, but you don’t know how wars are fought. The flintlock is far more important. I plan to use it to drive out the barbarians.” Xiao Ming gently stroked the weapon.

Now that the flintlock was finally in production, Xiao Ming felt relieved—Qingzhou had just narrowed the gap with the West.

They were still talking excitedly about the gun when the sound of hooves thundered outside.

Niu Ben and Lu Fei arrived.

“Your Highness, the flintlock is done?” Niu Ben asked eagerly.

Xiao Ming nodded and tossed them each a rifle.

“Your Highness, this thing could replace a spear!” Lu Fei exclaimed, first noticing the bayonet.

Niu Ben nodded. “No wonder you said to disband the spearmen. These riflemen are basically new spearmen.”

“Now you understand. Flintlock soldiers are both ranged and close-combat fighters. When enemy cavalry charge, they shoot from afar. Up close, they can fight with bayonets. They won’t be slaughtered so easily anymore.”

Niu Ben’s eyes lit up. “Your Highness, how do we use it?”

Xiao Ming smiled, then turned to Chen Qi. “Set up a suit of armor 80 meters away.”

That was about the flintlock's maximum effective range.

Chen Qi obeyed and placed the armor at the far end of the range.

Then Xiao Ming turned to Niu Ben and Lu Fei. "Stand beside me and follow my lead."

He handed each of them ammunition.

Though puzzled, they followed his instructions.

Xiao Ming stood the gun upright, bit open the cartridge, and poured the gunpowder and ball into the barrel. Then he used a ramrod to push it down tightly, sprinkled powder in the flash pan, raised the gun, and aimed.

Niu Ben and Lu Fei copied his every move.

"Fire!" Xiao Ming ordered.

They pulled the triggers. The rifles cracked, smoke puffed out—their first shots.

But Niu Ben and Lu Luo had poor form; they almost dropped their guns.

“That kick is strong.” Lu Fei muttered. He wasn’t as awed as the first time he saw cannons—he just thought it was like a smaller version.

“Did I hit it?” Lu Luo asked excitedly.

Niu Ben looked hopeful too—they had high expectations.

But the scouts returned quickly: no hits.

“That can’t be. I aimed carefully!” Niu Ben protested.

Xiao Ming didn’t comment. “Second round of fire.”

Niu Ben and Lu Fei scratched their heads and reloaded.

“Hit!” a scout called out on the second round, bringing back the armor.

The bullets had gone clean through.

Though the flintlocks weren't as accurate as bows, the power was undeniable. Seeing the hole in the armor, Niu Ben fell silent.

"Old General, maybe you're unimpressed by the accuracy. But I didn't bring you here to show off that."

Xiao Ming turned to Chen Qi, Song Changping, and Zhang Liu. "You three—give it a try."

The three eagerly took the rifles and took their places.

"Old General, you've fought in countless battles, and your archery is unmatched. But now, even someone like Chen Qi, who's never touched a blade, can shoot and kill a seasoned barbarian cavalryman at this distance with a flintlock."

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The three fired.

"Hit!" the scout reported again.

Niu Ben's face darkened.