

The Battle of Shatizu Castle

A samurai walked by a crack in a hut. Even though he was one of the best guards at the castle, he never would have seen the two eyes looking out from the crack. The samurai never knew what hit him. "All clear," whispered the black figure. Another similarly dressed figure dropped from a nearby building. Despite the two story fall, the smaller man was unfazed. The two ninjas crept toward the next guard. A quick swipe from a sedative-tipped whip sent the man falling to the ground. The second ninja easily climbed up a wooden hut, then let down a rope. The first ninja, whose name was Chen slowly pulled back a bow that had been strung across his back, an arrow whizzed towards the main outpost. The second ninja, Shantou dove towards the rope previously tied to the arrow, Shantou grabbed the rope and used it, along with climbing claws attached to his boots, to walk to the stone tower. Once in, Shantou quietly pulled up the rope, tied another length onto it and shot a second arrow back to Chen. The two ropes formed a crude tightrope. Chen carefully walked across the rope to the tower. The two ninjas exited a moment later, Chen carrying a scroll in his hand. Chen's dual katanas and Shantou's knock out whip made short work of anyone else in their way. Soon an alarm was sounded. No one knew what had happened.

That's why these two were the best at what they did. At a time when Japanese nobleman fought over land, power and money, ninjas found their place in battling the elite samurai.

A few days later a royal messenger arrived at Chen and Shantou's bamboo home. "The emperor wishes for you to appear before him," the snooty messenger said. Chen was speechless "THE emperor? The emperor of Japan?" Shantou exclaimed.

"He desires you to come to the palace tomorrow," the messenger continued. Working for nobleman was impressive but being requested by the Emperor was unheard of.

The next day, the two warriors were shown to the throne room. Unlike the messenger and despite being thought divine, the Emperor was friendly and approachable.

“As you two probably know,” the Emperor began, “Samurai bandits have been raiding Japan’s most important cities. This is too big to be random. It has to a conspiracy. At least that’s what my advisors tell me. A spy that was in Osib’s Shatizu Castle saw Osib receive a piece of parchment. The informant believes this scroll contains information on making the Chinese black powder. If Osib and his bandits are able to make this mysterious powder, all of Japan would be conquered. The parchment is needed if Japan is to survive these barbaric attacks. Also of great importance to me personally... they have taken my daughter,” the Emperor finished sadly.

Chen understood their mission instantly “You want us to infiltrate Shatizu castle and bring back that parchment, as well as rescue your daughter, if she’s in there.”

The emperor smiled. “Yes, just one more thing.”

Chen looked at him curiously, “What sir?”

“I thought you might need some help,” the Emperor said, “So I requested for another ninja to join you.”

“Begging your pardon sir,” said Chen, “but we don’t need any help from an-“
BANG! The rest of Chen’s sentence was cut off by a small explosion. “What was that?” Shantou cried. A hand tapped Chen on the shoulder; he spun around to find a ninja dressed exactly like himself. The Emperor smiled, “This is Xantu he has some of the newest technology, such as the mysterious exploding powder and a more powerful bow called a crossbow taken from Chinese troops.” Xantu held up a bag and a strange device. “Alright,” Chen agreed.

The next night, a rough looking man walked back and forth on the drawbridge of Shatizu castle. Shantou silently slipped under the drawbridge and, clinging to the bottom of the rough timbers of the drawbridge, made his way across. Chen dove into the water without making any sound to alert the bandit. Xantu didn’t bother with being as stealthy; a speeding arrow flew from the shadows and went clean through the guard’s neck, killing him instantly. Another guard came walking up at the furthest reach of his patrol, seeing

his downed partner, he sucked in air to yell an alarm but was knocked out by Chen.

“Who taught you to be stealthy,” Chen scolded.

“Sorry,” Xantu whispered, “I’m just not a monkey like him,” he continued looking toward Shantou. Xantu threw a grappling hook up onto the castle wall. The three ninjas climbed up the stone wall. Two guards spotted Shantou’s head and started shouting, Shantou swiped with his whip and both guards went down. “Oops,” Shantou said to the other ninjas down the wall. “I hate when they see me. Let’s get a move on,” he continued to his partners.

Xantu threw a small pouch with a spark dancing on top onto a different wall. “That’ll confuse ‘em,” he said confidently. An explosion similar to the one Chen had experienced when he met Xantu pulled most of the guards to the wrong wall. Three enemy Samurai had to be sliced by Chen’s swords. “Don’t you have anything for short range?” Chen inquired of Xantu. Xantu pulled out a double sided sword with a grip in the center of the two blades. Xantu wielded the exotic weapon like a Bo staff. “That will do” said Chen. Chen reiterated his plan quickly, “I’ll check the dungeon; Shantou will get the paper; Xantu will distract the rest of the guards; We’ll meet at the drawbridge.” Xantu jumped off the wall and stabbed down with his strange weapon to slice through another opponent, then ran into a mass of villains, swinging left and right. Chen and Shantou looked after the brave ninja. “That wasn’t exactly what I had in mind,” Chen remarked.

Shantou ran to Osib’s quarters of the castle, jumped up to a window, and pulled himself in. A chest sat in the corner. Surprisingly Osib was alone. Osib pulled his Wakizashi, a small sword, from its scabbard when he saw Shantou enter. The commanding ruffian swung his Wakizashi at the seemingly unarmed intruder. Shantou was already sliding on the ground at the man and swept Osib’s legs out from under him. The leader bandit dropped his Wakizashi but drew a tanto, a small dagger. Shantou swung his trusty whip but got it cut in two for his effort. The evil bandit smiled wickedly as he

stabbed at Shantou. Shantou stepped aside and elbowed the villain, knocking him out. Shantou found a key around the man's neck and inserted it into the chest. With a click, the chest was unlocked. Some bags of gold and a scroll were inside. As Shantou reached for the scroll a footstep alerted him to the waking of his earlier adversary. Shantou grabbed a bag of gold and swung it at the dastardly warrior, knocking him out again. Shantou grabbed the scroll and part of his whip and hopped out the window.

Amazingly, Xantu was still alive, he had managed to climb up on a thatched roof and was shooting down guards with his crossbow and cutting through others with master skill. Shantou ran into the fray and started making his way towards Xantu.

Meanwhile, Chen was running through the underground dungeon, cutting through any guard in his way with his two katanas. After checking several cells, he found a cell at the end of a hall guarded by six well armed enemies. After considering his options, Chen attacked. Surprise being on his side, he managed to cut through two guards before the rest counterattacked. Chen blocked with one blade while slicing through ruffians with the other. After three more had fallen, Chen easily spun and cut through the last guard with both katanas. Chen broke the cell lock with two strokes. Inside was a young girl cowering against the wall. As soon as she saw his sword, the small girl began to claw and kick at Chen. "Whoa, whoa," Chen said, trying to protect himself from the furious assault. "I'm trying to help!" The girl stopped and looked at Chen curiously. "I was sent by your father to rescue you," Chen continued. The girl got to her feet and followed Chen out of her cell. Just before she left her cell a series of explosions on the topside sent her scuttling back to her cot. "Don't worry," Chen said, "It's just one of my friends."

"For a ninja, he's not very sneaky," came the response. Chen smiled.

When the two arrived on top it was chaos. Guards were surrounding a hut with explosions forming randomly in the crowd. "Not very sneaky about does it," muttered Chen. After tucking the princess in an alcove, Chen charged into the crowd, swinging. "How'd you do?" Shantou called.

“Good!” Chen yelled back, “Xantu did his job pretty well, let’s go.” Xantu threw a smoke bomb where they were standing and the three jumped off the hut and sprinted to where the princess was hiding. Then the foursome ran out the castle. “Go ahead Shantou. Take the princess and the parchment and go. You can’t do any good without a weapon,” Chen called. Shantou complied as Xantu and Chen spun on their pursuers and began cutting them down. Xantu signaled to Chen that he was going to throw a smoke bomb and for Chen to get up in a tree.” Chen nodded and then stabbed another villain. HISSSSS. Smoke leaked out of the ground in front of Xantu and quickly enveloped the two ninjas. After several minutes, the smoke cleared. The heroes were concealed in a tree. Most of the henchmen began to look elsewhere for the ninjas, unfortunately a few stayed.

Those who lingered were staring at the sky, staring at the ground, in general, staring at everything. What were these fireballs that appeared out of nowhere? Where did the smoke come from? How did their quarries disappear? After a few hours, Xantu saw that their rivals had no intention of leaving. He impatiently launched an arrow. A sharp-eyed foe saw where the arrow must have come from and started yelling and pointing at the two ninjas. Some of the bandits pulled back bows but their arrows hit only tree and air, Xantu and Chen were already on the ground once again on the attack.

Osid’s other men were drawn to the commotion. After the fight at Shatizu castle and then hiding motionless, Xantu and Chen were weakened.

The enemy was just starting to overwhelm the two, when the welcome sound of a whip cracking caused some of the outlaws to look around. Shantou leapt out of the forest, whip in hand. “I met up with the Emperor’s elite samurai.” The criminals didn’t stand much of a chance even though they were only surrounded by the three.

With Shantou arrival, Chen and Xantu were revitalized. After a short fight, most of Osid's men were either dead or knocked out on the ground. The ninjas snuck through the trees and made it back to Tokyo before midnight.

The Emperor and his daughter looked quite pleased when Chen, Shantou, and Xantu appeared completely unscathed. "That parchment you retrieved contained the formulas for the mysterious black powder. You have staved off Osid's plan. You have proven that you are the three best warriors in all of Japan."