

if the walls of
**MELAKA SHOULD
CRUMBLE**

EDHAM KAIZER





IF THE WALLS
OF MELAKA
SHOULD
CRUMBLE ...

(Jika Roboh Kota Melaka ...)

To PERDANA LIBRARY
- fond respect
Zakie
(Edham Kaizer)

A Slow Burn Historical Novel

by

Edham Kaizer



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IF THE WALLS OF MELAKA SHOULD CRUMBLE...

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PERDANA
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*Jika Roboh Kota Melaka
Papan di Jawa Saya Dirikan
Jika Sungguh Bagai Dikata
Badan dan Nyawa Saya Berikan*

If the Walls of Melaka Should Come Apart,
The Woods of Java Shall Replace the Ramparts,
If the Words You Speak are True,
I'll Surrender My Body and Soul to You.

~

Mustaqim to Wan Zaiton
Melaka, August 1511



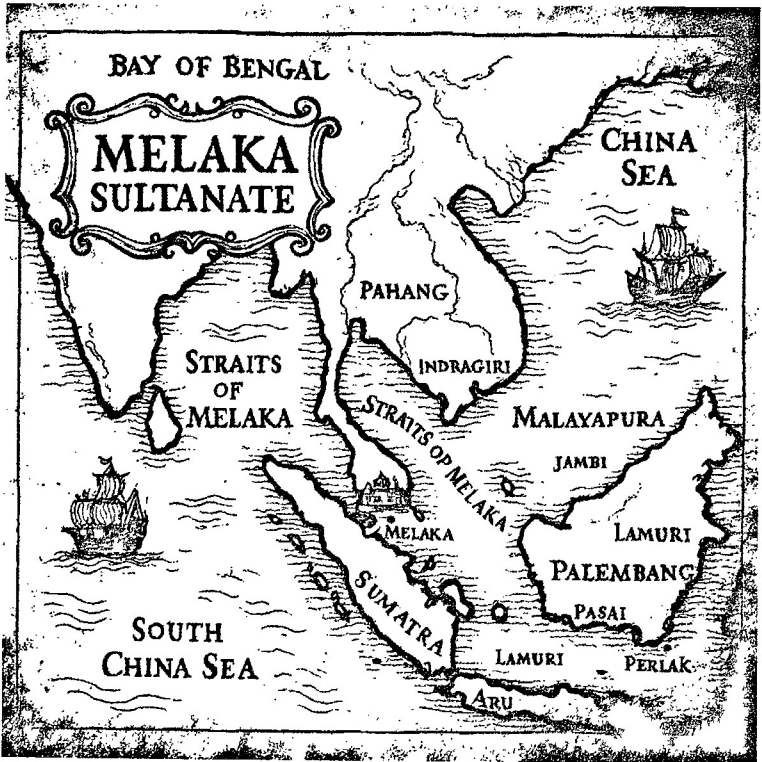
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Melaka: A Historical Context

During the 15th Century, spices – in huge demand for flavouring food dishes and use in medicine – came to Europe via the Middle-east land and sea routes. The search for direct access to the extremely lucrative Eastern spice trade was one of the major motivating factors in the European Age of Exploration.

Since the beginning of 1500 and onwards, first Portugal and consequently other European powers attempted to control the Eastern spice trade, the ports which traded in these spices, and eventually the territories which cultivated them. The Portuguese maximized their superiority in shipbuilding and weaponry to muscle in on the spice trade as they lacked in goods for exchange that the Arabs, Indians and Persian desired.

In 1509, at the Battle of Diu, the mighty Portuguese Armada defeated the Mamluk Egyptian fleet and the Gujaratis in a fierce naval battle at the island port of Diu, India, establishing Portuguese trading control (Estado da India) in the Indian Ocean. Later in the same year, Diogo Lopes de Sequeira, a Portuguese sea-faring fidalgo (nobleman) visited Melaka to establish a trade pact.

Melaka was by then, a significant trade centre, acting as the chief port for Indian cloth, Moluccan spices, Chinese silk and porcelain.

Melaka was founded in the 14th Century by Parameswara - a prince of the Srivijaya Empire in Sumatra. He fled to Melaka from Singapura when it was attacked by the Majapahit Empire of Java and the Ayutthaya Kingdom of Siam.

He established a trading port at the mouth of the Melaka

River which expanded to occupy the northern coast of Sumatra and the Malay peninsula, on either sides of the Straits of Melaka. Melaka then quickly became a hub for merchants from China, India, the Middle East, and beyond.

The Straits of Melaka's strategic location connects India's Bay of Bengal coastline to the China seas. It is a busy maritime highway for sea-faring traders that connects trade between the East and the West. Arabs, Chinese, Indian and Persian merchants flocked to Melaka to do business there. It was also a place for Bugis and Acehnese pirates who preyed on unsuspecting ships that ply the Straits.

The Melaka Rulers' ability to regulate the conduct of sailors and merchants – both in the city and aboard their ships – made Melaka a desirable place to do business compared to many older ports at the time.

By the late 1400s and the early 1500s, Melaka had burgeoned into a significant trading centre, acting as the chief port for Indian fabrics, Chinese silk and fine porcelain as well as Moluccan spices.

It was a cosmopolitan city inhabited by people from as far as Burma (Arakan and Pegu), China, India, the Middle-east and the surrounding islands of the Malay Archipelago. It was a place where as many as 84 languages were spoken. The population of Melaka then was estimated to be between 30,000 and 100,000 – a city big enough to be known as the “Jewel of the East.”

However, Melaka's prosperity made it a target for European powers hungry for the lucrative spice trade. They came in the name of the Church, Gold and Country (Deus, Oura e Gloria).

The Portuguese, led by Afonso de Albuquerque, launched a massive assault on Melaka in 1511. Armed with a formidable fleet of 18 war galleons equipped with state-of-the-art naval artillery and 1,800 men, they overwhelmed the city's defenses and took control. This naval victory marked the beginning of European colonialism in Southeast Asia and had far-reaching consequences for the region.

The fall of Melaka also disrupted traditional trade

networks and introduced new trade practices and technologies. Additionally, the Portuguese introduced Christianity to the region and destroyed many cultural and religious sites.

Despite the conquest, Melaka remained an important centre of trade and commerce throughout the 16th and 17th centuries. Its strategic location continued to attract merchants and traders from Europe, Asia, and the Middle East.

This book is inspired by historical records and is a novelization of the events leading to the fall of one of the greatest commercial centres of the region in the 16th Century.

Prologue

“Today, I heard whispers of a fabled city far to the east—a place called Malaca. The merchants of Arabia and Gujarat spoke of it with awe, describing it as a jewel of the seas where the wealth of the Orient converges. They say Malaca is a bustling port unmatched in grandeur, where the finest silks of Cathay, the spices of the ilhas Molucas, and the rarest gems of Ceilao are traded. It is a meeting point for ships from every corner of the world—Chinese junks, Javanese vessels, and Arab dhows—all seeking fortunes in its thriving markets. Yet, beneath their reverence lies caution, for they warn of a powerful sultan who rules with strength and cunning, alliances forged in gold and steel, and pirates who prowl its surrounding straits.”

“If Malaca truly exists, it is more than a mere port—it is a gateway to the riches of the East, a prize that many covet but few dare challenge. Portugal’s mission to dominate the spice trade must look beyond the shores of Estado da India to such places.

Though I cannot yet sail to its harbours, the very thought of Malaca fills my imagination with both wonder and ambition. Perhaps one day, ships under the banner of our king will enter its waters, and its wealth will flow to Lisbon. For now, it remains a distant dream, carried by the winds of the monsoon and etched into my mind as a future beacon for our nation’s endeavour.”

The Journal of Vasco da Gama

31st August 1498 – Calicute, Estado da India

CHAPTER 1:

LISBON

Lisbon, winter 1506 – The Whisper of Melaka

The heady scent of salt and wine thickened the air inside the dimly lit tavern. Smoke curled from smoking pipes, coiling like ghosts above the heads of sailors, merchants, and wayward noblemen. Candles flickered against the damp stone walls, their golden glow dancing over faces hardened by the sea.

At a corner table, near the great oak barrels of Madeira, a group of men huddled close. Their voices were low, but the name passed between them carried weight.

“Melaka.”

The sound of it stirred the room like the distant toll of a bell. Duarte da Silva, seated alone in the shadow of a pillar, lifted his gaze from his untouched cup of wine. He had heard the name before, in Aden and in Cairo, whispered among traders and dreamers alike. But here, in the heart of Lisbon, it had a different tone—one laced with hunger for adventure and conquest.

Duarte, a seasoned seafarer with a penchant for danger and adventurer, leaned closer to hear their whispers.

“The jewel of the East,” murmured a man with a weathered face, his fingers tracing the rim of his tankard. “Gold, spices, silk—more wealth than all of Portugal’s coffers combined.”

A younger man, dressed in fine but travel-worn garments, whispered conspiratorially. “And weak,” he added, “A kingdom fattened by its own riches, defended by a sultan who believes in trade over steel.” There was a short silence of disbelief at first, and then laughter rumbled through the group, but

beneath it all was something shrewder. A plan forming. A storm brewing.

Duarte watched, silent, his fingers tightening around the stem of his goblet. He had heard whispers in enough ports to know when the tide was shifting.

And tonight, in a tavern far from the Indian Ocean, the tide whispered Melaka's name.

Lopes and Duarte - Intrepid Adventurers

Spring, 1507. The grand library of Lisbon was comfortably quiet, interrupted only by the muted rustle of pages and the occasional murmur of scholars deep in study. Sunlight filtered through high, arched windows, casting long beams across shelves lined with leather-bound tomes and ancient scrolls.

In a secluded corner, two seasoned seafarers, Lopes de Sequeira and Duarte da Silva, sat hunched over a large oak table, surrounded by maps, charts, and books.

Friends since their younger days at the prestigious *Ordem de Cristo*, they were trained to join the Portuguese overseas expansion efforts. Sons of prosperous Fidalgo families, they complemented each other in their pursuit for adventure - Sequeira thrives on planning and strategy, while Da Silva was the master tactician.

"This name keeps appearing," Sequeira said, tapping a finger on a yellowed manuscript. His voice was low but edged with excitement. "Melaka. A city that controls the trade routes between the East and West."

Da Silva leaned forward, his sharp eyes scanning the passage. "Here too," he said, pointing to the faded map sprawled across the table. "It's marked near the equator, by a narrow passage—likely a strait. If this is true, controlling Melaka would give us mastery over the spice trade."

Tracing a paragraph in a book with his finger, he adds. "Here it is again—Melaka. A port that Vasco da Gama himself called the 'Gateway to the riches of the East' upon his return from Calicut. Yet, it remains elusive, more myth than reality to most of us."

De Sequeira leaned back in his chair responded, his tone sceptical. "A myth, perhaps, but one that has teeth, Duarte. Our Viceroy in Calicut Francisco de Almeida's attempt to find it—even sending his friends, Estevao de Vilhena and Francisco Pereira, disguised as Arab traders on a ship—ended in disaster. You've heard the stories, haven't you?"

Duarte nods grimly. "I have. I met Captain De Melo who served in Cochin under Almeida, and he told me what happened. These men were lucky to escape with their lives. Nearly lynched by the locals near the Coromandel Straits when their true identities were discovered. What fools, to think they could disguise themselves as Arabs and passed unnoticed."

Sequeira adds. "Now, Melaka is no ordinary port. This other old book says that it's a melting pot of cultures, traders, and spies. The Arabs, the Chinese, the Gujaratis, the Javanese—they all protect their trade secrets fiercely. A pair of clumsy Portuguese infiltrators strolling in the market? Vilhena and Pereira were doomed the moment they set foot on the docks."

Da Silva pauses thoughtfully. "Still, the alluring tales persist. Da Gama spoke of riches beyond imagination—silks, spices, porcelain, gold—all flowing through Melaka. A single port that ties the East to the West. If we control Melaka, Lopes, we control the spice trade. The Dutch, the Castillians, and the Venetians—they'd have no choice but to bow to Portugal."

He adds. "Da Gama found Melaka's name whispered in the bazaars of Calicut. Perhaps we should do the same—plant our own whispers, use subterfuge and patience instead of muscle. The merchants who've been there know the truth. If we can win their trust—or their greed—we might uncover the city's secrets."

Sequeira gazed at the map in front of him, his expression thoughtful. "True. But patience is not our strong suit, Duarte. Nor is subtlety. We cannot wait forever while the Arabs and the other traders grow fat on their wealth. If we do not act, someone else will."

Da Silva, sounding incredulous. "You're suggesting

Almeida's amateurish farce wasn't such a bad idea after all?"

Sequiera shaking his head. "Not exactly. But a fleet with the right balance of strength and diplomacy might succeed where others have failed. First, we must learn more. Who holds the reins of power in Melaka? Is it the Sultan? The merchants? The Javanese sailors?"

Sequiera smiled. "And who can be bought. Every port has its traitors, its opportunists. If Melaka is as rich and bustling as they say it is, there will be those willing to trade loyalty for gold—or survival."

The room fell silent for a moment as the two men stared at the map and the books around them. Sequiera stretches his tired arms and breaks the silence. "Da Gama's mention of Melaka was brief, but tantalizing. I wonder... did he see something we've missed? Did he hear something more than he let on?"

Da Silva, his tone speculative. "Perhaps. Or perhaps he wanted us to earn the prize ourselves. You know how he was—always the one to dangle the carrot but never hand it over. If he knew more, he's taken it to his grave."

Sequiera, chuckling bitterly. "Typical of the man. But no matter. We'll find Melaka eventually. And when we do, Duarte, it will be the key to Portugal's dominance in the East. The Sultan of Melaka will either kneel before us—or fall to our cannons."

Sequiera adds, his voice deep and deliberate. "We must control Melaka, Duarte. It's the crossroads. The meeting of East and West. Whoever controls Melaka commands the spice routes. It's the key to the Indies, my friend."

Da Silva's eyes glimmered with ambition. "And no one holds the key forever. Tell me, Lopes—how strong is their grip?"

Sequiera leaned back, stroking his grizzled beard. "I hear the sultan's power is no small thing. The city thrives on its diversity—Arabs, Gujaratis, Javanese, Chinese. They've built a web of alliances stronger than any fortress walls. They've even got emissaries in the Ottoman Imperial Court in Constantinople!"

Da Silva smiled cynically; his confidence unshaken. “Alliances can be unravelled. Ports can be taken. If Melaka is what Da Gama claims, we’d be fools not to pursue it. The Portuguese Crown hungers for dominion, and Melaka could feed that hunger for centuries.”

Sequiera’s eyes narrowed, his tone darkening. “Don’t mistake ambition for ease, Duarte. Da Gama may have seen paradise, but paradise has its gatekeepers—and its dangers.”

Da Silva leaned closer, his voice dropping to a whisper. “Then we outwit the gatekeepers. Gold for the greedy, sharp steel for the stubborn. We’re Portuguese, Lopes. The seas bow to us. Melaka will too.”

Sequiera sat back, running a hand through his rumpled hair. “But notice the warnings,” he said, gesturing to another book. “The seas are treacherous, the monsoons unpredictable. And the lands around it are said to be ruled by powerful sultans, protected by fleets of ships. Let us not forget the blood-thirsty pirates that roam the surrounding seas.”

Da Silva smirked. “Sultans or not, this city is the golden key to the prosperous Indies. If Vasco da Gama could chart a path to India, why can’t we go further?”

Sequiera nodded thoughtfully, his gaze drifting toward the towering shelves. “We’ll need more than courage, Duarte. We need allies, provisions, we’ll need royal support from the Treasury - a Royal Commission, and a fleet strong enough to survive the journey, - and whatever awaits us in Melaka.”

The two men fell into silence, their thoughts turning to the monumental task ahead. Outside, the wind carried the scent of the Atlantic, a reminder of the vast unknown waiting just beyond the horizon.

As the sun dipped lower in the sky, Lopes de Sequeira rolled up the map and arranged the books carefully, a flicker of determination in his eyes. “Let’s make our preparations. The court and King Manuel I will see the value in this venture. We’ll find Melaka—or die trying.”

And with that, the two seasoned seafarers stepped out of the library, their hearts set on uncovering the secrets of the fabled city that would soon shape the destiny of empires.

Lopes and Duarte – Their Plan

The tavern near the port had grown quiet, save for the occasional creak of wood and the soft murmur of the few patrons still lingering. The fire in the hearth burned low, casting flickering shadows on the stone walls. At a secluded corner table, Lopes de Sequeira and Duarte da Silva leaned close, their voices muffled by the hum of the dying evening.

Sequeira tapped his fingers against his mug, his brow furrowed in thought. “You understand what’s at stake, don’t you, Duarte? A royal warrant isn’t handed out like a loaf of bread. King Manuel I will demand more than empty promises.”

Da Silva, his sharp eyes gleaming in the firelight, gave a thin smile. “Of course. But the king is a man like any other. He has ambitions, fears, and weaknesses. If we appeal to them, he’ll see that granting us the warrant is in his best interest.”

Sequeira leaned back, crossing his arms. “And how do you propose we do that?”

“Simple,” Da Silva said, his voice low but confident. “We offer him a vision. We paint Melaka as the key to Portugal’s dominance over the spice trade in Asia. Pepper, cloves, nutmeg, silk—wealth beyond imagining, all flowing through our ports. He’ll see the Crown’s coffers overflowing, the world’s trade routes bending to his will.”

Sequeira arched a sceptical brow. “You think gold alone will sway him? The king is no fool. He’ll want assurances—proof we can succeed where others have failed. The manuscripts tell us the Sultan of Melaka is no ignorant tribal chieftain. He rules a fortified city, a hub of alliances stretching from Constantinople to China.”

“This is why we do not offer King Manuel just gold,” Da Silva countered, leaning forward. “We offer fear of loss. Let him imagine the Spaniards seizing Melaka first, or the Dutch striking a deal with the Sultan. The idea of losing the Indies to his rivals will keep him awake at night.”

Sequeira stroked his beard, the faintest hint of a smile tugging at his lips. “Fear is a sharp tool. But we’ll need more. We’ll bring him gifts—spices, silks, and treasures from our

past voyages. Enough to stir his greed. And we must present a plan, one so precise he can't deny its merit."

Da Silva nodded, his smile widening. "A map, detailing our probable route. A list of resources we'll need—ships, men, weapons. And a strategy to take the city. Not just by force, but by exploiting its weaknesses. We must convince him we've already won, and all he needs to do is sign the warrant."

Sequeira chuckled softly, though his gaze remained serious. "You have a silver tongue, Duarte. But remember, the king values loyalty as much as ambition. If we fail, we won't just lose our heads—we'll tarnish Portugal's name."

"Then we won't fail," Da Silva said firmly. "We've sailed farther than most men dare, faced storms and enemies alike. Melaka will be no different. With the king's blessing, we'll carve our names into history."

Sequeira raised his mug, his expression thoughtful but resolute. "To the Indies, then. And to the favour of the king."

A Silva clinked his mug against Sequeira's, his voice brimming with confidence. "To Melaka. The jewel of the East, soon to be ours."

As they drank, the embers of the fire glowed faintly, much like the ambition that burned between them. Beyond the tavern's walls, the winds of destiny stirred, carrying whispers of a city of gold and spices half a world away.

Lopes and Duarte - The Royal Commission

In the grand hall of the Ribeira Palace, its high vaulted ceilings adorned with gilded carvings and tapestries depicting Portugal's maritime triumphs, Lopes de Sequeira and Duarte da Silva stood before King Manuel I. The air was thick with anticipation as the two men prepared to present their bold request.

The king, dressed in a rich crimson robe trimmed with ermine, sat upon his ornate throne, flanked by his advisors and courtiers. His sharp eyes studied the two adventurers as they knelt, holding a rolled map and a collection of weathered manuscripts.



Sequeira was the first to speak, his voice steady but filled with passion. “Your Majesty, we come before you with a vision—a vision of expanding Portugal’s dominion to the East, beyond India, to a city da Gama wrote wrote about, of untold wealth and power. A city known as Melaka.”

Duarte da Silva stepped forward, unrolling the map they had studied so carefully in Lisbon’s library. “Here, Your Majesty,” he said, pointing to the area marked near the equator. “This strait is the gateway to the East. They say Melaka commands it, and with it, the flow of spices, silks, and treasures from China, Arabia, and beyond. It is said that ships from every corner of the world fill its harbours. To possess Melaka is to possess the key to the Indies.”

The courtiers murmured among themselves, and King

Manuel leaned forward, his interest piqued. “And what do you propose?” the king asked, his voice calm but commanding.

“We seek Your Majesty’s royal warrant and funding to mount an expedition,” Sequeira replied. “A fleet strong enough to navigate these uncharted waters, provisions to sustain the journey, and the authority to represent the Crown in forging alliances—or subduing resistance.”

King Manuel’s lips curved into a thoughtful smile. “You paint an enticing picture, Senhor Sequeira. But these are dangerous waters, filled with storms and rivals. What makes you believe you will succeed where others have failed?”

Sequeira spoke with confidence. “Because we have studied the journals of Vasco da Gama and others, Your Majesty, and the maps of the greatest explorers. We know the risks, and we are prepared to face them. With the Crown’s support, we can secure this city for Portugal and bring glory to your reign.”

The king raised a hand, silencing him. “And yet, you ask much—ships, men, and resources. The Crown does not invest lightly, especially in ventures that may stir conflict with powerful rulers. The Sultan of Melaka is no merchant prince; his allies span continents, even to the great Muslim Caliph in Constantinople.”

The hall fell silent as King Manuel pondered the vision presented to him. He glanced at his advisors, some of whom nodded subtly in approval. Finally, he rose from his throne, his presence commanding the attention of all.

“Very well,” the king declared, rising royally. “You shall have my warrant and the resources you need. But understand this—Portugal’s future rests on bold ventures such as these. Bring me Melaka, and you will be richly rewarded.”

Sequeira and da Silva bowed deeply, their hearts swelling with triumph. “We will not fail, Your Majesty,” Sequeira promised.

As they left the hall, the weight of their mission settled upon them. The expedition to Melaka was no longer a dream—it was a royal command, and the destiny of Portugal’s empire now rested on their shoulders.

CHAPTER 2:

THE SANTA CRUZ

Porto de Lisboa

April, 1508. The bustling harbour of Lisbon teemed with life as the final preparations for the expedition to Melaka unfolded. The scent of salt in the air mingled with the earthy aroma of fresh timber and tar, as shipwrights hurriedly secured the last planks and sailors hauled crates of provisions onto the towering ships.

Its cosmopolitan port hands – Jews, Moors, even Africans were busy hauling supplies onto the ships. Merchants and curious onlookers thronged the docks, eager to witness the fleet destined to chart the farthest reaches of the known world.

At the centre of the activity, the mighty carrack Santa Cruz stood tall, her three towering masts rigged with sails ready to embrace the winds of the Atlantic. Painted in bold white and red, her hull bore the Cross of St. George, the emblem of Portugal's ambitions. She was the pride of the fleet, built for endurance and battle, her decks bristling with cannon and her hold packed with supplies for the long journey eastward.

Lopes de Sequeira stood at the quarterdeck, his hands clasped behind his back as he surveyed the harbour with a sense of purpose. Clad in a richly embroidered coat and a feathered hat, he cut a commanding figure, his dark eyes scanning every detail of the preparations below. The success of this expedition would cement the De Sequeira family's name in the annals of Portuguese history.

Duarte da Silva, by his side, leaned over a chart spread across a barrel, consulting with the fleet's navigator. "The

monsoons will be our greatest ally or our greatest foe,” Duarte said, tracing the route toward the Indian Ocean with his gloved finger. “We must reach the Cape of Good Hope by July, before the winds turn against us.” He was already planning for eventualities even before the first sail unfurls.

Sequeira nodded, his gaze turning toward the smaller ships that would accompany them—two caravels and another carrack, each laden with weapons, trade goods, and provisions. “This fleet is not just an expedition; it is a message,” he said firmly. “A message to the East that Portugal has come to claim its place above the great powers.”

Below deck, sailors busied themselves stowing barrels of salted meat, dried fish, hardtack, and casks of wine. Blacksmiths hammered last-minute repairs to the ship’s artillery, while carpenters reinforced the hull against the unknown perils of uncharted seas.

On the docks, priests blessed the fleet, sprinkling holy water on the crews and invoking divine protection for the journey ahead. Families bid tearful farewells to loved ones, while merchants haggled over the price of last-minute goods being loaded onto the ships.

As the sun climbed higher, casting golden light over the shimmering waters of the Tagus River, a trumpet sounded. The harbour fell silent as King Manuel I himself appeared on horseback, flanked by an entourage of nobles. He rode to the edge of the dock, where Sequeira and Da Silva descended to kneel before him.

“Rise,” the king commanded, his voice carrying over the quiet crowd. “Today, you embark on a mission not just for glory, but for the future of Portugal. Bring me Melaka, and with it, the world’s riches.”

Sequeira bowed deeply. “We shall not fail, Your Majesty.”

Returning to the Santa Cruz, Sequeira and Da Silva climbed to the sterncastle. With a nod to the captain, the great ship’s anchor was raised, and her sails unfurled. A loud cheer erupted from the crowd as the fleet began to glide out of the harbour, the Santa Cruz leading the way, her banners snapping in the breeze.

If The Walls of Melaka Should Crumble.

Trade built Melaka. Power threatens to destroy it.

At the crossroads of empires, Melaka thrives—rich, independent, untouchable. But to the Portuguese Crown, she is not a city. She is a prize. Through diplomatic overtures and hidden daggers, through storms and sieges, the battle begins long before the cannons fire.

Spies infiltrate. Loyalties blur. A woman is kidnapped. A traitor speaks. The balance teeters.

From royal courts to bloodied shores, *If the Walls of Melaka Should Crumble...* is a story of ambition, resistance, and the terrible price of empire.

Because some wars are not won with swords.

They're won in silence. And lost in shadows.

A brilliant; passionate and riveting narrative, embellished by intriguing characters and enhanced by painstaking research of historical details. Strikingly graphic and an excellently crafted tour d'histoire... The genius of Edham Kaizer's story-telling lies in his restrained drollery and eye for detail that displays a remarkable maturity and adeptness to imagine the lives of those from the 16th century. Kaizer is the kind of writer who makes you want to grab the person next to you and say "Read this!"

-AISHA RASHID

I am amazed how Edham Kaizer has weaved together the complex events in his storyline together. He made them meaningful with characters that I had invested emotionally in, making the story even more poignant.

Over all, it is a good book that's a must read. Five Stars from me.

-Tan Jit Seng

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