

## I. Dynasty 294

### Chapter 294: Military Uniforms

“Your Highness, something good must have happened these past few days. Why are you so happy?”

Lying back on a rocking chair and enjoying Lu Luo’s massage, Xiao Ming chuckled at her words.

How could he not be happy? They had successfully extracted tungsten! Right now, Zhang Liu at the machinery department was working day and night to refine tungsten. Although the extraction method was rather primitive, they would soon accumulate enough to produce a batch of high-quality cutting tools.

Meanwhile, Song Changping was working alongside Zhang Liu—not to assist with the tungsten, but because the carbon reduction process also produced some manganese powder. Song Changping was using that manganese to produce a manganese-carbon alloy—essentially spring steel.

Of course, theory was one thing; actually synthesizing the alloy was another. Precisely controlling the ratios of elements was no easy task, and it was up to Song Changping to handle the experiments.

Now that preparations for the flintlock musket were underway, how could Xiao Ming not be in a good mood?

“When a man is happy, the whole world looks better,” Xiao Ming said lazily, gazing at the deep blue sky he loved so much—clear and free of smog.

Lu Luo smiled sweetly. His happiness was her happiness. “Your Highness, I have some good news too.”  
“Oh? Tell me.”

“A very skilled woman joined our textile workshop. She’s excellent at both weaving and sewing—much better than I am. At this rate, I might lose my job as workshop supervisor,” Lu Luo said with a sigh.

Xiao Ming teased, “In that case, why not just kick her out?”

“How could I? Your Highness, doing that would chill people’s hearts. I’m not someone who envies the capable,” Lu Luo pouted.

Of course, Xiao Ming was only joking. He just wanted to see her attitude. Like Ziwan, Lu Luo was thoughtful and considerate.

He squeezed Lu Luo’s small hand and said seriously, “I only said it because I care about you.”

“Your Highness...” Lu Luo blushed and whined softly.

Her tender voice almost melted Xiao Ming’s bones. If they weren’t about to marry soon, he might have lost his self-control right then and there.

After a bit of playful teasing, Xiao Ming suddenly remembered Meng Youliang's situation. He hadn't told Lu Luo about it yet—and he didn't plan to. Like Yue Yun said, Meng Youliang couldn't be fully trusted yet. Better to let him eat and rest well in prison for a while longer.

Switching topics, Xiao Ming asked, "Lu Luo, how's the preparation of the military uniforms and shoes for the Qingzhou Army?"

"We've produced three thousand sets of uniforms over the past three months," Lu Luo reported earnestly, "but the shoes are slower to make. Sewing the thousand-layer soles is more complicated."

Since Xiao Ming entrusted her with the textile workshop, Lu Luo had worked diligently, taking his assignments very seriously.

"Three thousand sets—that's good enough. Pack them up today. I'm taking them to the Qingzhou Army," Xiao Ming said.

Besides armor, the Qingzhou Army lacked proper uniforms. These were the very uniforms Xiao Ming had promised them before the New Year.

Now that the flintlock project was on track, it was time for the Qingzhou Army's equipment to evolve too. Although plate armor offered flexibility, it was still less agile than cloth clothing.

Such small differences in mobility could affect the reloading speed of flintlocks. According to his plan, once the Qingzhou Army was equipped with flintlocks, their armor would be redistributed to soldiers from other prefectures.

After all, outside of Qingzhou and Dengzhou, the other four prefectures' armies only had armor for their officers. During his last trip to Dengzhou, Commander Ye Qingyun had escorted Meng Youliang back. When he saw even the ordinary Qingzhou soldiers clad in full plate armor, his eyes had nearly turned red with envy.

After enjoying a relaxing morning, Xiao Ming followed Lu Luo to the textile workshop.

There, he saw the Qingzhou Army's new uniforms.

According to Xiao Ming's design, the left sleeve of each uniform was embroidered with the characters "Qingzhou Army," along with an insignia of two crossed swords beneath golden wheat stalks.

Since he was formalizing the military, the troops needed official insignias. The design symbolized that the army came from the people—and existed to protect the people.

"Your Highness, this is one of the thousand-layer-soled shoes," Lu Luo said proudly, presenting a pair of shoes resembling traditional Beijing cloth shoes.

Xiao Ming picked them up and was struck by a wave of nostalgia. He had worn similar shoes as a child.

The soles weren't made of rubber or plastic, but were thick layers of coarse cloth stitched together until reaching about two centimeters thick.

Even so, in Qingzhou, many couldn't afford such shoes.

The Qingzhou Army's soldiers were all from the lower classes. In this era, only the wealthy could wear thousand-layer soles; the poor could only afford straw sandals.

"Not bad! Very fine craftsmanship. How many pairs in total?" Xiao Ming asked, noticing how much more meticulous the female workers had become since they were paid better wages.

"One thousand two hundred pairs," Lu Luo replied.

At the same time, workers were already loading the uniforms and shoes onto horse-drawn carts.

After verifying everything, Xiao Ming brought the goods directly to the Qingzhou military camp.

At the Qingzhou Army Camp

Among the six prefectures, the Qingzhou Army was the most elite and best-equipped force. They had already proven their strength at the Battle of Cangzhou.

Of course, Xiao Ming prioritized supplying his best troops first—not because he looked down on the other armies, but because resources were limited. He had to focus where they were most needed.

“Your Highness, what did you bring this time?”

As soon as Xiao Ming arrived with dozens of carts, Lu Fei hurried over like a bandit sniffing out treasure.

Seeing Lu Fei’s shoes—worn down to just a few thin layers—Xiao Ming grabbed a new pair of shoes from the cart and tossed them over. “These are for you.”

Catching them, Lu Fei’s eyes lit up. He shouted, “Everyone, come quick! His Highness brought us uniforms!”

The soldiers training on the field were all Lu Fei’s men—about three thousand in total. They immediately surrounded the carts, eyes shining with excitement.

New uniforms! Something they had long dreamed of!

Xiao Ming was about to order Niu Ben to oversee distribution when Lu Fei suddenly shouted, “What are you all waiting for? Grab them quick! If the other officers get here, they’ll claim part of the batch. We’re the closest—we should take advantage!”

“You rascal! Don’t hog everything! These uniforms are for all of us!” another officer yelled as he led more soldiers rushing toward the carts after hearing the commotion.