

## I. Dynasty 84

### Chapter 84: Plate Armor

The newspaper was passed around among the crowd.

Xiao Ming explained, "What you hold in your hands is a newspaper. The role of a newspaper delivery boy is to deliver these newspapers to various towns and counties and read them aloud to the people. This task is simple but also very important. After reading the newspaper, you will also be responsible for gathering the grievances of the people and reporting them back to Qingzhou."

The scholars nodded in agreement. At this moment, Fan Zeng spoke up, "Your Highness, isn't the role of a newspaper delivery boy somewhat similar to that of a censor?"

"Indeed, it is somewhat similar to a censor. However, the grievances you report will be published in the newspaper, and the officials will then respond with solutions, which will also be published. This way, the voices of the people can be heard by everyone, from top to bottom," Xiao Ming said, giving Fan Zeng an appreciative look.

The scholars were astonished. Prince Qi's deep concern for the hardships of the common people left them deeply moved.

Some of the scholars said, "Your Highness is diligent in governance and cares for the people. We should do our part to assist you."

"Yes, I am willing to take on this role as a newspaper delivery boy."

“Exactly, there’s no shame in this. Studying the classics is ultimately for the sake of the people.”

“...”

The scholars in the command headquarters were filled with enthusiasm. Pang Yukun and Xiao Ming exchanged satisfied glances. In truth, both the common people and these scholars had a sense of fairness in their hearts.

In the past, they might have been more cautious, but now, with Prince Qi’s various reforms, they had seen the results firsthand.

However, not all the scholars were enthusiastic. Some remained silent, seemingly uninterested in the role of a newspaper delivery boy.

A few even showed signs of impatience, as if they were waiting for something else.

Xiao Ming noticed their expressions and sneered inwardly. He knew these people were aiming for the Chief Secretary position in the military. But the more they desired it, the less likely he was to give it to them.

These individuals were indifferent to the plight of the common people and would not sympathize with soldiers who came from humble backgrounds. Even if they joined the military, they would act like arrogant officials. Xiao Ming had no use for such people.

Throughout history, those who won the hearts of the people ruled the world. Every one of Xiao Ming's reforms was aimed at winning over the people. Bringing these individuals into his ranks would only undermine his efforts.

Moreover, these impatient scholars were all well-fed and well-dressed, clearly coming from wealthy families, whether large or small.

After a moment of contemplation, Xiao Ming said, "Those who wish to apply for the role of newspaper delivery boy, please stay. The rest may leave."

"Leave? Your Highness, the notice clearly stated that there are also positions for Chief Secretaries," one scholar protested.

Pang Yukun snorted coldly, "What His Highness says goes. When did it become your place to make a scene here? Out!"

The scholar's face turned pale. He flicked his sleeve in anger and stormed out, followed by several others.

After a while, looking at the hundred or so people remaining in the hall, Xiao Ming finally said, "Congratulations, all of you. You may now choose between the roles of Chief Secretary or newspaper delivery boy. However, for the Chief Secretary position, you must pass Chief Secretary Pang's examination. As for the newspaper delivery boys, you can register now and start reporting daily. The pay is one tael of silver per month."

The scholars were stunned, then overjoyed. Many secretly congratulated themselves for not leaving.

“Next, I will examine each of you. Those who pass will be assigned to Bowen Academy as students for a period of time. After passing the exams, you may enter the military,” Pang Yukun said.

The scholars immediately lined up, waiting to be tested.

At this moment, Fan Zeng quietly stepped forward and said to Xiao Ming, “Your Highness, this commoner is too old and will not apply for the Chief Secretary position. However, Your Highness’s words just now have deeply moved me.”

“An old steed in the stable still yearns to gallop a thousand miles. There’s no need for you to belittle yourself,” Xiao Ming said.

Fan Zeng replied, “Your Highness, this commoner has been taking the imperial exams since the age of fifteen and has achieved nothing to this day. Comparing me to Jiang Ziya is too generous. I know my limitations and will be content as a newspaper delivery boy.”

“In that case, I won’t force you. As the saying goes, a melon won’t be sweet if it’s twisted off the vine,” Xiao Ming said. Fan Zeng was indeed too old, and without genuine interest, he wouldn’t be able to fulfill the role of Chief Secretary.

However, in Xiao Ming’s view, Fan Zeng’s age and experience as a scholar made him well-suited for the newspaper office he was about to establish.

After a pause, Xiao Ming said, "If you're willing, could you write about what you observe among the people? If it's good, it could be published in the newspaper."

"Of course," Fan Zeng said.

Xiao Ming nodded. He wasn't entirely sure of Fan Zeng's abilities, so he wanted to test him.

In truth, Xiao Ming didn't place much stock in those selected through the imperial exams. In any era, there were always those with unconventional talents.

With the positions of Chief Secretary and newspaper delivery boy settled, Xiao Ming accelerated the establishment of the newspaper office, paper-making workshop, and printing workshop.

As soon as the buildings in the industrial district were completed, he assigned craftsmen to begin production.

He also selected a location for the newspaper office, temporarily placing it within Bowen Academy.

Just as Xiao Ming was settling into his seat in the command headquarters, a commotion erupted outside. Lu Fei walked in, laughing heartily. As he entered, he said, "Your Highness, I heard the steel workshop has produced a lot of armor. Could I take a look?"

"Hmph, Chen Wenlong told you, didn't he? That man can't keep his mouth shut," Xiao Ming said.

Lu Fei chuckled, “Your Highness, you can’t blame Chen Wenlong. I cornered him and scared him a bit, and that’s when he spilled the beans.”

“I figured as much. Fine, since you’re here, let’s go take a look,” Xiao Ming said, also feeling a sense of anticipation.

Since the steel workshop had expanded and had sufficient manpower, the production of plate armor had begun. Moreover, it was being produced on a large scale using assembly-line methods. A daily output of one hundred sets of plate armor was guaranteed.

Of course, given the backward production conditions, there were still limitations.

When they arrived at the steel workshop, they saw rows of assembled plate armor, gleaming with a silvery-white sheen.

From the helmets to the breastplates, arm guards, and leg guards, each set formed a complete human figure.

This was the advantage of plate armor—it was not only flexible but also provided comprehensive protection, leaving almost no weak points. Combined with the high-quality steel produced by the steel workshop and the repeated hammering of the forging process, the quality of the plate armor was excellent.

“Your Highness, this one must be mine, right?” Lu Fei pointed to a particularly large set of plate armor.

The successfully forged plate armor stood like rows of terracotta warriors. Xiao Ming followed Lu Fei’s finger and saw a set of plate armor that was both larger in size and thicker than the others.

“That’s right, this one is for Commander Lu,” Chen Wenlong said with a smile.

The cold metallic sheen of the plate armor caught Lu Fei’s eye. He gazed at it as if it were a lover and strode over. “Your Highness, may I try it on?”

Xiao Ming nodded and instructed the craftsmen to help Lu Fei put on the plate armor. After all, this was Lu Fei’s first time encountering plate armor.