

## I. Dynasty 85

### Chapter 85: The Effectiveness of Plate Armor

A set of plate armor consisted of many components. With the help of the craftsmen, Lu Fei successfully put on the armor.

Once the helmet was in place, Lu Fei looked like a steel monster. He excitedly walked around in the armor.

“Not bad, very flexible,” Lu Fei said with excitement. “But I wonder if this plate armor can withstand swords and blades.”

“That’s easy to test. Zhao Hu, go ahead and give him a slash,” Xiao Ming said.

Zhao Hu immediately broke into a cold sweat. “Your Highness, this...”

“What are you afraid of? Just do it. Are you a soldier I trained or not?” Lu Fei scolded.

Hearing this, Zhao Hu’s face darkened. He drew the steel sword from his waist and slashed at Lu Fei’s abdomen. With a metallic clang, the blade left only a shallow scratch on the armor. Lu Fei took a few steps back but was unharmed and didn’t even cry out in pain.

“Your Highness, I’m completely fine. Give me a few more slashes!” Lu Fei said excitedly.

Zhao Hu was also amazed. Now feeling more confident, he swung his sword at Lu Fei repeatedly.

Lu Fei kept retreating, but just like the first slash, after several strikes, he only felt a slight discomfort.

Zhao Hu, however, was getting into it. He swung his sword again and again without stopping, until Lu Fei finally kicked him to the ground.

“You brat, look what you’ve done to my precious armor! It’s covered in scratches!” Lu Fei said, heartbroken. Then, with a pleading look, he turned to Xiao Ming. “Your Highness, can I get another set? Look at what this kid did to this one.”

Xiao Ming smirked. “It takes at least thirty taels of silver to produce one set of plate armor. You really have the nerve to ask.”

“Thirty taels?” Lu Fei exclaimed. “That’s a year’s worth of my salary!”

Xiao Ming was, of course, exaggerating to make Lu Fei value the armor more. However, if the armor were produced using traditional forging methods, it would indeed cost around thirty taels. But with the hydraulic hammer and free labor from slaves, the cost of this set of armor was actually comparable to the price of a plow ox.

“And that’s the low estimate. Your armor is a general’s set—thicker and with more intricate engravings,” Xiao Ming added.

Lu Fei immediately regretted his actions and glared at Zhao Hu. "You're paying for this!"

Zhao Hu protested, "You told me to slash it! Besides, I don't have the money."

Seeing Lu Fei's distress, Xiao Ming decided to stop teasing him. "Fine, considering your contributions in Cangzhou, I'll give you three sets of plate armor."

"Thank you, Your Highness!" Lu Fei was overjoyed.

As he lovingly touched his full-body armor, Lu Fei added, "Your Highness, this armor is truly incredible. It's practically impenetrable. If you give me ten thousand soldiers equipped with this, we won't have to fear the barbarians!"

"Don't speak so carelessly," Xiao Ming said sternly, wanting to prevent Lu Fei from becoming overconfident. "While the plate armor is sturdy, it does reduce mobility to some extent."

Lu Fei moved around a bit and said, "It's a little restrictive, but not too bad. The real question is whether arrows can pierce it."

"Ordinary cast-iron arrowheads won't be able to," Xiao Ming said bluntly. The forging techniques used for his plate armor were roughly equivalent to those of the 17th or 18th century in the modern era. Without specialized arrowheads, the armor would be difficult to penetrate.

In fact, even early firearms couldn't penetrate plate armor. It wasn't until firearms became more powerful that plate armor was eventually phased out.

Xiao Ming was equipping his army with plate armor to deal with the current situation in the Great Yu Empire. Moreover, given the technology he had access to, producing plate armor was faster and cheaper than producing scale armor.

That's why he had chosen plate armor.

"Is that so?" Lu Fei's grin widened, and he couldn't wait to don the armor and go to war.

"Of course, this is just speculation. The true test will come in battle," Xiao Ming said. This was his honest opinion. Only through war could the effectiveness of any equipment be truly determined.

Lu Fei, however, was too enamored with the high-quality armor to fully process Xiao Ming's words. "Your Highness, I'll take these three hundred sets of plate armor back to the barracks now."

"Wait, don't be in such a hurry. There's more," Xiao Ming said, waving his hand. The craftsmen brought over a long-handled, long-bladed weapon.

"Your Highness, is this the modao you mentioned?" Lu Fei asked.

Xiao Ming had previously mentioned taking him to see the modao, and Lu Fei had been eagerly awaiting it.

“Exactly. This is the modao, specifically designed to counter the barbarians’ heavy cavalry,” Xiao Ming explained.

Currently, most of the barbarian cavalry on the grasslands were light cavalry, but there were also many heavy cavalry units, which were the elite of the barbarian forces. Typically, the barbarians employed a tactic where light cavalry harassed the flanks while heavy cavalry charged through the center.

This strategy had proven nearly unstoppable against the Great Yu Empire’s armies.

Lu Fei picked up the modao and tested its weight. “Your Highness, this modao is quite heavy. It must weigh at least twenty catties.”

“That’s why, when swung, it can deliver a fatal blow to both man and horse,” Xiao Ming said. The modao was entirely made of fine steel, with a long handle and a blade resembling a spearhead—long, wide, and extremely sharp.

As Lu Fei ran his hands over the modao, he realized that, combined with the plate armor, this weapon would be a nightmare for cavalry in battle formations.

In addition to the modao, the steel workshop had also produced a significant number of spears, swords, and other weapons for the army. For ranged weapons, Xiao Ming had chosen crossbows.

Although crossbows were more expensive to produce and had a slower rate of fire, for Xiao Ming, training a competent archer took at least three years—far too long.

In war, soldiers were expendable. It was a race to see who could field an army the fastest. This was why firearms eventually became the dominant weapon—once one batch of soldiers was lost, another could be trained in just three months.

Crossbows were similar. Compared to bows, soldiers using crossbows didn't require as rigorous training, making them ideal for the current state of the fief.

Moreover, Xiao Ming could address the biggest drawback of ancient crossbows. Generally, crossbows were inferior to bows largely due to their painfully slow reloading speed—a disadvantage that even early firearms couldn't overcome.

Ancient crossbows were often referred to as foot crossbows because they required both hands and feet to reload. However, Xiao Ming had incorporated pulley mechanisms into the crossbows.

This meant soldiers needed less strength to operate the crossbows efficiently.

Currently, these pulley crossbows were still in the research and production phase and hadn't yet been mass-produced in the steel workshop. However, modern technology had proven their feasibility, and it was only a matter of time before they were ready.

After showing Lu Fei the various weapons and equipment for the army, Lu Fei immediately had people transport the gear from the steel workshop back to the barracks.

The new recruits were still wearing their own clothes, indistinguishable from ordinary civilians. With these new weapons and armor, the soldiers finally had something to look forward to.

Chen Wenlong and Xiao Ming watched helplessly as Lu Fei busied himself. This was just the beginning. As the steel workshop became more efficient, the production of plate armor would accelerate, and his soldiers would never again be left without proper weapons or armor.