

# RISE OF THE POOR

## Chapter 11: Who teased whom?

"An Ge'er, you little tiger, what are you looking at?" The great-aunt led several brightly dressed cousins to the doorway. Since women could not enter the ancestral hall, they were only peeking in from the entrance. Just then, they happened to see Zhu Ping'an gazing intently at something above the hall. There was no denying that the cute, chubby little boy with a round face was quite eye-catching.

At first, Zhu Ping'an didn't react when the great-aunt called him. He had been listening to everyone referring to him as "little Zhu" since he arrived, and hearing someone call him "An Ge'er" caught him off guard.

"An Ge'er?" the great-aunt called out again.

Only then did Zhu Ping'an realize she was calling him. "An Ge'er" sounded much nicer than "little Zhu." In the Ming Dynasty, such terms as "Ge'er" and "Jie'er" were quite common in towns, but they were relatively rare in villages. It

was, in a way, a fashionable way of addressing someone. He remembered seeing such titles when reading "Dream of the Red Chamber".

"I was wondering if our ancestors would wave at us from the clouds," Zhu Ping'an turned his head and said earnestly.

In their position, as a child, he could only play his role well.

"Pfft." The 8-year-old cousin from the little aunt's side couldn't help but laugh, her delicate pink hand covering her mouth with a handkerchief. "Is little cousin a fool?"

The little cousin wore a pink pleated skirt, which swayed slightly with her laughter, looking quite pretty, like an innocent little girl just beginning to blossom.

The 12-year-old cousin from the eldest uncle's family waved her hand lightly and playfully flicked the little cousin's forehead, laughing, "Nonsense! How could little cousin be a fool?"

"Children speak without filter; let the wind blow it away." The great-aunt quickly interjected, saying, "Don't say that! An Ge'er is very smart; he's going

to be a top scholar in the future, right, An Ge'er?"

As she spoke, the great-aunt began to tease Zhu Ping'an.

The village children were all dirty, and the city kids didn't have anyone as chubby and cute as him. Such a chubby, fair-skinned little boy was indeed rare.

"Mm, yes," Zhu Ping'an thought for a moment and replied seriously.

Giggling, the cousins laughed even harder, and even the great-aunt was amused by Zhu Ping'an's earnestness.

To them, teasing a chubby little kid was the most fun thing.

They all energetically began to tease Zhu Ping'an, especially the great-aunt, who was particularly enthusiastic. In the city, she couldn't easily tease other people's kids, and the eldest cousin was too serious, much like Da Chuan, making it less fun to mess with him.

"An Ge'er, the great-aunt wants to ask you: which came first, the chicken or the egg?" The great-aunt squatted at the doorway, asking Zhu Ping'an with great interest.

Isn't it true that adults have always used this question to tease children throughout the ages?

The question of whether the chicken or the egg came first is a playful one, similar to the classic philosophical problem of whether a white horse is still a horse. A chicken is a type of poultry, and a chicken egg is the egg laid by that poultry. From a definitional perspective, the chicken is defined first, and then the egg follows. However, if we argue that the chicken came first, we must ask where the chicken came from—it hatched from an egg. This leads us into a circular reasoning loop: which came first? It's a lighthearted game that adults play to tease children.

Being teased can be boring, but pretending to be a little rascal and teasing others is quite another matter. In reality, isn't it similar? In the morning, as you walk your shiny pet dog, do you ever think about your pet's thoughts? "Oh, good morning, Golden Retriever brother and Husky sister! Here I am, taking out the poop-scooping servant again!"

Pretending to be a fool has become a habitual source of amusement for Zhu Ping'an.

Which came first, the chicken or the egg?

"Grandma came first," Zhu Ping'an replied seriously.

A chorus of laughter erupted from the women.

"Why did Grandma come first, An Ge'er?" the great-aunt asked.

"Because whether it's a chicken or an egg, it's all managed by grandma. If grandma bought the chicken first, then we had chickens first. If grandma bought the eggs first, then we had eggs first."

The great-aunt shot Zhu Ping'an an intrigued glance. She had asked many children this question before, and every one of them had been flummoxed by it. This answer was the first of its kind she had heard.

The great-aunt vaguely felt that Zhu Ping'an might be extraordinary in the future.

The little cousins were once again amused by Zhu Ping'an's response. They thought it was funny how he connected the chicken-and-egg question to his grandmother, as if the plump little cousin was adorably silly. They began to tease him back, asking questions like why people have two legs or why ducks have two wings but can't fly.

Zhu Ping'an played along, throwing out silly responses, while internally he felt like a herd of wild horses was galloping through his mind.

"Little cousin, why don't you ask us a question?" the little cousin suggested with a bright idea to tease Zhu Ping'an.

"Big sister, can I not ask?" Zhu Ping'an asked seriously, shaking his head.

"No way! You have to ask!" the little cousin giggled, nodding earnestly.

"Alright then," Zhu Ping'an furrowed his brows, pretending to think hard.

As soon as Zhu Ping'an indicated he was going to ask a question, not only were the little cousins interested, but even the great-aunt leaned in to listen.

What kind of question could a little rascal just out of his toddler years possibly ask? Zhu Ping'an's past adventures with the trouble of not wearing underpants had become a funny story that the Chen family shared, making everyone laugh heartily at the memory.

"Grandpa climbs a tree to pick strawberries. He can pick one basket in a day, two baskets in two days. How many baskets of strawberries can Grandpa pick in three days?"

Zhu Ping'an raised his head and said the question with a silly expression, as if he was racking his brain for a challenging problem.

The little cousins exchanged glances, thinking, 'Look at him, struggling so hard. He probably thinks this is a tough question, but it's so easy. Counting to three is already difficult for him, but for us, it's a piece of cake!'

"Oh, that's so simple! Three baskets of strawberries!"

"Little cousin is so silly! Grandpa can pick three baskets in three days."

The little cousins answered in unison, wearing expressions of boredom, as if the question was too easy to be interesting.

See? This is the difference—it's an IQ crushing moment.

Zhu Ping'an shook his head.

What? That's not right?

The little cousins couldn't understand. Even the great-aunt looked puzzled. Picking one basket in a day and two baskets in two days clearly meant that in three days, he should have three baskets. How could it be wrong? Could it be that this little guy hadn't even mastered addition and subtraction within three?

"What do you mean it's wrong?" the eight-year-old cousin kept pressing.

Zhu Ping'an tilted his head back at a 45-degree angle, rolling his eyes with a hint of childlike arrogance in his tone.



"Grandpa wouldn't pick even one basket!"

Upon hearing this, the little cousins erupted into protests, especially the younger cousin, who exclaimed that it was impossible and accused Zhu Ping'an of making things up.

"What do you mean? How could he not pick even one basket?"

"Yeah, if you say Grandpa is being lazy, that wouldn't be any fun, little cousin."

"Being tricky isn't what a good child does!"

Zhu Ping'an raised his head even higher, looking quite proud of himself.

"Because strawberries grow on the ground, not on trees! So Grandpa can't pick strawberries from a tree."

The little girls exchanged glances, rendered speechless.

Seizing the opportunity, Zhu Ping'an slipped away, wanting to hide his brilliance and avoid any further questioning.