

Rise 117

Chapter 117: Mother Chen

Although Elder Brother Zhu Pingchuan changed his words quickly, he was still scolded by Mother Chen. He became meek and did not dare to say another word.

When Elder Brother saw Zhu Ping'an entering with Father Zhu, he could only keep shouting "Mother, mother... mother..." He was so emotional that he couldn't say anything more.

"Shouting 'mother' a hundred times, you're still an ungrateful wolf. You marry a wife and forget your mother. Your wife hasn't even entered the door yet, and you're already complaining that the food I make is bad..." Mother Chen heard her eldest son continuously shouting for her, but she still hadn't recovered from his earlier remark that the food from the outside restaurant tasted better.

"Mother, I'm back." Zhu Ping'an, carrying a bag, walked into the house with Father Zhu. From a distance, he saw Mother Chen and shouted.

"Weren't you always here?" Mother Chen thought it was her eldest son speaking. Only after saying this did she feel something was off. She quickly lifted her head and looked toward the front door, where she saw her youngest son, carrying his bag, walking wearily inside.

Mother Chen's first reaction was surprise, followed by anger. She hurried up, raised her hand, and slapped Father Zhu Shouyi on the shoulder with a loud smack. At the same time, her sharp voice echoed like a lion's roar.

"Zhu Shouyi, are you blind? Don't you see how much my son has lost weight from hunger out there? He traveled all the way back, and you let him carry his things alone. It's so heavy that he can't even straighten his back! What's the use of you, so big and strong, just for show!"

"Where is he hungry? I think he's actually a bit fatter. Also, I wanted to carry the bag earlier, but it was Zhi'er who insisted on carrying it himself," Father Zhu Shouyi looked at Chen with grievance, covering his arm that had been slapped, but he didn't dare to say anything.

"Mother, I wanted to carry it. It's not Father's fault." Zhu Ping'an quickly stepped forward to defend his father.

When Mother Chen looked at Zhu Ping'an, her gaze was completely different from the cold look she gave Father Zhu earlier.

When she had looked at Father Zhu, her gaze was as cold as autumn winds sweeping fallen leaves.

Now, when she looked at Zhu Ping'an, her gaze was as warm and loving as spring sunshine.

"Zhi'er, don't speak for him. Quickly put down your bag and let me have a good look at you. How come I feel like you've lost weight again? Did you not eat enough outside? I always felt like I gave you too little money when you left. Also, there were rumors a few days ago saying that you were robbed, and it made me worry for so long. If you hadn't had someone send word back, I would have insisted on going with your father to look for you. Oh, wait, why do I feel like you've grown taller? But why are you so dark now..."

"A few days ago, the town was celebrating, saying you came first in the exam and sent ten taels of silver as a reward from the county magistrate... They also said you'll continue studying outside, but I'm not happy with that. There's no place like home. Look at how much better I can feed you every day."

Mother Chen quickly walked up to Zhu Ping'an, took the bag off his back, and forcefully shoved it into Father Zhu's arms. She gave him a sharp glance, then gently pulled Zhu Ping'an to her side to inspect him carefully, as if he had just returned from a battlefield.

Father Zhu held the bag with both hands and stood together with the eldest son, Zhu Pingchuan, both of them sharing a feeling of sympathy. They looked at the gentle treatment Zhu Ping'an was receiving from Mother Chen, and their envy was evident.

It's likely that both of them were thinking, "Why are we all family, yet the difference is so big?"

After checking Zhu Ping'an, Mother Chen rushed to the kitchen, saying she was going to make a bowl of chicken soup to nourish the "skinny and hungry" Zhu Ping'an, and no one could stop her.

"You're back, Zhi(Zhi brother)," Elder Brother said awkwardly, rubbing his hands, then seemingly remembering something, he ran to his room. After a while, he came out of the room holding a honeycomb and then darted back into the kitchen.

"Mother, honey for Zhi," Elder Brother's voice came from the kitchen.

Then, Mother Chen's teasing voice followed, "What's this? Isn't this what you brought back from the mountains to send to your in-laws?"

"There's still plenty in the mountains," Elder Brother's embarrassed voice came next.

In the yard, Zhu Father and Zhu Ping'an exchanged glances. After a moment, Zhu Father spoke, "Go change into some clean clothes in your room. Your mother made you two sets of clothes."

How could I not miss home?

The deep love at home could melt the coldest ice from the North and South Poles, and in that moment, I was immersed in the feeling of being loved and loving in return.

By the time Zhu Ping'an came out wearing fresh, clean clothes, Mother Chen had finished cooking the chicken soup. The rich aroma of the soup filled the air, with mushrooms, vegetables, and ginger slices adding to its color, fragrance, and taste. Mother Chen had also made two other dishes, filling the table with a wide array of food.

Zhu Ping'an ate until he was completely full, so much so that even one more peanut would have made him burst. He had to waddle with his belly full, but even so, Mother Chen still doubted that he had eaten enough.

Before bed, Zhu Ping'an presented the gifts he had selected from the town to Mother Chen and Zhu Father. Mother Chen happily put on the silver ear studs with a smile but grumbled about Zhu Ping'an wasting money. Zhu Father, holding the wine jar, examined it carefully from all sides, a smile also on his face.

As for the gift for Grandfather, that could wait until tomorrow when they went to the old house.

That night, Zhu Ping'an didn't read any books. After a bath, he lay down on the bed, his body tired but full, and began to plan for the next day. He thought he would first visit the old house and then go to his mentor's home... Lying on the bed, not only did his body get rest, but his soul seemed to have found peace and rest too, completely relaxing inside and out. He fell asleep quickly, deeply, and comfortably. Amidst the dust of the world, he found true rest at home.

When he woke up, it was already faintly bright outside. As usual, Zhu Ping'an got up and began practicing calligraphy on the large stone in the yard.

"Zhi'er, why are you up so early? You just came back. Go sleep a bit more," Mother Chen, as usual, was the first to wake up. Seeing Zhu Ping'an sitting in front of the stone and dipping his brush in water to practice calligraphy, she couldn't help but ask with concern.

"No need, Mother. I went to bed early last night," Zhu Ping'an replied with a silly grin.

Mother Chen didn't insist and went to wash up before preparing breakfast.

Soon, the rest of the family got up. They were no longer surprised by Zhu Ping'an practicing calligraphy so early. They had long been used to his unwavering dedication to practicing calligraphy, no matter the weather.

Early in the morning, Mother Chen prepared a large table of delicious dishes. There was the leftover stewed chicken from last night, three hot dishes freshly made, a plate of pickled cucumbers from their own garden, and a pot of fragrant rice porridge.

Zhu Ping'an had greatly missed his mother's homemade pickled vegetables when he was outside. With the pickled cucumbers, he drank three bowls of rice porridge in one go, making Mother Chen very pleased.

After breakfast, the new day began.