

RISE OF THE POOR

Chapter 12: Cheating for New Year's Money

The procedure for ancestor worship is generally quite complicated. As it nears the end, Great-uncle holds the wine and recites: "To the spirit of the Zhu family's official position, may it protect the Zhu family, bestow gracious rains upon the household, oversee the sweeping of the tombs, and bring forth immeasurable gratitude... I dare to present this sweet wine to honor the annual events, to certain relatives and the official spirits, may they partake in the feast." After finishing, he bows three times, pours wine on the ground, and burns paper money.

Great-uncle and Grandfather repeat Great-uncle's actions, but there's no need to read the incantation again. At this point, the ancestor worship ceremony can be considered complete, and everyone returns to the Zhu family courtyard.

The Zhu family courtyard has long since prepared a lavish lunch, setting up three large tables. The largest table is for the men, while the other two tables are for the women and children, with the meals being nearly identical.

The bowls and plates are large and deep, filled with a hearty assortment of dishes: stewed native chicken, braised wild chicken, braised fish, cold mixed black fungus, steamed rabbit meat, braised rabbit meat, and several plates of home-style greens, all paired with a few jars of fine old wine, making it quite mouthwatering.

It truly reflects the saying from an ancient poem: "Do not laugh at the murky wine of the farmer; during a bountiful year, there's enough to host guests with chicken and pork."

When the three branches of the family gather for the meal, the differences are quite noticeable. Great-uncle's family and Auntie's family exhibit significantly better table manners compared to their own.

Not to mention the adults, just looking at the children is enough to tell: Cousin Zhu Pingjun from the eldest uncle's family is eating with a runny nose, gobbling down food like he hasn't eaten in days, smacking his lips loudly, even grabbing meat with his hands from the plate... The children from Great-uncle's family are clearly much better behaved, especially a few of the cousins, who eat with much more decorum, looking quite charming.

After the meal, the adults discuss that since Great-uncle's family will be moving south, it would be better to treat this gathering as a New Year reunion and also to give the children some New Year money for fun.

As for New Year money, Zhu Ping'an didn't know how he got excited, perhaps due to feeling a bit childish himself because of his physical state.

After coming to this world, he had never even touched a single coin. Now that he could receive money, it would be strange not to feel excited. Having money in hand brings a sense of security.

"Happy New Year, Grandpa and Grandma." Zhu Ping'an took advantage of his sweet-talking skills, clasping his little chubby hands to wish the elders a happy new year. Although he couldn't escape the feudal custom of kneeling, after all, showing respect to elders is a beautiful tradition.

Because of his sweet words, Zhu Ping'an received a considerable amount of New Year money from Great-uncle and Auntie's family, especially since each of them also gave him an extra silver ingot. Zhu Ping'an secretly observed that it seemed like Great-uncle and Auntie only gave him the silver ingots, while everyone else received a handful of copper coins; he was the only one who received this special treat.

Grandfather and Grandmother also showed favoritism; Zhu Ping'an saw with his own eyes that Grandmother gave Zhu Pingjun more New Year money than she gave him...

After making the rounds, Zhu Ping'an's pockets were already heavy with New Year money.

At that moment, Mrs. Chen walked over with a smile resembling that of the Big Bad Wolf.

At this moment, Mrs. Chen was thinking: This little rascal, seeing that you just received a lot of New Year money and even a silver ingot, haha, my son is really great; come, give it to your mother.

"Zhi'er, come here, let me keep your New Year money for you. Money is safest with me, and when you want to buy candy, you can come to me for it," Mrs. Chen said, rubbing Zhu Ping'an's little head with a smile, extending her hand.

Looking at Mrs. Chen's wolf-like smile, Zhu Ping'an felt a chill run down his spine.

It seems that the tradition of mothers tricking their children out of their New Year money has remained unchanged for centuries. The tactic employed by his mother, Mrs. Chen, is aptly named "creating something from nothing." It's

simple yet highly effective. Just think about how many naive little kids fall for this trick from their moms every year! The genius of this tactic lies in the phrase "I'll help you keep it safe." This touch is like the finishing stroke of a painting, bringing the trick to life, as countless innocent children willingly hand over their New Year money to their mothers, cheerfully complying.

However, Zhu Ping'an clearly does not belong to that naive category of children.

His response was uniquely inventive and distinctively defiant: "No, I want to save it to marry a wife!"

Zhu Ping'an's words immediately amused all the aunts and uncles present, who laughed at how this little one was already thinking about saving up for a wife at such a young age.

Mrs. Chen was left speechless; it made no sense! This little rascal had been fooled by her for so many years, so why wasn't it working this time? Marrying a wife—how could he even think of that at such a young age? Who taught him this? She turned to glare at Zhu Shouyi.

Zhu Shouyi, who was drinking, ended up being caught in the crossfire; he nearly choked on his wine from the glare from his wife, repeatedly waving his hands to indicate that he hadn't taught him that.

With the "creating something from nothing" tactic failing, Mrs. Chen switched to a more cunning approach, playing the concerned parent.

"Do you know how dangerous it is for a child to have so much money? It's good behavior to voluntarily hand it over," Mrs. Chen said, placing her hands on her hips and intentionally raising her voice.

If it were a typical naive child, at this point, they would probably tear up and admit their mistake, handing over their New Year money.

But unfortunately, Zhu Ping'an was not that kind of child.

"I'll put away the money for marrying a wife right away; I won't keep it on me," Zhu Ping'an waved his chubby paw, indicating that he could manage it himself and that she needn't worry.

Mrs. Chen was left in disappointment again.

Now, Auntie and others were intrigued and gathered around, as almost all the children's New Year money had just been taken away by their parents through various means. Zhu Ping'an was the only one who hadn't been tricked, so they were curious about him.

Zhu Ping'an also noticed that almost all his siblings had had their New Year money taken away by their parents using various tactics.

Just moments ago, Zhu Pingjun was tricked by his aunt with a single sentence: "Let me keep the money safe for you, and I'll buy you new clothes later." As a result, Zhu Pingjun happily emptied his pockets, willingly handing over his warm New Year money.

Little Yu'er was also tricked by her third aunt using a similar method: "Yu'er, dear, how about I trade you two handfuls of sunflower seeds and peanuts for one handful of your New Year money? Isn't that a great deal?"

"Okay, thank you, Mommy!" Little Yu'er nodded adorably, looking like she had struck a good bargain.

Although Zhu Ping'an felt he should also be like the other kids and allow his parents to "trick" him out of his New Year money, money was very important to him. Whether for schooling or as a capital for making money, having some set aside for emergencies was necessary, so he couldn't hand over his New Year money just yet.

Seeing that everyone was watching, Mrs. Chen felt embarrassed to pressure Zhu Ping'an into giving up his red envelope anymore, thinking that she would wait until the relatives left to ask for his red envelope later.

"Okay then, you take care of it yourself. If you lose it, I'll make sure to punish you," Mrs. Chen said, smoothing things over before going to chat with her sisters-in-law.

However, this scene made many people remember Zhu Ping'an; this plucky little fellow was quite interesting.