

Rise 128

Chapter 128: Uncle Comes to Borrow Money

I have been in Yingtian for a week now, and there are less than ten days until the entrance exam. Zhu Pingan's revision has mainly focused on the Four Books and Eight Legged Essays. During this time, he has been interrupted several times by the chubby guy. This chubby guy would often bump his head on the loft stairs, but each time, he would cheerfully say that it was a good omen for passing the exam. Moreover, the chubby guy had good timing, usually coming to find Zhu Ping'an during meal times, so he wouldn't disturb Zhu Pingan's study too much.

One day, while Zhu Ping'an was revising by the window, someone knocked on the door.

Zhu Ping'an thought it was the chubby guy, Xue Chi, so he casually called out, "The door isn't locked, just push it open and come in."

However, something felt off. Zhu Ping'an looked up and saw a person standing behind the shop assistant, tilting their head slightly, looking at him with some confusion.

"Uncle! Why are you here?" Zhu Ping'an thought to himself. He had initially thought that Yingtian was big enough that he wouldn't see his uncle until the entrance exam, but to his surprise, he ran into him so soon. He had always had a bad impression of his uncle, especially after seeing how much effort his grandfather, grandmother, and aunt had put into raising money for his uncle after returning home. This only made him feel more disgusted with him.

Zhu Shouren, his uncle, saw Zhu Ping'an look up and immediately confirmed that the young man in the first-class room was indeed his nephew, Zhu Ping'an.

"Zhi'er, it's really you! I thought I had mistaken you for someone else. It's been months since we last met, and you've gained some weight. I'm relieved to see you doing well," Zhu Shouren said with a smile.

After recognizing Zhu Ping'an, his uncle dismissed the shop assistant and entered the room alone, walking over to Zhu Ping'an's side and casually chatting about family matters.

"When did you come to Yingtian, Uncle?" Zhu Ping'an stopped writing and asked.

Zhu Ping'an had always been on guard when it came to his uncle, who only showed up with some ulterior motive, and it was usually nothing good.

"I've been in Yingtian for a few days now. I've been busy with studying, so I haven't come to see you until now," his uncle answered seriously, walking around the room, inspecting every corner.

"Zhi'er, this house must be quite expensive, right?" Zhu Shouren suddenly asked.

"Oh, this house? I'm not really sure. I originally lived in the attic upstairs, and it was much cheaper. The owner of this house thought the high attic was a good omen and insisted on swapping it with me," Zhu Ping'an replied, not understanding his uncle's intentions, speaking with some reservation.

Zhu Shouren, however, didn't believe a word of it. Such a good thing was too absurd to be true, but he didn't call Zhu Ping'an out on it. He continued to talk in circles with him for a long time.

Zhu Ping'an held his brush, watching his uncle talk aimlessly for a long while. Realizing that if this continued, he wouldn't get any studying done, he decided to ask directly, "Uncle, is there something you need from me?"

It seemed that Zhu Shouren had been waiting for Zhu Ping'an to say those words.

"Zhi'er, I have a gift for you. I have a friend—you've met him before—whose mentor is the instructor at the county school. This mentor has connections, and my friend has gotten insider information. His mentor can know the exam questions a day in advance..." Zhu Shouren paused here, carefully looking outside the window and checking the door to make sure no one was around, then continued mysteriously, "He can know the exam questions a day in advance, and also..."

Zhu Ping'an rolled his eyes at this. He had heard this story many times before. Despite all the exams his uncle had taken, he had never passed the entrance exam.

"Thank you for your good intentions, Uncle, but it's better if fewer people know about such good things. There's no need to tell me," Zhu Ping'an interrupted calmly.

This wasn't the reaction Zhu Shouren had expected. He still had more to say, but to his surprise, Zhu Ping'an seemed completely uninterested.

"Cough, cough, Zhi'er, this time the exam questions are very reliable," Zhu Shouren said confidently, stroking his beard.

"Really?" Zhu Ping'an replied casually.

Zhu Shouren was pleased, but just as quickly, Zhu Ping'an's words shattered his hopes.

"Really? Well, in that case, I'll congratulate you in advance, Uncle," Zhu Ping'an said indifferently, showing no concern for the supposed insider information.

Uncle Zhu Shouren never expected Zhu Ping'an to react like this. This left him almost speechless, his subsequent words stuck in his throat. However, Uncle Zhu Shouren was no ordinary person. When he saw that Zhu Ping'an didn't take the bait, he decided to try a different approach.

"Zhi'er, is money tight for you recently? I've spent quite a bit on studying lately, and funds are a bit low. My friend's mentor will be coming to Yingtian tomorrow, and I thought about inviting him to a restaurant for a meal, engaging in some conversation, discussing the inside story. This time, the examination for scholars will be like taking something from a bag for us, uncle and nephew. For the Zhu family, and for us, so... Could you lend me ten or eight taels to invite him for a meal? After we return home, I'll pay you back."

Then, Uncle described the scene after successfully passing the scholar exam, as if everything were under his control.

Ten or eight taels? Uncle said it so lightly, as if it were just a few coins, almost as if it weren't worth paying attention to. He didn't know that the family had to work hard for half a year just to gather those ten or eight taels. He didn't realize how many long hours of early mornings and late nights, with no rest, went into earning that money. He didn't know how much sweat had been shed behind those ten or eight taels... It seemed that when I was at home, my grandfather and the others had just asked someone to send money to Uncle!

"Oh, Zhì'er got distracted just now. Could you repeat the last sentence, Uncle?" Zhu Ping'an didn't show any expression on his face, but he was extremely displeased inside.

"For the Zhu family, and for us, so..." Uncle Zhu Shouren thought Zhu Ping'an was moved and started to repeat the earlier sentence.

"Not that one, further back." Zhu Ping'an shook his head.

"My friend's mentor will be coming to Yingtian tomorrow, and I thought about inviting him to a restaurant for a meal..." Uncle Zhu Shouren repeated the earlier sentence again.

Zhu Ping'an shook his head again.

"Zhì'er, is money tight for you recently? I've spent a bit on studying lately..." That wasn't it either. It was the first sentence, so Uncle Zhu Shouren repeated it.

Before he could finish, Zhu Ping'an's naive voice interrupted.

"Oh, my funds are tight too, Uncle." Zhu Ping'an looked at his uncle with an honest and sincere expression, saying seriously.

Uncle Zhu Shouren stared at Zhu Ping'an for a few seconds, not reacting at first. But in the end, Uncle was no ordinary person. After a few seconds of silence, he spoke again.

"Oh, Zhì'er, your funds are tight? No problem, then. Why not send a letter to the family, asking them to raise a little money... After all, it's all for the Zhu family. I'm sure Second Brother will understand..."

Hearing this, Zhu Ping'an immediately felt as though a thunderclap had struck him. Uncle really was exceptionally clever, to think of this!

"Since you're sending a letter to the family, Uncle could also send a letter to the old residence. There are more people there, and they have more money." Zhu Ping'an looked up at his uncle and spoke, testing how Uncle would respond, knowing that he must have asked for money from the old residence using this excuse.

Uncle Zhu Shouren was blunt, "Your grandfather already sent me money, but I've spent a bit on studying recently. You know your grandfather has a fiery temper, so if I send another letter to the old residence... So, I've bothered Zhi'er to send a letter to the family."

"Uncle is afraid of grandfather, but I'm also afraid of mother." Zhu Ping'an said indifferently.

Uncle smiled and patted Zhu Ping'an on the shoulder, "Afraid of what? You're young, much better able to take a beating than I am! Besides, when we pass the scholar exam, your mother will be so happy that she won't mind at all."

Uncle, where is your face? I can't find it anywhere!!!

"Sending a letter to the family will take time, and you'll miss tomorrow's opportunity. It would definitely ruin Uncle's plans. I suggest you find another way, Uncle." Zhu Ping'an spoke calmly, offering the suggestion with a look that showed he was considering his uncle's best interests.

His Uncle left in disappointment.