

# RISE OF THE POOR

## Chapter 14: The Willful and Scheming Little Loli

As the sun sets in the west, the sound of creaking from a distant muddy path signals the departure of the cart. Granduncle and Aunt gradually fade away under the reluctant gazes of the old Zhu family, while Grandfather stands at the doorway, gazing at the cart's receding figure, unwilling to let them go.

Of course, Zhu Ping'an does not share this sense of parting sorrow. He feels his bulging pockets and grins widely, comforted by the money within—his heart is at ease when he has funds.

Chen is also eyeing Zhu Ping'an's pockets, her eyes squinting into crescents.

It proves that age brings wisdom; the New Year's money Zhu Ping'an received was confiscated by Chen, leaving him with only five copper coins. Even so, Chen reminded him not to waste money.

Zhu Ping'an looks resentfully at Chen, who is cheerfully counting money under the oil lamp, thinking, "You've only left me five wen; how can I waste it?"

"One, two, three, four, five, six..." Chen is busy counting silver beans under the oil lamp.

"Wife, what do you want me to buy for you at the market tomorrow?" Father Zhu Shouyi walks in from outside and asks. Just now, Grandmother called Father over because tomorrow is market day in the town. She asked him to buy some essentials like oil, salt, soy sauce, and vinegar, and also to take the two rabbit skins from this time, along with three rabbit skins he had saved earlier, and the dried wood ear mushrooms and bamboo shoots to sell for some extra household funds.

Father Zhu Shouyi is well-meaning, but this draws a big eye-roll from Chen.

"Oh, I was counting here; why are you making a fuss?" Chen looks displeased. She was in the middle of counting when Zhu Shouyi interrupted her with his loud voice, forcing her to start over again. It's no surprise she isn't in a good mood toward him.

So, the counting begins anew.

In a moment, Chen finishes counting the New Year's money she forcibly took from Zhu Ping'an. Not counting the five wen she left for him, there are eight silver beans and twenty copper coins on the table.

That's nearly one tael of silver. Chen happily puts the money away and hides it under her pillow to stash it away when no one is watching.

"Alright, don't pout anymore. Tomorrow, your father will take you to the town to play for a day," Chen comforts Zhu Ping'an.

Though he knows it's a futile endeavor, Zhu Ping'an can only resign himself to it, feeling that he cannot fight against greater forces.

Xiahe Village is about five li away from the town, which is called Khaosan Town, due to its proximity to the mountains.

Khaosan Town is surrounded by mountains, with streams winding around both sides of the town. The layout within the town is orderly, with the trading area and the residential area vaguely separated. Numerous shops line both sides of the business district, and the sounds of vendors calling out are endless.

Though it may not seem like much in Zhu Ping'an's eyes, it is considered bustling and lively compared to the village.

Zhu Shouyi drives the ox cart to Khaosan Town with his two sons. On the cart, besides the rabbit skins and wood ear mushrooms requested by Grandmother, he has also brought some bamboo baskets and small daily necessities he wove from bamboo. Zhu Ping'an has also brought a basket full of dried honeysuckle to see what the apothecary in the town would offer.

Once they enter the business district, Zhu Shouyi spends two wen to rent a ten-square-meter stall and begins displaying the mountain delicacies, rabbit skins, and bamboo crafts on the cart.

Next to their stall is a small food stand, covered with an oilcloth awning outside, under which are six tables for guests to sit and eat.

In order to secure a good spot early on, Zhu Ping'an and the others hadn't even eaten breakfast yet. After setting up the stall, Zhu Shouyi led his two sons next door to the small eatery for some breakfast.

Zhu Shouyi ordered four steamed buns and two meat buns for himself and his sons, along with three bowls of dough soup. The price was one wen for two steamed buns, one wen for one meat bun, and a total of one wen for the three bowls of soup. Altogether, it cost five wen, and the shopkeeper generously offered a plate of pickled vegetables.

Zhu Shouyi ate two steamed buns himself, while Zhu Ping'an and Zhu Pingchuan each had one meat bun and one steamed bun.

"Dad, you should have the meat bun; I'll just have a steamed bun," Zhu Pingchuan reluctantly pushed the meat bun in front of Zhu Shouyi.

"I'm fine too," Zhu Ping'an added, being somewhat simple-minded and speaking little.

Zhu Shouyi affectionately patted both sons on the head and shook his head, saying, "You two eat. I had too much to drink yesterday, so I don't want anything greasy today."

Seizing the moment, Zhu Ping'an felt quite tempted by the meat bun. This was the first meat bun he had seen since coming to this ancient time, and surely it would not disappoint him.

"Poor and shabby!"

At that moment, a childish and arrogant voice rang out.

Zhu Ping'an turned to look and saw a little girl, around four or five years old and similar in age to him, casting a disdainful glance in his direction.

The little girl was dressed in a Ming dynasty-style child's robe, with silk ribbons tied around her waist and adorned with tassels in her hair. She looked lively and elegant, a true beauty. If it weren't for the rude comment she had just made, Zhu Ping'an would have surely praised the beauty of the Hanfu style and exclaimed, "With a daughter like this, it's enough!"

However, it was unfortunate that she was a capricious and sharp-tongued little gold-worshipper, wasting her pretty looks.

Next to the little girl sat a chubby local landlord, his round head topped with a watermelon hat, wearing a large gold ring on his finger, and dressed even better than Granduncle. On their table were braised meat slices, a steamer of meat buns, exquisite side dishes, and two bowls of wonton soup.

So, she's the daughter of a wealthy landlord; no wonder!

The landlord showed no intention of reprimanding his daughter but instead indulgently encouraged her to eat quickly.

"Shu'er, be good, don't mind them, just eat your food."

The landlord had three sons, and this was his only little daughter. He doted on her so much that he was afraid she would fall if he held her too tightly and worried she would melt if he put her in his mouth—he truly spoiled her beyond measure.

You spoil her, but I won't.

Zhu Ping'an thought as he shot a sidelong glance at the little girl, rolling his eyes and muttering, "Ugly girl!"

This remark seemed to ignite a powder keg, and the little girl immediately protested, pouting with tear-filled, big watery eyes. How dare this little bumpkin call her ugly? Only people were supposed to say she was pretty!

"Who are you calling ugly, you little poor thing?!" The little girl glared at Zhu Ping'an, practically ready to bite him.

Zhu Ping'an's face broke into a smirk, and he was about to continue schooling this spoiled little girl when—

"Ahem." Zhu Shouyi coughed lightly. "Zhi'er, eat your food."

As a straightforward man, Zhu Shouyi didn't want to stir up trouble and recognized that the chubby landlord was Li Dacai from the neighboring village, Shange Village. Thus, he stopped Zhu Ping'an.

"Brother, don't cause trouble," Zhu Pingchuan advised from the side. His personality was nearly a mirror of their father's—just as honest, to the point of being somewhat dull.



With his father intervening and his brother trying to calm things down, Zhu Ping'an had to abandon his plans to teach the spoiled little girl a lesson.

Seeing that Zhu Ping'an had quieted down, the little girl became smug and continued to taunt him, referring to him as a "little bumpkin" and a "poor thing."

"Alright, Shu'er, hurry and eat your food before it gets cold. After you finish, Daddy will take you to buy a little red horse," Li Dacai said, spooning wontons into the little girl's mouth.

Li Dacai doted on his daughter, feeding her first before attending to his own meal.

With wide eyes, the little girl accepted bite after bite from her father.

Once she was finally satisfied, just as Li Dacai was about to eat, the little girl started demanding sugar-coated haws. Not one to refuse her, Li Dacai hurried off to buy them.

In the meantime, the little girl took some chili sauce and started adding spoonfuls into her father's bowl of wontons, muttering, "You want to feed me?"

Well, let's see how you like this. Can't eat anymore? Ha, too bad... too spicy for you..."

Zhu Ping'an mentally added another label to the little girl: scheming.