

Rise 141

Chapter 141: Every Family Has Its Own Problems

Actually, listening to Fatty's Father shout "Fatty, turn over," just feels oddly amusing.

As for Fatty's Father's praise, Zhu Ping'an smiled foolishly, repeatedly cupping his hands in humility, saying that he didn't deserve it.

Afterward, Fatty's Father sighed, expressing how much effort he had put into educating Fatty, rambling on for quite a while, and mentioning that he was particularly pleased with Fatty's appointment as the first in the county.

The fatty in the corner, upon hearing his father talk about the effort he had put into educating him, covered his backside, which had been slapped countless times, and said, "I didn't see you putting in much effort."

Actually, Fatty had another sentence he didn't dare speak: "I didn't see you putting in much effort; all you did was scold and beat me. When I couldn't pass the exams, you had a child to pin your hopes on for the next generation."

As soon as Fatty finished speaking, Fatty's Father immediately got angry, gasping in fury, shaking his finger at Fatty and shouting, "You ungrateful child! I took a half-month leave just to come back and beat you for your education!"

Fatty's Mother quickly stepped in to help Fatty's Father calm down and signaled to Fatty to apologize quickly.

Reluctantly, Fatty apologized.

"Ping'an, I apologize for making you laugh. Although Fatty failed the exam, his good friend became the top of the county, which is something to celebrate. Truly talented at such a young age. Come, let's go to a restaurant to celebrate for you," Fatty's Father said, looking serious but actually a very easy-going person.

But this won't do. Fatty had just failed the exam and was feeling down, so this would be like rubbing salt in the wound.

"Thank you, Uncle, for your kindness. However, Ping'an has already made plans with Uncle and a few other locals. I'm afraid I'll have to disappoint your generosity this time," Zhu Ping'an cupped his hands and declined Fatty's Father's invitation.

"Why celebrate with them? Let's go! Although I failed, I can still donate to become a student. Then we can take the county exam together next time." Fatty, having been down for a moment, quickly cheered up again.

"Donate? I'll make you donate!" Fatty's Father became angry again, grabbing a thick stick, ready to teach Fatty a lesson.

"Why not donate? If you don't spend the money, I will. That damn exam made my son so thin!" Fatty's Mother stepped in front of Fatty, glaring at Fatty's Father.

"An indulgent mother spoils the child!" Fatty's Father was very displeased with Fatty's Mother's behavior. "Look at Ping'an."

"You already donated before," Fatty poked his head out from behind Fatty's Mother and said weakly.

When it comes to hitting, you strike the face; when it comes to exposing faults, you reveal the sensitive ones. Fatty's words struck Fatty's Father right in the sore spot, causing his serious face to turn red and his breathing to become more labored. His hand, gripping the stick, was twitching with the veins bulging, as if he were about to sacrifice family for justice.

Donating to become a student was a popular practice at the time.

The boy's examination was full of obstacles. People like Fatty and Fatty's Father, who failed the exams, had other ways to enter the official ranks. In fact, those who didn't pass the preliminary examination or the national exams could still take the county exam by participating in the so-called "donating grain to enter the school." This system started in the mid-Ming Dynasty and lasted until the end of the Qing Dynasty. Donating grain meant using money to donate to become a student, thereby obtaining the qualification for the county exam (many people who were rich but uneducated donated to become students without actually attending the exam). You didn't have to study at the Imperial Academy. This practice was commonly known as "donating to become a student," or "donated students."

Fatty had tried hard for a long time, but Fatty's Father refused to let him donate. No matter what Fatty's Mother said, it was useless.

But given Fatty's nature, even if he tried a few more times, it wouldn't work.

"Uncle, according to the rules, Ping'an shouldn't be interfering with your family's matters. However, there are a few things Ping'an feels compelled to say. The county exam and the provincial exam are different. The county exam focuses on essays and the Four Books, while the provincial exam emphasizes strategy and theory. People have different strengths and weaknesses. Although the path of donating to become a student is sometimes looked down upon, there are always exceptions. For example, in our Ming Dynasty, Luo Gui failed the preliminary exam seven times, but after donating to become a student, he went on to win first place in both the provincial and national exams. I believe that although brother Xue may not excel in the Four Books, his essays are exceptional. Therefore, Uncle, you might consider giving brother Xue a chance; no one can say that he won't become the next Luo Gui." Zhu Ping'an cupped his hands, presenting facts and evidence, his tone persuasive and stirring.

Upon hearing this, Fatty's Father paused for a long while before finally nodding and saying, "Ping'an's words are convincing, and he's truly thoughtful. Fine, I'll give this ungrateful child a chance."

Upon hearing this, Fatty let out a loud cheer and jumped up high, his chubby face grinning like a blooming chrysanthemum.

"Brother Zhu, you are truly like a second set of parents to me!" Fatty was so excited that he spoke in a disjointed manner.

Second set of parents?!

Fatty's Father's face darkened upon hearing this, and he involuntarily tightened his grip on the stick he had just loosened.

What a chaotic day.

Unable to refuse the kind gesture, Zhu Ping'an was dragged to the restaurant that Fatty's Father had arranged for the celebration. Fatty, having received his father's approval to donate and become a student, was overjoyed, even happier than if he had topped the exam. He ate and drank a lot, and before long, he had drunk himself under the table. Fatty's Father's face darkened. If Zhu Ping'an hadn't been there, Fatty's Father would've definitely given Fatty a good beating.

Zhu Ping'an had also drunk a little too much. Fatty's Mother had one of the strong servants escort him back to the inn where he was staying.

When Zhu Ping'an returned to the inn, he took a hot bath and then splashed his face with cold water. His head cleared up a little.

Sigh, I can't drink like that again. It's bad for my health. Adolescents are in their growth and development stages, and drinking can have a serious impact on normal physiological functions and development. It can cause memory loss, and even affect other basic functions.

So, for the sake of my future happiness, I must learn from this.

Zhu Ping'an, with a slightly dazed head, sat at the desk, spread out a sheet of rice paper, and wrote two large words: "Quit Drinking."

It was just after sunset. Zhu Ping'an sat at the desk, watching the sun gradually set behind the Western mountains. He couldn't help but think of his parents, who were still back in Xiahe Village. In a few days, his parents should be receiving the good news from the county. His father might not realize it, but his mother, Chen Shi, would surely go around proudly showing off the news. He could almost imagine the scene—no matter what the conversation was about, his mother would always bring up "my son is the top of the county," chuckling. However, he also felt a tinge of sadness for his grandparents. They had high hopes for his uncle. When they came for the county exam, his grandfather had even said at the door that his uncle would definitely pass this time and encouraged him to try harder. Unfortunately, his uncle failed again, and his grandfather would be so disappointed when he heard the news.

Moreover, his grandfather had once shielded his uncle's reputation by taking the blame for the high-interest loans and even had to split the family. Now, the son he had been protecting had failed again, and the son who took the blame and was separated from the family had won the top spot.

He wondered what his grandparents would think when they heard the news.

Every family has its own problems.