

Rise 152

Chapter 152: Farewell

"The Qinhuai Grand Event, why not let Young Master stay and witness it?" Some fellow villagers advised Zhu Ping'an to stay.

Then, his first uncle Zhu Shouren and others also persuaded Zhu Ping'an to stay and experience the grand event.

"Ping'an is too homesick, and I can only disappoint you, uncles." Zhu Ping'an shook his head, showing no interest at all.

Seeing this, his first uncle and others could only look at him with regretful gazes.

Zhu Ping'an stood at the street corner, watching his first uncle and the other villagers, who were eager to leave and head to the opposite bank of the Qinhuai River, bid farewell. His emotions were difficult to control at that moment. Did his first uncle not know that while using the hard-earned money from the old family house for indulgences, the grandparents and others in the old house were toiling away in hardship?

What "honoring the ancestors"? It only serves to tarnish and shame them!

Zhu Ping'an felt a deep sorrow over this.

As he thought about honoring the ancestors, that mysterious and unexplainable aura reappeared.

He remembered vaguely feeling that there had been some change in the aura at the old house, and he had sensed something blurry in the aura. Now, it was clear that it had indeed changed, for he could see it more clearly.

Above the heads of his first uncle and the other villagers who were rushing to leave for the opposite bank of the Qinhuai River, a pillar of luck appeared. However, there was a thin membrane-like layer outside the pillar, which should be protecting the luck and preventing it from leaking out.

However, at that moment, the protective membrane around the pillar of luck above his first uncle and the others had holes in it, especially his first uncle. The protective membrane around his first uncle's luck pillar was like a sieve. Through the holes in the membrane, a faint thread of nearly invisible cyan luck dissipated into the air. This was why his first uncle's luck remained white, because he could not retain the cyan luck.

Except for his first uncle, the others' luck protective membranes also had holes, to varying degrees, causing all the cyan luck they had accumulated through studying or the virtues of their ancestors to leak out.

Could it be that others were also like this?

Zhu Ping'an casually turned his gaze to other people on the street. There was a bun shop owner who was giving buns to beggars. Above his head was a strong white aura. His protective membrane was intact, with no damage at all. A small thread of white aura continuously fused into his luck pillar, protected by the membrane, preventing it from leaking out. The whitest part of his aura seemed to have a slight tendency to change color.

Then he looked at a passing scholar. The protective membrane above his head was also flawless, and a small thread of cyan aura quietly developed within his luck pillar...

Standing closest to his first uncle and the others, Zhu Ping'an did not see any intention for the cyan luck they lost to gather toward him. It all dissipated into the air.

It seemed that he could only see the aura. Even if he could see it clearly, he could only observe. He did not have the ability to absorb others' luck to strengthen his own. There was no change—he could only look. It was really a waste. But it also seemed normal. This was the Ming Dynasty hundreds of years ago, not some immortal world.

A few seconds later, Zhu Ping'an could no longer see the aura. As usual, he could only see it for a few seconds.

His first uncle and the others took their leave, eagerly rushing toward the opposite bank of the Qinhuai River. They quickly disappeared from view.

Zhu Ping'an stood in place for a long time, then smiled self-deprecatingly. He almost went astray. Luck was just an external force. How could he rely on such an ability? One still needs to rely on oneself. Strengthening oneself is the key. Everything still depends on oneself.

This useless ability could be glanced at occasionally, but it should not be considered some underhanded skill.

However, what he had seen just now about luck was enough to serve as a warning.

If he guessed correctly, the protective membrane of luck should be related to a person's virtues. Good virtues mean a good protective membrane, and your luck will not leak out. The saying "heaven does not disappoint the diligent" applies here. If you work hard and reach your goals, success will naturally follow; conversely, if your virtues are poor, meaning your virtues do not match your luck, your luck will leak out. Without luck, it will be much harder to achieve things.

The ancients used to say "virtue matches heaven," and the old books taught, "Virtue is obtained." To obtain something is to have virtue. Heaven grants people nature, and it is through this nature that one becomes a human being, and also becomes oneself. Virtue begins with nature, so the Chinese often refer to virtue as the nature of the person. For example, if a person has filial nature, they also have filial virtue. If a person has the nature of supreme goodness, they also have the virtue of supreme goodness. Virtue is also called moral character, which has classification and ranking meanings. Though people have the same good nature, their personalities differ, and goodness can be of many kinds. The completion of goodness can also have many levels. The sage is the highest level of goodness and the highest rank among humans.

Heaven has endowed me with a good nature, so my virtue is obtained from within myself, from what is inherently mine, not from seeking it externally. Since it is obtained from within, it must be achievable. Therefore, it is said: "A gentleman has no place where he cannot be self-content." It is also said: "A gentleman acts according to his position; when wealthy, he acts in wealth; when poor, he acts in poverty; when in trouble, he acts in trouble; when among the barbarian tribes, he acts among them."

First Uncle and others are enough to serve as a warning for myself. When doing things, one must first be a person.

From this perspective, I can see that fate is not entirely without merit; at least it has served as a reminder for me.

Zhu Ping'an watched as the figures of First Uncle and the others disappeared into the distance. He shook his head and then went upstairs with the clothes he bought for the fatty.

When Zhu Ping'an opened the door and returned to his room, the fatty had already finished his bath, wrapped in a bedsheet, sitting at the table with two dishes and a soup, eating greedily, making noises as if he and the pig from the old house, with a white body and black spots, were from the same school of behavior.

While eating, the fatty saw Zhu Ping'an bringing the clothes and was greatly moved. With food in his mouth, he mumbled, "You're really a good brother."

Zhu Ping'an was speechless. If it weren't for the fact that checking one's fate takes about ten days, he'd really want to check the fatty's fate and see whose fate is more like a sieve, his or First Uncle's...

"Brother Zhu, want some?" The fatty pushed the plate towards him, asking.

"You eat it yourself. I already ate at the Flower Pin Banquet." Zhu Ping'an rolled his eyes.

"Flower Pin Banquet..." Upon hearing this, the fatty seemed to have some deep grudge against the food, repeating the words before diving back into his meal, continuing to eat like a hungry beast.

After eating his fill, and changing his clothes, the fatty took his leave, hurrying back to the inn where his parents were staying. He had been too embarrassed to return home in ragged clothes, but now things were much better. If he didn't return soon, he didn't know how Old Master Xue would deal with him.

"Brother Xue, I'll probably be heading home tomorrow or the day after. We'll meet again next year for the provincial exam. But you should make sure to study hard at home, as the provincial exam doesn't offer opportunities like donating to become a student anymore." As the fatty was about to leave, Zhu Ping'an mentioned his departure to avoid the fatty thinking he was leaving without saying anything.

The fatty stopped in his tracks, seemingly reluctant. It wasn't easy to meet a friend who could actually talk, not one of those reckless companions, and that was rare.

"Fatty's impressive, his talent is at least two measures higher than yours, it's just bad luck this time. Uh, speaking of returning home, I might also go back with my parents around then..." The fatty, upon hearing this, grumbled, waving his chubby face, claiming how awesome he was, but when mentioning returning home, he couldn't help but feel a bit wistful.

"See you at the provincial exam."

"See you at the provincial exam."