

## Rise 155

### Chapter 155: Chen's Show-off Attribute

The old Zhu family house was emitting cooking smoke. Zhu Ping'an's third aunt was in the kitchen preparing a meal, while Old Man Zhu sat in the yard puffing on his dry tobacco pipe, still wearing his nearly new blue cloth tunic. Old Lady Zhu sat across from him, picking vegetables.

The two of them chatted casually.

"Those who brought good news have been here for several days now, but why hasn't Zhi'er come back yet?" Old Man Zhu murmured as he puffed on his pipe.

Old Lady Zhu stopped picking vegetables and shook the ones in her hand. "Stop complaining, we've already split up the family."

Old Man Zhu glared. "Even if we've split up, he's still my grandson. And anyway, it was you who spoiled the eldest and the fourth."

"Now you're blaming me? Back then, wasn't it your idea to split up the family?" Old Lady Zhu retorted sharply.

Old Man Zhu forcefully tapped his tobacco pipe twice against his chair. Her words had struck a sore spot in his heart. How much better it would have been if that accident had never happened. If only he hadn't insisted on sacrificing the second son to preserve the first. Now, Zhi'er's honor of being the top scorer in the imperial examination had been slightly overshadowed.

Now, sigh... Old Man Zhu had sighed more than once already.

"Alright, he's still our precious grandson, no matter what, that won't change." Old Lady Zhu, feeling pity for her husband, saw the regret on his face and hurriedly put down the vegetables she had picked, trying to comfort him.

Old Man Zhu sighed again.

Just then, they heard the sound of the main gate creaking open.

"Grandfather, grandmother."

A naive and youthful voice came from the gate.

Hearing that voice, all the regret and sighs on Old Man Zhu's face vanished in an instant. He quickly jumped up from his chair, his face full of joy.

Old Lady Zhu dropped the vegetables she was holding, turning around in disbelief to look at the gate.

"Ah, Zhi'er is back! Oh, and he's brought chicken! And such a big chunk of meat..."

The fourth aunt suddenly appeared from somewhere, and as soon as Zhu Ping'an spoke, she had already taken a big bowl from his hands and began chattering away.

It had been a while since he last saw her, the enthusiastic Fourth Aunt.

"Fourth Aunt, hello," Zhu Ping'an greeted her with his usual silly smile.

"Good, good, good! Zhi'er is even better. You don't know, the commotion from this visit was bigger than last time. You wouldn't believe it—someone from the county even got lost and came to the wrong door! At first, we thought your uncle had won the lottery." Fourth Aunt said enthusiastically, then grabbed Zhu Ping'an's arm and pulled him towards the courtyard. "Why are you still standing there? Come on in!"

When Fourth Aunt mentioned the wrong door, both grandparents couldn't help but blush a little, even after so many days had passed.

"Zhi'er is back!" The third aunt, who had been tending the fire in the kitchen, walked out after adding some dry wood.

"Third Aunt, hello," Zhu Ping'an greeted her with a silly smile.

"Zhi'er has really brought honor to the family," Third Aunt praised him.

"Quick, quick, come inside and talk," Old Man Zhu waved his pipe, his face beaming with a smile.

"Mm." Zhu Ping'an nodded and walked toward his grandfather.

"Zhi'er is back!" The eldest aunt appeared from the house at that moment, looking somewhat wistful.

Zhu Ping'an also smiled and greeted her.

Zhu Ping'an spent quite a while inside talking to his grandparents, Third Aunt, Fourth Aunt, and others. His grandparents were much kinder than usual, and Fourth Aunt and the others were much more enthusiastic than before. Without his grandmother even having to say anything, the water was already poured, and even a plate of fried melon seeds was brought out.

"Zhi'er, go back and tell your father. In a couple of days, our old Zhu family will hold a feast with flowing wine and invite everyone in the village to join in the fun." Old Man Zhu puffed on his pipe, very eager about the idea.

No need to, right?

"Not long ago, the head of our village came over and mentioned it. Your position as the top scholar in the village is a big deal. It's also the highest honor in our town. It's a good opportunity to inspire the younger generation in our village," said Old Man Zhu proudly.

"Mm, alright, Grandfather," Zhu Ping'an nodded.

After talking for a while at the old Zhu family home, Zhu Ping'an politely declined his grandmother's invitation to stay for dinner, taking his empty bowl and heading home.

Before reaching home, Zhu Ping'an noticed his mother, Chen, sitting under a large tree, enjoying the sunset and chatting happily with five or six of the aunts in the village.

It was almost time for dinner. Why was his mother, Chen, out chatting? She hadn't been one to engage much with these older women before.

"Zhi'er, come here."

His mother, Chen, waved at Zhu Ping'an from afar when she saw him.

Zhu Ping'an responded and walked over quickly.

"Hurry, tell me again, what are the benefits of being a scholar? You mentioned it at home, but I didn't quite catch it," his mother Chen asked, her face full of pride.

Zhu Ping'an almost forgot how much his mother loved to show off.

At times like this, Zhu Ping'an knew exactly what to do—just cooperate fully.

"Oh, from now on, I won't have to pay taxes, and military service and corvée labor won't concern me either," Zhu Ping'an began, playing along with his mother.

With each word Zhu Ping'an spoke, Chen's pride grew even stronger, and her eyes gleamed with anticipation, waiting for him to continue.

"I am a scholar, which means I'm one of the best among the students. The government will provide me with six dou of rice every month, along with fish, meat, oil, and various other allowances," Zhu Ping'an continued, understanding exactly what his mother wanted.

"Every year, the government will also give me at least four taels of silver," Zhu Ping'an added.

At this point, the aunts around his mother gasped in surprise. Of course, hearing their astonishment only made Chen's smile and pride grow more pronounced.

"And there's more, I heard you mention something about being equal to the county magistrate," his mother reminded him.

She remembered everything so clearly but still said she didn't? Bad, Mom.

"I don't need to kneel when I meet an official. I can also present a petition and visit the county magistrate whenever I like," Zhu Ping'an fully cooperated with his mother.

"Even if I make a mistake, the government won't punish me, let alone give me a beating, unless the official from Yingtian removes my title..." Zhu Ping'an continued.

"Spit, spit, spit! We won't break the law!" His mother quickly interrupted, not wanting to hear anything bad, even if it was just a hypothetical situation.

"Of course, I wouldn't break the law," Zhu Ping'an quickly assured, making his mother smile happily.

"Ah, no wonder everyone wants to become a scholar! It turns out that being a scholar is so powerful," one of the aunts remarked.

"Yup, you just wait to enjoy the blessings," another added.

"Your second child really has a bright future," yet another said.

At this moment, the aunts around were both surprised and envious, causing his mother's laughter to grow louder.

Even on the way home, his mother's smile didn't fade.