

Rise 156

Chapter 156: Unfortunately

Zhu Ping'an returned home and mentioned his grandfather's intentions. To his surprise, his mother, Chen, was the first to express her full agreement, and she was extremely supportive. With his mother on board, Zhu's father naturally had no objections.

His elder brother, Zhu Pingchuan, also raised both hands in approval. Ever since the news of his younger brother's success in the imperial exams reached Juan'er's family, his future father-in-law had become much more favorable towards him. In the past, the man would always keep a close eye on him, fearing that he might spend time alone with Juan'er. However, after his younger brother passed the exams, the father-in-law turned a blind eye when he spent time with Juan'er.

The dinner was unusually lavish. Chen, his mother, was so concerned about Zhu Ping'an being hungry that she piled all sorts of delicious food into his bowl. Whenever he ate a bit slower, his mother would ask, "Why aren't you eating, son? Is the food not to your liking?" With her asking like this, Zhu Ping'an had no choice but to shovel food into his mouth. Chen was so satisfied with her son's appetite that she squinted her eyes in contentment.

The consequence of this was that, when Zhu Ping'an went to bed, he could only lie flat on his back, unable to hold any other position due to the overwhelming motherly love filling his stomach.

At night, as Zhu Ping'an lay on his bed, he gazed at the moonlight outside the window. The evening breeze brought the fragrant smell of earth through the window, a scent of harvest. The croaking of frogs began again outside, and as Zhu Ping'an lay on his back, breathing in the earthy aroma, he gradually became drowsy amid the croaks, eventually falling into a sweet dream.

Mornings in the countryside were unlike any others.

A shiny rooster flew up to a branch, crowing loudly to announce the arrival of dawn. Amid the continuous crowing, the village slowly woke up from its sleep. A few barks of dogs shattered the village's tranquility.

The main house of the Zhu family opened its door. Chen, his mother, came out holding a basin of water for washing. As soon as she opened the door, she saw Zhu Ping'an sitting by the well in the yard, practicing his calligraphy.

"How come you're up so early when you passed the exams? You've just come home, and yet you're not resting?" Chen looked at her second son, who was dipping his brush in the well water to practice his calligraphy, not realizing when he had gotten up. Her heart filled with concern.

"I'm used to it, Mother," Zhu Ping'an raised his head and grinned.

"Habits are formed, you know. You can't keep waking up this early tomorrow," Chen said with a hint of worry, hoping her youngest could sleep a little longer. Other people's children could never be woken up no matter what, but her second son, he never let her wake him up and always got up earlier than her.

"Okay, Mother," Zhu Ping'an nodded in agreement.

"Stop fooling around, you always say okay, but every time you still wake up early," Chen said, half-scolding.

"My second son is hardworking," Zhu's father had also gotten up and came out holding a night incense. Hearing his wife's scolding, he couldn't help but curl his lips.

"A doting mother spoils her child; it's a good thing that our second child is so diligent."

Zhu's father thought simply, believing that a man should be diligent and sweat it out, indulging and pampering him would lead nowhere.

"No matter how diligent, nothing is more important than health," Chen, upon hearing this, shot Zhu's father a glare.

Zhu's father, intimidated by the glare, kept quiet but gave Zhu Ping'an a supportive look.

One by one, everyone in the Xiahe village woke up. The cooking smoke rose in the air, and people went to work or visited each other for chat. A new day had begun.

While Zhu Ping'an's family was having breakfast, his grandfather arrived to discuss the arrangements for a banquet. He was very eager, and they finally set the date for three days later. In the Ming Dynasty, or perhaps even in today's rural areas, something like this would happen. When someone passed the exams, the whole village would celebrate. Moreover, with his grandfather's enthusiasm and his mother's full support, Zhu Ping'an had no choice but to go along with the arrangements made by the elders.

After breakfast, Zhu Ping'an slung his satchel over his shoulder and headed towards Shanghe Village. He wanted to thank his teacher for his guidance, so he planned to invite his teacher to the banquet. Additionally, he intended to visit the wealthy Li family to show his gratitude. Thanks to the books from the Li family's collection, he had gained a solid knowledge base for the imperial exams. Also, the difficult question involving yellow flowers had been helped by a sly young girl, even though it had been an unintentional twist of fate.

Upon reaching Shanghe Village, Zhu Ping'an first went to his teacher's house. Normally, the teacher's door was never closed, but today it was shut, which struck him as odd. He pushed on the door but couldn't open it. Looking down, he saw a piece of paper that had likely been attached to the door but had fallen off due to the wind and sun. Zhu Ping'an picked it up and saw the four characters written on it: "Out visiting friends." This paper had probably been left for him. It seemed that his teacher's wife had also gone with him; otherwise, there wouldn't be nobody at home. Zhu Ping'an was surprised that his teacher was so romantic.

Since his teacher wasn't home, Zhu Ping'an decided to head to the Li family's house instead, to borrow another book to read.

The Li family's house was not far from his teacher's home. It was a large compound, and the courtyard seemed freshly painted, giving it a brand-new look.

Zhu Ping'an stepped forward and knocked on the large door between the two stone lions.

Knock knock After knocking twice, he once again heard the familiar impatient voice of Uncle Li.

Soon, the large door opened slightly, and Uncle Li's face, filled with impatience, poked out from behind it.

"Oh, it's young Master Zhu coming! Come in, come in! No, no, let me open the big door. How can young Master Zhu enter through the small door?" Uncle Li, the doorman, now seemed like a sycophant, his earlier impatience nowhere to be found, replaced by an expression of enthusiasm.

"Uncle Li, don't call me that, it will shorten my life. I'll just go through the small door." Zhu Ping'an smiled bitterly.

"How could that be? Young Master Zhu is blessed by the stars, destined to live a long life. How can you go through the small door? Young Master Zhu is a scholar, how can he use the small door?" Uncle Li shook his head, then quickly opened the big door and invited Zhu Ping'an inside.

Uncle Li really knew how to adapt, but this enthusiasm made Zhu Ping'an feel both amused and helpless.

"Uncle Li, please stop calling me young Master Zhu." After entering through the big door, Zhu Ping'an turned around seriously and spoke to Uncle Li, "It sounds strange, just call me how you usually do."

"As long as young Master Zhu is used to it, calling a scholar 'Master' is customary." Uncle Li showed no sign of his usual negligence; his attitude was entirely different, full of respect.

Uh, Zhu Ping'an was speechless. Judging by Uncle Li's demeanor, he wouldn't be able to get him to change the way he addressed him in the short term.

"Is Master Li home? I am deeply grateful for his generous help in the past, allowing me to borrow books. Thanks to him, I was fortunate enough to pass the entrance exam, and I am eternally thankful. Three days from now, we will hold a flowing banquet at home and hope to invite Master Li to grace us with his presence."

Zhu Ping'an paused for a moment, then stated his purpose.

Uncle Li shook his head slightly. "Master is out and has not returned yet."

Well, in that case.

Zhu Ping'an thanked Uncle Li, then made his way confidently toward the study, planning to borrow a book.