

## Rise 16

### Chapter 16: A wave of twists and turns

After Zhu Ping'an and his brother entered the pharmacy, a young apprentice immediately came over to greet them, showing no disdain for their plain clothing. The apprentice smiled and asked, "Are you two here to see a doctor or to get medicine? If you're here to see a doctor, you'll need to wait a moment."

Zhu Pingchuan's face turned red, and he shook his head repeatedly, stumbling over his words, "N-no, we're not here to see a doctor... nor to get medicine... we're here to s-sell..." As he said this, his voice became much quieter, almost like a mosquito buzzing, feeling very embarrassed.

"We're here to sell medicine."

In contrast to Zhu Pingchuan's awkwardness, Zhu Ping'an appeared quite at ease, showing no shyness at all. Seeing his brother's difficulty in speaking, he took over the conversation.

"You're selling medicine? We generally don't buy from others..." The young apprentice glanced at the basket on Zhu Pingchuan's back. For safety reasons, the pharmacy usually sources herbs from specific suppliers; most people don't understand the skills needed to harvest herbs properly, which often leads to the medicinal properties being compromised. It was clear these two brothers were not herb farmers, and what could two children possibly have? Considering the pharmacy's interests, he politely declined.

Behind the counter, another young apprentice was preparing medicine for a woman and her child. As he was working, he paused slightly and quietly called over to the apprentice attending to Zhu Pingchuan.

Upon hearing his senior brother's call, the young apprentice who was serving Zhu Ping'an and Zhu Pingchuan apologized, saying, "I'm sorry, but why don't you go look elsewhere?"

After saying that, he walked away.

Zhu Pingchuan, already feeling uneasy, turned even redder at being rejected and wanted to take Zhu Ping'an away.

Was this a bad start?

However, since Liu Bei could visit the thatched cottage three times, what was the harm in visiting a few more pharmacies? Zhu Ping'an was prepared to leave.

The two young apprentices whispered to each other, and one apprentice, feeling embarrassed, said to the old doctor, "Master, all the herbs for this prescription have been gathered, but we are missing one ingredient—honeysuckle."

"Missing honeysuckle?" The old doctor, who was stroking his beard, paused and asked, "How could we be out of honeysuckle? Didn't we just receive a batch a few days ago?"

"The storekeeper wasn't careful, and the stock of honeysuckle got damp from water damage," the young apprentice explained honestly.

At this point, Zhu Ping'an had already reached the door and keenly caught the conversation between the apprentice and the old doctor.

"Brother, where are you going?"

Zhu Pingchuan's voice rang out at the door.

Zhu Ping'an broke free from his grasp, snatched the basket from Zhu Pingchuan, and ran towards the old doctor, holding it tightly with both hands.

The old doctor was apologetically explaining something to the woman, while she, eager to have her son's medicine prepared as soon as possible, wore a worried expression.

"Old doctor, I have medicine to sell," Zhu Ping'an proudly presented the basket in front of the old doctor.

"Hey." The young apprentice stepped forward to block him, worried that Zhu Ping'an might disturb the esteemed doctor while he was diagnosing a patient.

The title "Old Doctor" struck a chord with the old physician. Who didn't appreciate a good title, especially a doctor? Because of Zhu Ping'an's words, the old doctor decided to take a look at the herbs this little boy was holding and give him a chance.

"You have herbs?" The old doctor casually glanced at the basket but was surprised to see something that brightened his eyes, even causing him to pull out two strands of his beard in excitement.

"What you have here... well, yes, yes, it's quite good. The harvesting was done properly, and the drying is just right—this is top-quality." The old doctor pushed the apprentice aside, stepped forward, picked a honeysuckle flower from Zhu Ping'an's basket, examined it closely, and then sniffed it, his old face breaking into a smile.

The young apprentice fell silent upon seeing the honeysuckle the old doctor had picked. He felt a bit ashamed, realizing he had almost rejected something valuable that came unexpectedly.

"My young friend, we will take this honeysuckle. Er Bao, go weigh this honeysuckle and prepare the medicine for Madam Liu first, then settle the payment for this young friend based on the top-quality rate," the old doctor said with satisfaction, his tone friendly as he spoke to Zhu Ping'an. He even changed how he addressed him to bridge the gap, sending one apprentice to weigh the honeysuckle while he turned back to speak to the woman beside him, "Madam, this is wild honeysuckle. Its medicinal effects are more than double that of the cultivated honeysuckle, which will help your son recover much faster."

At the entrance, Zhu Pingchuan heard the old doctor's words and gaped in astonishment, feeling as if he were floating on clouds. His brother had actually picked wildflowers from the mountains that were genuine medicinal herbs, and there were indeed people who would buy wildflowers.

"Thank you, old doctor," Zhu Ping'an said earnestly, clasping his hands in gratitude.

Chinese herbal medicine is classified into three grades: superior, medium, and inferior, with significant price differences. Selling it at the superior grade would likely fetch at least double the price.

One apprentice went to weigh the honeysuckle while another began preparing the medicine for Madam Liu, passing it to a maid standing nearby and quietly reminding her of the precautions.

Upon hearing that her son's condition would improve a day earlier thanks to the honeysuckle, Madam Liu was overjoyed. Before leaving, she instructed the maid to reward Zhu Ping'an with a silver coin.

Zhu Pingchuan was already bewildered. Not only could the wildflowers from the mountains be sold, but someone even gave out silver coins as a reward.

Zhu Ping'an accepted the silver coin, his round face lighting up with a smile so wide that his eyes were nearly obscured. He clasped his chubby hands to thank her.

"Thank you, Madam. My little brother will surely recover soon!"

As Madam Liu reached the door, she turned back and looked with a hint of surprise. She leaned over and whispered a few words to the maid beside her.

The maid then hurried over, lifting her skirt slightly, and placed another silver coin into Zhu Ping'an's hands.

"Little brother, you're quite charming! The lady asked me to give this to you. Buy something delicious to eat when you get home," the maid said, gently patting Zhu Ping'an's chubby cheek before rushing off to catch up with Madam Liu.

Zhu Ping'an clutched the two silver coins in his small, pudgy hands, his face beaming with joy like a bulldog.

Zhu Pingchuan felt so embarrassed he almost wished he didn't know his younger brother.

"The honeysuckle weighs a total of two jin, three liang, and four qian. The price for top-quality honeysuckle is 50 wen per jin, medium-quality is 38 wen, and inferior is 25 wen. Calculating at the top-quality rate, the total comes to 117 wen," the young apprentice announced loudly after weighing the herbs and clearing his throat.

Zhu Ping'an was quite satisfied with this price; the medicine shop seemed fair and honest, without any shortchanging. The honeysuckle he had weighed at home was indeed just two jin and three liang, and despite the heavy basket, the honeysuckle wasn't too heavy, especially after drying.

It seemed this was a trustworthy shop.

Zhu Pingchuan was truly shocked by the apprentice's price announcement, more so than when he saw Madam Liu reward Zhu Ping'an with two silver coins. Unlike Zhu Shouyi, who was slow-witted but not stubborn, Zhu Pingchuan understood that the reward was merely incidental. The wild honeysuckle, however, represented a steady stream of income; after all, there were plenty more of those wildflowers in the mountains.

Just thinking about it made him feel a little breathless with excitement.

The old doctor instructed the apprentice to fetch a string of copper coins from the counter. In front of Zhu Ping'an and Zhu Pingchuan, he counted out 120 coins and placed them into the basket at Zhu Ping'an's feet, smiling kindly as he said, "This is a total of 120 big coins. The extra three are for helping this old man out earlier."

"Thank you, old doctor. We'll be on our way now," Zhu Ping'an said, waving his chubby hand and gratefully bowing to bid farewell.

He was concerned that their father would worry if they took too long.

Zhu Pingchuan held the basket and took Zhu Ping'an's hand as they made their way to the door.

But just a few steps outside, they heard the old doctor call out, "Wait a moment!"

Upon hearing this, Zhu Pingchuan felt cold sweat forming on his forehead, thinking that perhaps the doctor was having second thoughts. Who would buy wildflowers and pay such a high price? It was nearly equivalent to a week and a half of work! Anxiety bubbled in his chest.

Zhu Ping'an turned back and asked, "Is there something else, old doctor?"

"If you have more medicinal herbs like this in the future, feel free to bring them directly after drying. However, the price may vary, so be prepared," the old doctor said, stroking his beard. He admired Zhu Ping'an's spirit and recognized the good quality of the honeysuckle. The medicine shop had a high demand for honeysuckle, which was commonly used in herbal recipes and medicine. Hence, he decided to stop them and build a good relationship.

Upon hearing this, Zhu Pingchuan let out a sigh of relief and eagerly replied, "Okay, okay!"