

## Rise 19

### Chapter 19: Returning Home

This price is a bit expensive for a farmer; buying a whole bolt of fabric for over a hundred coins would upset his wife. Buying half a bolt should be enough for Chen to make two or three sets of clothes.

"Then give me half a bolt," Zhu Shouyi thought for a moment and asked, "Can you give me a discount?"

The shop assistant pondered for a moment, glanced towards the counter, and whispered, "I can tell you're buying this for your wife, right? She's lucky to have you. Our shopkeeper has a rule that if relatives come to buy fabric, we can give a small discount. Here's the deal: when you pay, just say you're the eldest cousin of my seventh aunt's cousin-in-law. For half a bolt, I'll give you a three-coin discount. Any more and I really can't do it."

How fake!

Zhu Ping'an pursed his lips. He had clearly seen the assistant exchange a glance with the shopkeeper just now.

"Alright, thank you, brother." Zhu Shouyi was focused on the cotton fabric he wanted to bring back for Chen and didn't notice the exchange between the shop assistant and the shopkeeper. Hearing the assistant's words, he was quite moved.

Zhu Shouyi didn't mind, but Zhu Ping'an had other thoughts. He recalled the female protagonists in time-travel farming novels he had read, who always managed to buy scraps of fabric at such shops for cheap and turn them into pouches to sell for a profit. Although he couldn't sew pouches, his mother, Chen, and the others could.

He looked around and, as expected, there were plenty of discarded fabric scraps under the counter. They were all small, about the size of a palm, too small to be of any use. The shop didn't care about them, and they were dirty from being stepped on by customers coming and going.

"Can I have some of those fabric scraps to play with?" Zhu Ping'an, with his chubby little hands, pointed to the dirty fabric scraps under the counter and asked curiously.

The shop assistant followed his gaze, seeing that they were just useless scraps.

"Oh, those? Help yourself," the assistant said indifferently. He could easily decide on these things since they were too small to be of any use. The shopkeeper didn't want them either, and he'd just have to sweep them away later. Since the child was curious, he could take them. After all, they had already made money from his father.

Not spending a single coin, Zhu Ping'an was happy to take advantage of the situation.

So, Zhu Ping'an, carrying his little basket, ran over excitedly and began stuffing it full, packing it tightly to make more room.

This time, it wasn't just Zhu Pingchuan who felt embarrassed; even Zhu Shouyi, who was handing over the money, blushed with embarrassment.

The shop assistant didn't mind and casually said, "No need to feel embarrassed, sir. These are just scraps, not worth much."

Everything was settled, and by the time they were on the ox cart heading home, the sun was already beginning to set. Zhu Shouyi snapped the whip, urging the ox cart forward, though he didn't hit the ox, and hummed a tuneless song.

Zhu Ping'an sat in the cart, looking at the various daily necessities they had bought, and then at his own basket full of scraps, feeling a deep sense of contentment.

By the time they got home, smoke was already rising from the village chimneys, as families began preparing dinner.

Before they even entered the gate, they could hear the loud voice of Fourth Auntie.

"Oh, second brother is back! How much did you sell? What did you buy?"

If it were modern times, Zhu Ping'an would definitely recommend Fourth Auntie to work as an airport security officer. She inspected everything on the cart, including Zhu Ping'an's little basket.

Luckily, the top of the basket was filled with fabric scraps from the shop. Fourth Auntie grabbed two handfuls of scraps, and under Zhu Ping'an's watchful gaze, she sheepishly stopped rummaging, not discovering the secret beneath the scraps.

Grandmother soon arrived too. She first looked at the things Zhu Shouyi had bought and then inquired about the bamboo weaving and mountain mushrooms he had sold.

Zhu Shouyi answered her questions one by one and then handed over the wrapped copper coins.

After looking at the money, Grandma found that there was more than ten wen than usual, and she was very pleased. She roughly asked about the reason. Zhu Shouyi explained the situation about Zhu Ping'an selling the wildflowers, and Grandma praised Zhu Ping'an.

"Did Zhi'er's wildflowers sell?" Fourth Aunt asked with a hand over her mouth, laughing.

"Yes!" Zhu Ping'an raised his chubby little face and smiled brightly.

Fourth Aunt didn't believe it at all, thinking that the little kid was just too shy to speak properly, so she laughed even harder while covering her mouth.

After putting away the things with Grandma, Zhu Shouyi led his two sons back to the east wing carrying their baskets.

"You're back! Why did it take so long? It's much later than usual," Chen was sewing the crotch of another pair of Zhu Ping'an's open-crotch pants. When she saw the three of them come back, she paused her needlework and looked up at the door.

Then Chen noticed Zhu Ping'an was huffing and puffing as he closed the door of the room.

"Tired... what are you closing the door for?" Chen was very surprised to see this.

"Just wanted to see if you liked it. I brought it back from town for you. I thought it would look good if you made clothes from it."

At that moment, Zhu Shouyi grinned and stepped forward, pulling out a half piece of white fabric with peach blossoms from the basket, proudly presenting it to Chen.

"How expensive could this be? You're just wasting money," Chen complained, though she couldn't hide her smile, and there was still a hint of pain in her eyes.

"Mom, this is for you," Zhu Ping'an said, bouncing over with two steamed buns wrapped in paper from his small basket.

"What's this?" Chen asked curiously.

"Steamed buns from town. The dough is soft, and the filling is delicious," Zhu Ping'an said, grinning as he leaned on Chen's leg.

"You little rascal, stop wasting money. You and your brother can share them; Mom won't eat any," Chen said, gently patting Zhu Ping'an's small head.

Zhu Ping'an shook his head, "I ate with my brother in town."

Chen insisted on giving the buns to Zhu Ping'an and his brother, but Zhu Ping'an insisted that Chen should eat them. Chen turned to look at her eldest son, and Zhu Pingchuan nodded vigorously, saying they had already eaten.

After thinking for a moment, Chen tore both buns in half, dividing them into four pieces, so each of the four family members could have one half.

Such simple happiness made Zhu Ping'an feel that the buns tasted much better than the ones he had eaten in town.

After finishing the buns, Zhu Shouyi briefly recounted the events in town. When he mentioned that he had kept a few dozen wen for their family this time, Chen's eyes lit up; this wooden-headed man had finally come to his senses.

However, when Zhu Shouyi mentioned that the wildflowers Zhu Ping'an had picked sold for more than a hundred wen in town, and that a noble had rewarded him with two silver coins, Zhu Ping'an knew things were about to get complicated.

Sure enough, Chen's big eyes sparkled as she stared at Zhu Ping'an, as if silver coins were flying out of them.

"You, a little kid, shouldn't be holding so much money; hand it over quickly," Chen said, placing her hands on her hips, her spirits high.

A little arm couldn't compete with a big thigh.

A few minutes later, Chen happily began counting the money on the table.

"One, two, three, four... one hundred and eighteen." As Chen counted, she felt something was off and turned to ask Zhu Ping'an, "Wasn't it supposed to be one hundred and twenty wen?"

"Those two wen were spent on the steamed buns," Zhu Ping'an said, his face darkening.

"Mm-hmm." Chen nodded.

Something seemed off. Chen felt as if she had forgotten something.

The next second, Chen turned around and asked fiercely, "What about those two silver coins?"

Zhu Ping'an, with his chubby little hand covering his pocket, stepped back, thinking, "Oh, Mother, can't you leave me a little something? Money isn't everything, but not having money is a big problem!"

Chen couldn't hear Zhu Ping'an's inner thoughts; even if she did, she would pretend she hadn't.

Zhu Ping'an tightly covered his pocket with his chubby hand.

But it was of no use.

"I've got it. Mom will save it for you to marry a pretty wife," Chen said with a gentle smile, but her hands were merciless as she pried Zhu Ping'an's little hand open, one finger at a time.

"My son really is capable."

Looking at the two silver coins in her hand, Chen was all smiles and playfully pinched Zhu Ping'an's chubby face hard.