

Rise 201

Chapter 201: Bringing Good News

On this day, snow continued to fall in Yingtian City, creating a magnificent scene. The entire world was covered in a silver-white hue, resembling a grand city of ice and snow.

Around the time of the Mao hour (approximately 5-7 AM), officials and bailiffs were dispatched across Yingtian City to decorate the area from Jiangnan Gongyuan to the Confucius Temple with lanterns and festive ornaments. The contrast between the bright red lanterns and the silver-white snow was striking.

On this day, scholars and students staying at the inns changed into brand-new scholar robes, donned their most devout expressions, and knelt in the direction of the Confucius Temple, burning incense in prayer.

At a table by the window in the inn's main hall, Zhu Ping'an and the chubby Xue Chi sat drinking rice porridge and eating small side dishes. Zhu Ping'an remained calm and composed, savoring his meal with ease. However, the chubby Xue Chi was quite different. While eating, he frequently glanced toward the entrance, his eyes bloodshot, a clear sign that he had struggled to sleep the previous night.

The inn's main hall was filled with scholars, many of whom were acting just like Xue Chi—constantly looking toward the entrance, their eyes red, resembling hungry wolves.

This was the day of the imperial examination results announcement.

Unlike the preliminary exam for academy scholars, the results of the imperial examination were traditionally announced first by bailiffs who visited the inns and lodging places of the examinees to personally deliver the good news. Only after all the successful candidates had been notified would the full results be posted at the Jiangnan Examination Hall.

There was no need to worry about the bailiffs losing their way, as all scholars had registered their temporary residence and place of origin with the authorities before the exam.

"The bailiffs are delivering the good news!"

Around the time of the Chen hour (approximately 7-9 AM), an excited shout was heard from outside.

Instantly, everyone in the inn's main hall turned their heads toward the entrance, their anticipation reaching its peak. Xue Chi nearly flew out of his chair in excitement.

"A golden-scaled fish is not meant to remain in a pond; once it encounters a storm, it will transform into a dragon."

Everyone fantasized about becoming a provincial graduate. The moment one attained this status, everything changed—it meant stepping into a new world, a world called power.

Time seemed to slow to a crawl. The scholars in the hall waited anxiously, feeling as if they had been waiting for ten thousand years, yet no sounds of congratulations had arrived.

"Good news from the imperial exam! Congratulations..."

Everyone in the hall eagerly looked toward the entrance, and some even rushed forward.

However, they only saw a bailiff holding a red scroll, swiftly passing by the inn and heading toward another establishment.

"Sigh..."

A collective sigh filled the inn.

Before the sighs had completely faded, another clear and resounding announcement echoed toward the hall.

"Good news from the provincial exam! Congratulations to Xue Chi of Fengyang Prefecture for placing 35th on the supplementary list..."

A bailiff, shouting all the way, burst into the hall.

Upon hearing this, the chubby Xue Chi, who was sitting opposite Zhu Ping'an, jumped to his feet and shouted in excitement, "I passed... Wait, what? What did you just say—supplementary list?"

The words "I passed" had barely left his mouth before he froze. His flushed face darkened as he grabbed the bailiff and shook him.

"Yes, the supplementary list," the bailiff confirmed with a nod.

After receiving confirmation, Xue Chi let go of the bailiff. His chubby face was on the verge of tears.

"You call this good news? It's the last spot on the supplementary list!"

The Supplementary List is an additional ranking in the imperial examination, also known as the Reserve List. The Supplementary List for the imperial examination began in the fifth year of the Jiajing era of this dynasty. Those who make it onto the Supplementary List are not considered official Juren (provincial graduates), but they gain the qualification to take the next Imperial examination without having to retake the county and prefectural-level exams. The number of Supplementary List slots is limited, with an average of one Supplementary List candidate selected for every five main list candidates.

However, in the end, it's all the same—nothing.

The people in the main hall understood the chubby man's excitement. Even though he did not officially pass as a Juren

, making it onto the Supplementary List was still quite an achievement—at the very least, it was an honor. The people in the hall congratulated him.

The chubby man felt disappointed for a moment but quickly came to terms with it. He pulled out a small piece of silver and rewarded the messenger who brought the news. Then, he sat across from Zhu Ping'an and started boasting about himself.

"Brother Zhu, even though I didn't become a Juren, making it onto the Supplementary List is still a big deal. This is called the Gongbang (Tribute List). Now, I can go to the Imperial Academy in the capital. I'm way ahead of my old man!"

The chubby man had an incredibly strong ability to self-heal emotionally. In an instant, he was no longer upset. After all, he had managed to make it onto the Supplementary List despite initially securing a spot in the Imperial examination through connections and bribes. That was already better than many who took the exam through official channels. Compared to his father, he was leagues ahead.

"Not bad." Zhu Ping'an nodded. However, there was an unspoken part of his sentence—he truly hadn't expected this result. Considering the fat man's infamous essay *My Sister, I Long for Thee*, this outcome was surprising. Perhaps his other essays had some outstanding parts.

Hearing Zhu Ping'an's words, the chubby man became smug.

As time passed, aside from the chubby man, two others in the inn's main hall also received news that they had made it onto the Supplementary List. They exchanged glances with the chubby man, feeling a sense of camaraderie, and agreed to drink together in the future.

"Now, it should be time for the Gui Bang (Laureate List), right?" The people in the inn whispered among themselves, looking expectantly toward the entrance.

A crisp clatter of horse hooves shattered their anxious anticipation. Two sturdy horses neighed and stopped at the inn's entrance. Two government messengers dismounted, loudly proclaiming the good news of the imperial exam as they rushed inside.

"Good news from the imperial exam! Congratulations to Zhu Ping'an of Anqing Prefecture for placing 135th in the provincial examination!"

135th. The total number of candidates admitted to the imperial exam in all of Southern Zhili was exactly 135. Zhu Ping'an securing the 135th spot meant he was the very last on the list.

To be honest, this result was a bit unexpected for Zhu Ping'an. He didn't think he would rank at the bottom.

However, considering that more than ten thousand candidates took the imperial exam, becoming a Juren at all was already an achievement. Last place or not—he still passed. He chuckled to himself. It only meant he needed to work harder, much harder.

After all, one must never underestimate the hidden talents of the world.

Zhu Ping'an quickly adjusted his mindset, took out the reward money he had prepared in advance, and distributed it to the two messengers.

The messengers took the money and felt the weight of a heavy string of copper coins—there was a lot. Overjoyed, they offered their congratulations to Zhu Ping'an and then left, grinning as they returned to report back.

The fact that Zhu Ping'an barely scraped by to become a Juren made the people in the inn both envious and amazed.

How could this young man have such incredible luck? The very last spot on the list—his ancestors must have been blessing him!

Yet, behind their admiration was jealousy.

"If only I had better luck, I could have passed too," they thought.

"Brother Zhu, we really are kindred spirits, aren't we?" The chubby man sighed. "You got the last spot on the main list, and I got the last spot on the supplementary list."

Midway through his complaint, he suddenly corrected himself, "Wait, no—you actually passed!"

"One year earlier or later makes no difference," Zhu Ping'an said reassuringly. "Brother Xue, you made it onto the supplementary list this year, and this was an extra special examination. According to the system, there will be another imperial examination next year. If you take your time to prepare, you will surely place high on the Gui Bang then."

"That's true! Without you lot as competition, I'll rank at least 35th next time! Haha! They'll still be taking 135 candidates—passing should be a piece of cake!"

Upon hearing this, the chubby man's previously disheartened face lit up with excitement, his voice filled with joy.

Indeed, as the saying goes—misfortune might just be a blessing in disguise.

The chubby man's logic made sense. With a normal Imperial examination next year, his chances of passing were indeed high.