

Rise 230

Chapter 230: Killing Matt

Because in a few days, he has to set off for the exam, Zhu Ping'an has been spending these days at home, either reading books or writing couplets. The family will need couplets for the New Year, and it's likely that the old house will also want him to write them this year. Additionally, his elder brother's future wife's family will probably want him to write some, and besides that, his elder brother's wedding will also require couplets. So, for the past few days, Zhu Ping'an has been busy writing couplets at home.

The couplets for welcoming the New Year:

"Firecrackers sound, bidding farewell to the old year, red plum blossoms greet the new spring."

"A harmonious family brings fortune, peace throughout the year brings eternal spring."

"Home welcomes good fortune, prosperity in all things, the door invites wealth, success in everything."

When he was in high spirits, Zhu Ping'an mischievously wrote his name into a spring couplet:

"The country prospers, the family prospers, the country prospers, Old Ping'an, Young Ping'an, everyone is peaceful."

Of course, there were also the couplets needed for his elder brother's wedding:

"Centuries of love, hearts tied together, thousands of miles of fate, one thread binds."

"Clouds of good fortune swirl, jade completes the phoenix, together with Qin and Jin, purple air rises, we celebrate the new song of the warblers."

While writing the wedding couplets for his elder brother, his mother, Chen, came over with a sewing basket, holding a pile of coats and comparing them to Zhu Ping'an. Then, she took scissors and trimmed them a couple of times before sitting down beside him to make him some new clothes.

"Mother, you've already made me two new sets of clothes, that's enough," Zhu Ping'an put down the brush, feeling sorry for his mother, Chen, who had been making clothes for him for days, and had developed dark circles under her eyes.

"What do you know? You're going to the emperor's presence soon. How can you go without a few new outfits? You can't let people look down on you."

While threading the needle in the sunlight, Chen also reminded Zhu Ping'an of the things to be careful about when traveling outside.

"Mother, let me thread the needle."

Seeing that his mother had tried several times without success, Zhu Ping'an put down the brush and took the needle and thread from her hand. He quickly threaded the needle in the sunlight outside the door and handed it back to Chen.

Chen took the needle and thread, very pleased. Under the warm sunlight, she began her sewing work. After a while, she would place the needle on her hair to wipe it a few times before continuing. In the sunlight, the stitches were neat and delicate, like fish scales, ensuring the clothes were both durable and sturdy.

A mother's thread in her hands, a child's clothes on his body.

"Zhi'er, what are you writing?"

When Chen had finished the rough shape of the clothes, she saw that Zhu Ping'an was still writing the couplets and asked.

"I'm writing couplets. These are for my elder brother's wedding." Zhu Ping'an replied.

Upon hearing this, Chen became interested and said to Zhu Ping'an:

"Well then, Zhi'er, write the couplets for your elder brother's wedding room. Don't forget your mother once you get married."

Experience is the best teacher.

With his mother's command, Zhu Ping'an naturally obeyed. After thinking for a moment, he picked up the brush and wrote a couplet:

"Don't forget your mother when you marry, may happiness last for ten thousand years."

After Zhu Ping'an read the couplet aloud, Chen was very satisfied. She made a small mark on the couplet with the brush and said that they would hang it on his elder brother Zhu Pingchuan's wedding room door.

Looking at Chen's serious manner, Zhu Ping'an couldn't help but think, "My mother is formidable."

"When you marry, you must hang up a couplet like this," Chen said after Zhu Ping'an had marked the couplet.

"Son, when the time comes, hang up several." Zhu Ping'an grinned like a sycophant.

Chen was amused by Zhu Ping'an's sycophantic look. She reached out and tapped his head, laughing, "You've always had a sweet mouth, and even after passing the exam, you're still not serious."

Zhu Ping'an gave a silly grin.

"It seems I'll have to find a wife for you to manage you, or you'll never get serious." Chen laughed as she said.

"Well, you have to find me a beautiful one," Zhu Ping'an replied.

Zhu Ping'an thought Chen was joking, so he casually laughed it off.

"Alright, I'll find you a beautiful wife, like a fairy," Chen thought of Li Shu from Shanghe Village, who was so beautiful she could be compared to a fairy, and said with a smile.

Like a fairy?

Wasn't that just a joke? Zhu Ping'an didn't take it seriously.

By evening, Zhu's father returned home with the ox cart from Kaoshan Town. From a distance, they heard the bell on the big black ox's neck. As soon as Mother Chen heard the bell, she put down her sewing and rushed outside.

"Did you buy it?"

Before Chen even reached the door, she asked from outside.

What did Mother need Father to buy so urgently? She usually waited for Father to come inside before taking any money from him. Now, Father hadn't even entered the door yet, and she was already rushing out.

Zhu Ping'an was curious.

"I bought it."

Zhu's father's voice came from outside, sounding like he was expecting praise.

The big black ox shook the bell even louder than usual. Normally, when the big black ox reached the door, it wouldn't shake the bell this cheerfully, and everything seemed a little different from usual.

A sudden horse neigh sounded from outside.

Could someone have arrived?

Zhu Ping'an curiously walked toward the door and saw his father talking to his mother, Chen, by the door. Tied to the side of the ox cart was a black horse. Well, maybe calling it a fine steed wasn't quite right. Compared to legendary horses like Dilu or Chitu, this one was like the underdog of the herd.

The black horse was about 1.2 or 1.3 meters tall, not particularly large. It had black fur, and its mane was long. Its appearance wasn't striking—its mane fell in a way that covered half its eye, giving it a somewhat rebellious, "non-mainstream" look. It was short and unimpressive, like the underdog of the horse herd.

The big black ox wasn't too friendly toward the black horse, constantly shaking the bell on its neck, almost as if to challenge it.

The underdog black horse was a bit haughty, flipping its non-mainstream head with its nostrils turned upward, ignoring the big black ox's provocation.

"How much did this horse cost?" Chen asked.

"Ten taels of silver." Zhu's father untied the black horse from the cart and brushed its mane, answering.

"Ten taels?" Chen winced a little. Ten taels was almost as much as they used to earn in a whole year before they split the family.

"This was from an acquaintance. If it were from someone else, it would have cost at least one more tael," Zhu's father explained, not missing the chance to take credit.

"Really?"

Hearing that it was cheaper than from others by a tael, Chen was a bit pleased. She looked at the black horse and said with satisfaction, "Well, with this horse, Zhi'er will have an easier time getting to the capital for the exam."

With this horse, Zhi'er will have an easier time going to the capital for the exam... So, Mother had Father Zhu buy the horse for Zhi'er's trip to the capital for the exam.

A gust of north wind blew, stirring up the dust on the ground and blowing it onto Zhu Ping'an. Though the wind in the dead of winter was cold, it felt as warm as a spring breeze against his face.