

## Rise 289

### Chapter 289: Such a Rude Country Bumpkin

The sixth young lady of the marquis' residence opened her small mouth in shock and stared wide-eyed at Zhu Ping'an, as if a newly hatched tiger cub had been frightened by a chubby country marmot passing by!

Why are all bumpkins so rude?

So scary! Baby's scared to death!

It wasn't until she heard her fifth sister telling that bumpkin not to joke around that the sixth young lady came back to her senses. So it was a joke, huh? But even so, it was still very rude. Bumpkins really are rude, far too rude. She didn't feel even a shred of goodwill toward this bumpkin brother-in-law. Just the thought that her proud and noble fifth sister had to marry such a bumpkin made her feel a bit... excited.

A bumpkin is a bumpkin, no matter how fine the clothes, he still reeks of dirt and countryside.

The sixth young lady of the marquis' residence covered her small mouth with her delicate jade-like hand, casting a big, disdainful eye-roll at Zhu Ping'an with obvious contempt and disgust.

Bumpkin, utterly contemptible~~~

On the other side, Zhu Ping'an, hearing Li Shu's coquettish reproach, slightly curled his lips, put away his casual demeanor, stood up straight, leaned forward slightly, and gave a very proper cupped-hands greeting to the sixth young lady who had just rolled her eyes at him. With a warm smile, he appeared like a graceful young gentleman:

"Zhu Ping'an of Xiahe Village greets the sixth young lady. If my earlier joke caused offense, I humbly beg your pardon."

The sixth young lady, in the middle of rolling her eyes, once again opened her mouth in astonishment.

What's going on here? How did a bumpkin suddenly turn into a courteous gentleman?! There was no trace of bumpkin-ness left in this man before her—he now exuded the aura of a "refined gentleman, warm as jade."

This abrupt change in demeanor made the sixth young lady, who was mid eye-roll, freeze up halfway through. She even cramped up a little and hastily returned the greeting, mumbling, "Brother-in-law, you're being too polite."

Of course, it wasn't just the sixth young lady who was surprised—many people at the marquis' gate were as well.

"Fifth sister must be tired from the journey. Let's get her and her group into the residence to rest for a bit, and then we can catch up. Wouldn't that be better?"

At this moment, a soft, weak voice broke the temporary silence.

It was the fourth young lady of the marquis' residence who had spoken. She wore long dangling pearl strands in her hair, a violet-black mink cloak with Gu embroidery, a crimson palace silk jacket, and a white gauze skirt. The skirt was embroidered with pale lotuses and green water ripples.

She was rather good-looking, but had a sickly air about her—resembling Lin Daiyu from Dream of the Red Chamber.

“Look at you, Fourth Sister, saying that like we were deliberately keeping Fifth Sister from entering the house,” said the third young lady with a coy smile, casting a sidelong glance at the fourth young lady.

“Ahem, Third Sister must be overthinking. Everyone knows you're the most considerate among us,” the fourth young lady replied weakly, looking at her.

“Whether I am or not, you know in your heart,” the third young lady raised an eyebrow, her voice slightly sharp.

“All right, let's go in. Let Fifth Sister rest.”

The second young lady of the marquis' residence—being the eldest legitimate daughter of the main branch and the oldest among the unmarried daughters—spoke with authority. After she spoke, the third and fourth young ladies no longer pursued the previous topic.

After standing outside the gate for so long, they could finally enter.

Zhu Ping'an followed the group through the side gate of the marquis' residence. Once inside, he realized that the outer gate had been quite modest—the interior was far more grand and luxurious than what was visible from outside.

Ancient Chinese architecture had two key terms: "jian" and "jin." Horizontal expansions were called "jian" (e.g., three jian, five jian), and vertical extensions were called "jin" (e.g., first court, second court, third court). In the capital—especially the inner city—there were strict regulations on the size of residences. Officials of different ranks were allowed different numbers of jian and jin, always in odd numbers: 3, 5, 7, 9, 11...

However, over time, these rules were mostly ignored, especially outside the palace area.

For example, the Marquis of Linhuai's residence was especially large, with layer upon layer of courtyards, rows upon rows of buildings, ridged roofs and flying eaves, carved beams and painted rafters, ceremonial gates, side rooms, passage halls, rock gardens, and towers. Despite Zhu Ping'an's excellent memory, he still couldn't clearly count how many jian and jin there were in the residence.

"The marquis' gate is as deep as the sea"—even taken literally, the saying made sense. There were just too many buildings; it felt like a sea.

Besides being huge, the lifestyle within was extravagantly luxurious. With carved beams and painted rafters, mountain corridor side rooms, birds and flowers in cages, koi swimming in ponds, and a constant stream of servants, old maids, and young maidservants—there must've been over a hundred people.

They walked for quite some time after entering before reaching the guest room area, which was prepared for Zhu Ping'an. This was still in the front courtyard. The guest room assigned to him was a small, standalone courtyard.

Li Shu directed the accompanying maids to arrange all the daily necessities and stationery that had been prepared in advance for Zhu Ping'an. In the Ming Dynasty, such etiquette was important—since they were not yet married, the fiancé could only be treated as a guest and was to stay in the front courtyard. Under no circumstance could he freely enter the inner quarters.

Only after the maids finished setting up the guest room did Li Shu leave. Zhu Ping'an escorted them to the Chuihua Gate and stopped, giving a cupped-hands salute as he watched them leave.

The Chuihua Gate of the marquis' residence was dignified and gorgeous, extraordinarily refined. From the outside, it looked like a grand and exquisite gatehouse built of brick and wood.

Because its eaves columns do not touch the ground but hang from the eaves, they are called "suspended columns," and below them hangs a pendant carved like a flower, which is why it's called the "Chuihua" (hanging flower) gate.

The Chuihua Gate was an internal courtyard gate in ancient Han residences—an important feature of siheyuan (courtyard homes). It marked the boundary and only passage between the outer and inner quarters. The outer courtyard was used for receiving guests, while the inner quarters were for the family's private living. Outsiders were strictly prohibited from entering. Even male servants had to obey this rule.

The ancient saying, "Don't go beyond the first gate or the second," referred to this second gate—the Chuihua Gate.

"If you need anything, just send someone to call me."

Zhu Ping'an understood these customs, so he stopped before the Chuihua Gate and said this to Li Shu with a calm tone, then gave her a cupped-hands salute and watched her leave.

That he didn't try to enter the inner courtyard—even this the bumpkin understood—left several young ladies of the marquis' residence, who had been waiting to see him make a fool of himself, somewhat disappointed.

Li Shu and her party entered the Chuihua Gate and continued inside along the covered corridor. In the center was the passage hall, also known as the courtyard. In front of the entrance was a screen made of fine marble, engraved with a poem by Li Bai, placed right in the middle.

Because of the marble screen, Zhu Ping'an could not see past it. One moment they were there, and the next they had vanished.

If the Chuihua Gate was the first barrier to the inner courtyard, then this marble screen was the second. Surely, there would be a third.

However, Zhu Ping'an had no interest in exploring further. After watching Li Shu and her party disappear into the inner quarters, he turned and returned to his guest room.