

Rise 38

Chapter 38: The Master's Curiosity

The sky cleared, the sun rose in the east, and Zhu Ping'an once again climbed onto the back of the cow, beginning a new day of grazing cattle and wooing little girls.

During breakfast, Aunt's coaxing words encouraged Jun Ge to go to school and aim for the top scholar, which made Mother Chen feel quite envious. When he set out to ride the yellow cow, the sense of loneliness and disappointment from Mother Chen frequently appeared in his mind.

I must work hard to earn a title of nobility for my mother.

Autumn is the season when crops need water. It takes at least three waterings to ensure a good harvest. However, during this crucial season, the heavens have not cooperated, and it hasn't rained for nearly a month. As Zhu Ping'an rode the cow along the village path, he saw the crops on both sides of the road clearly lacking water. Passing over the bridge, he could see with the naked eye that the water level in the creek had dropped; yesterday, the water had soaked the bridge piers, but now they were exposed by an inch.

On the hillside, the scheming little girl seemed to have been waiting for a long time, riding her little red horse with a disdainful expression.

"Why did you come so late? Didn't you know I've been waiting for a long time?!" The scheming little girl, Li Shu, opened with an accusation.

Zhu Ping'an, sitting atop the yellow cow, looked down at the scheming little girl with helplessness. It's not that I came late; you clearly arrived too early. Speaking of which, didn't you used to come much later? Why are you so early today? And this brat has changed her clothes again; that's too excessive. Changing every day must cost a fortune—who could afford to marry you?

"Hey, are you mute?!" The scheming little girl, Li Shu, saw Zhu Ping'an looking down at her, appearing calm and collected, which made her a little angry. She raised her small whip, pretending to strike.

Such a spoiled princess temperament; she gets temperamental over nothing, as if the whole world is her servant.

"I usually come at this time," Zhu Ping'an said lightly, then leaned down to pat the old yellow cow's head and said, "Old Huang, I'm getting off."

Old Huang bent down slightly, and Zhu Ping'an rolled off its back, leading the old cow up the hillside.

The little girl was a bit envious that Zhu Ping'an had trained the old cow to be so obedient, but she also remembered why she had come early: what had happened after Guo Jing shot two eagles with one arrow yesterday? Would the Mongolian barbarian Khan really marry Huazheng to that useless person? I want to know the story that's coming! Last night, I tossed and turned and couldn't sleep well; my heart felt like a kitten scratching inside, so I hurried over early.

But, unexpectedly, this little pauper doesn't want to tell me a story—how can this be?

So, the scheming little girl rode her horse to catch up with Zhu Ping'an, blocking his way and threatening, "Hey, Zhu Ping'an, you didn't forget something, did you? Do you believe I'll go tell the teacher right now?"

Same old story, just like those girls in elementary school who always threatened to report you.

"The teacher didn't tell the story of the eagle yesterday; he talked about the Three Character Classic and calligraphy instead—no stories. I'm going up to see if the teacher will tell one. If he does, I'll come back down to tell you," Zhu Ping'an spread his hands, looking helpless.

"You're lying! I don't care; I want you to tell me!" The scheming little girl began to be unreasonable, demanding Zhu Ping'an tell her immediately.

"If the teacher doesn't tell, I can't tell you either," Zhu Ping'an shook his head in refusal.

"You, hmp! If you tell me, I'll let you eat this." The scheming little girl took a small box from her saddle, opened it, and inside was fragrant braised pork.

Zhu Ping'an couldn't control his drooling a bit. Although he had a hearty meal this morning thanks to his grandfather's words last night, it was just plain vegetarian dishes and coarse grain flatbreads. Now, he had unexpectedly spotted some mouth-watering braised pork that was still steaming. Could it be that this small box was an ancient thermal container?!

"I had the cook make this specifically for you; just eat it," the scheming little girl seemed to recall something from yesterday when she had said something like "dog" to this little turtle, and the little brat had mocked her in return. So, this rare moment of suppressing her proud temper led her to explain a little.

Zhu Ping'an licked his lips and shook his head with difficulty.

"You!" The scheming little girl exploded.

"I'm going to class now. If the teacher talks about 'The Legend of the Condor Heroes,' I'll tell you later," Zhu Ping'an didn't want to provoke this cunning girl; who knows what she would do when she got angry?

The scheming little girl fell silent for a moment and said, "Then you better hurry; it won't taste good once it cools down."

Zhu Ping'an nodded and led the old yellow ox up the hillside.

The scheming little girl looked at Zhu Ping'an's back, unwillingly cracking the whip twice to vent her frustration!

When Zhu Ping'an, holding a black wooden board and a brush, arrived at his usual spot outside the classroom to sneak a lesson, the teacher had just finished checking the children's homework. Zhu Pingjun had once again been punished with the ruler.

After checking the homework, the teacher started the new day's lessons, still on the Thousand Character Classic. Today's lesson was on "Clouds rising bring rain, dew turns to frost. Gold produces beautiful waters, jade comes from Kunlun," leading the children in reciting it several times before beginning the explanation.

During the explanation, the teacher once again noticed the mischievous child outside the classroom, sitting properly as if he were listening to the lesson, feeling a bit curious, though he didn't pay it much mind.

After the explanation, the teacher began teaching the children how to write these characters.

The teacher wrote these characters on the table and hung them on the wall in front of the classroom. Then he walked around the classroom while explaining the key points of writing and correcting the children's mistakes.

As he turned to the doorway, the teacher saw the mischievous child playing the game of watering stones again and shook his head with a smile, realizing he had thought too much; the mischievous child had not been listening to his lecture at all.

So, the teacher focused all his attention back on teaching the children inside the classroom.

Outside the window, Zhu Ping'an was unaware of the teacher's thoughts. After pouring some water into the groove of a stone, he glanced at the large characters hung by the teacher in front of the classroom, listening to the teacher's explanation of the writing techniques, and began to write rapidly on his black wooden board.

The teacher walked around the classroom, correcting every child's mistakes. When passing the doorway again, he saw the mischievous child once more.

In his view, the mischievous child was no longer playing the game of watering stones but was engaged in a new game, poking at the stones with a small bamboo stick.

Out of curiosity, the teacher assigned the children in the classroom the task of writing three times, then stepped out to approach the mischievous child.

The mischievous child seemed engrossed in play and didn't notice the teacher approaching.