

Rise 48

Chapter 48: Uncle's Study Tour and Bringing Back a Girl

The journey was smooth, without any unruly kids causing trouble. Zhu Ping'an rode his old yellow ox, and together with Zhu Pingjun, they returned home without incident.

Before reaching home, they saw a large crowd gathered outside the Zhu family's gate, jostling together, pointing and discussing the Zhu family courtyard, with many aunts and older women expressing their disdain.

Zhu Ping'an's heart trembled; something significant must have happened at home. He hurriedly urged the old ox to speed up, and Zhu Pingjun followed closely, pushing his way through the crowd.

The Zhu family courtyard was indeed in chaos, filled with cries, curses, and noise all mixed together. His mother, Chen, and several of his aunts were surprisingly united, comforting the crying and cursing elder aunt.

"Last night, there was lightning, then the wind picked up, and it started to rain. She stood there, frail and pitiful, at the door, shivering from the wind, her clothes soaked by the rain. She looked helpless, pitiful, and weak. I could see her tears shimmering with hurt. I knew she needed warmth at that moment, so I gave her a few coins to buy a coat, but who knew she would repay me with her body?" The eldest uncle stood there, full of sentiment, truly embodying a bit of the spirit of worrying about the world before worrying about himself.

"Bah! Is that the reason you brought a woman home after fooling around outside?" The eldest aunt spat, crying and cursing, wishing she could bite off a piece of the elder uncle's flesh.

Hearing the elder uncle's explanation, Zhu Ping'an could only think of four words: "What a heroic elder uncle!" How utterly shameless! A little rain? It hadn't rained in over a month, and it was still hot at night these days.

Upon hearing this, the grandfather, furious, took a stick and chased the elder uncle around the yard. The grandmother was beside him, trying to stop him, afraid that he would hurt the eldest uncle with the stick. The eldest uncle now showed no dignity as a scholar; his hair was disheveled, likely from being clawed by the eldest aunt earlier. He was running around the courtyard like a drenched chicken, covering his head, fearing that his father's stick would ruin his face.

"Hey, old man, be gentle; don't break our uncle!"

In one corner of the courtyard, a young woman with painted nails and sunflower seeds stood against the wall, casually dressed but made up with some powder and eyebrow makeup. Though her looks were ordinary, her attire was bright and slightly more revealing than the average woman's, and her voice had a pretentious tone, clearly indicating she was not a respectable woman.

Zhu Ping'an almost understood; it seemed the eldest uncle had brought a woman home after only two days in the county. Wasn't he supposed to be visiting friends for a study trip? How could he return with such an obviously disreputable woman? Besides, where did he get the money? Two coins wouldn't be enough.

"Bah! You shameless, wanton woman, who do you think you are? That's my man!" The eldest aunt, provoked by the woman, dropped her pretense of being dignified and turned into a shrew. She stepped forward and spat a big mouthful of phlegm at the woman, launching into a barrage of insults.

The woman was not to be underestimated; after being spat on by the eldest aunt, she let out a shout and lunged at her, ready to fight. At that moment, the unity of the aunts was evident: Mother Chen, Fourth Aunt,

and Third Aunt all put aside past grievances to help the eldest aunt restrain the woman, even taking the opportunity to kick her. In no time, the woman was pinned to the ground by Mother Chen and the other aunts, who scratched at her face. Soon, the woman was disheveled, her clothes in tatters, hair a mess, looking utterly miserable.

"Zhu Shouren, what did you say when you came here? Are you still a man?" The woman shouted angrily at the eldest uncle, who was darting around like a rabbit.

It was futile; the eldest uncle was in no position to save himself.

Zhu Ping'an and Zhu Pingjun were both shocked by the chaotic scenes as soon as they entered the courtyard, unable to regain their composure; women fighting was so intense!

Meanwhile, the grandfather took the opportunity to hit the eldest uncle with a couple of sticks, while the grandmother cried out in distress.

"Dad, Dad, listen to me!" The uncle, hiding behind Grandmother, spoke awkwardly.

Father and Third Uncle were frozen on the side, not knowing what to do, while Little Fourth Uncle took the opportunity to stare intensely at the woman who was pressed to the ground by the aunts, sneaking a glance for his own amusement.

Zhu Ping'an really didn't know what to say. He came back to his senses, got down from the ox's back, and hurried to close the front gate to prevent outsiders from witnessing the embarrassment. As for the rest, it was beyond the control of one mischievous child.

The yard was noisy for a long time before it gradually quieted down. The makeshift trial was set up in the yard. Grandfather sat in a chair, and besides the eldest uncle and the disreputable woman, everyone else found stools or chairs and sat on either side. The eldest uncle and the woman stood in the middle, looking particularly disheveled.

"Wretch, why aren't you kneeling!" Grandfather said, coughing in anger.

Grandmother quickly reached out to help Grandfather catch his breath but was pushed away by him, who angrily complained, "It's all your fault for spoiling him!"

After being scolded by Grandfather, the eldest uncle plopped down to his knees, his previously clean face now particularly disheveled.

"Dad, listen to me, this wasn't your son's idea." The eldest uncle stubbornly insisted on explaining.

"If it wasn't your idea, why did you bring her home?"

Upon hearing this, Grandfather, infuriated, threw the large pipe he was holding at the eldest uncle. The eldest uncle, quick-eyed, dodged just in time, and the pipe hit the ground, splattering mud everywhere. If he hadn't dodged, he would have definitely gotten a bump on his head.

Seeing that the uncle had avoided it, Grandfather became even angrier, his finger trembling in fury. "Tell me, how did you let your wife ask your mother for money? Studying abroad, studying outside, and this is how you study outside!"

The eldest uncle's face was unclear whether it was flushed from embarrassment or from the rush earlier, but it was red as he forced himself to say, "Dad, I didn't want this either. I went to the county to study with my peers, but unexpectedly, after discussing academics together, he was very impressed with my knowledge and invited me to his home for a drink. At that time, it was drizzling, and Juan was thinly dressed, serving outside. I couldn't bear it, so I gave her some money to buy a coat to keep warm. Who would have thought she would think it meant I was offering myself? My friend saw that I was alone and had no one to take care of me, so he just gave Juan to me. I tried to refuse countless times. But he insisted, saying that if I didn't accept, it meant I didn't treat him as a friend, and if I didn't accept, he would sever ties with me and not share the exam points my mentor had taught me. I couldn't refuse; it was beyond my control."

In just a few sentences, the eldest uncle conveyed two meanings: this woman wasn't something I bought with money; my friend admired my knowledge and insisted on giving her to me, and I had no choice.

This was utterly reversing right and wrong! Zhu Ping'an was truly speechless. Who do you think you are? Not even a scholar, and yet someone is giving you a beautiful woman for free, and you can't even refuse her despite your best efforts.

While the uncle was saying this, Zhu Ping'an clearly noticed the mocking smile at the corner of the woman's mouth.

"Calm down, old man. Didn't the eldest say? She was given to us, so we can just return her." Grandmother spoke up for the eldest uncle.

Little Fourth Aunt chimed in lightly, "Since she was given to him for free, then where's the money big brother took when he left?"

Mother Chen shot a look of appreciation at Little Fourth Aunt.

"Of course, there's money." The eldest uncle's voice lacked conviction.

"Where's the money?" Little Fourth Aunt insisted.

The eldest uncle reached into his sleeve and pulled out a handful of coins, placing them in Grandmother's hand.

Uh, it was barely ten wen.

Grandfather's anger, which had not subsided, flared up even more. Unable to contain himself, he picked up a stick from the ground again. Seeing this, Grandmother immediately rushed over to hold the stick down, turning to the eldest uncle and shouting, "You wretch, hurry up and explain!"

"So, I treated my mentor to a meal in the county, and it cost a lot..." The eldest uncle stammered in his explanation.

"That was two taels of silver! Enough for our family to eat for half a year, and you spent it all on one meal!" Mother Chen lamented.

But Grandma not only didn't punish the uncle; instead, she shot a fierce glance at Little Fourth Aunt and Chen, signaling them not to speak recklessly.