

# RISE OF THE POOR

## Chapter 5: The Warmth of The Hibiscus Tent

Grandma Zhu fell silent for a moment before slowly speaking, "Eldest daughter-in-law, the family really doesn't have any extra resources for Jun'er's education right now."

Aunt Wu wanted to negotiate further, but Uncle Zhu pulled her gently under the table and signaled with his eyes. Aunt Wu then reluctantly nodded in agreement.

Because Zhu Ping'an was young and short, he happened to catch sight of Uncle's small gesture under the table and gained a deeper understanding of his uncle's thoughts, realizing that his uncle was quite perceptive.

Yes, Uncle! The path to the private school in the neighboring village is no longer feasible, but isn't there still you, Uncle? Although you didn't pass the examination to become a scholar, you are well-read. If I accompany you to learn traditional characters, isn't that a way to save the situation?

"Then can I learn from you, Uncle?" Zhu Ping'an raised his little face and asked with his little hands stretched out.

Before Uncle Zhu could respond, Aunt Wu was already upset and began to lecture Zhu Ping'an, "Little Pig, your uncle still needs to study for the exam. He wishes he could spend two days just reading. How could he have time to teach you to read and write? If it delays your uncle from passing the scholar exam and becoming a top student, you'll be the one to suffer!"

In short, Aunt Wu had a face full of disdain! She looked very much like Wang Dachui's mother-in-law.

"Let your uncle pass the scholar exam first, and then I'll teach you," Uncle Zhu's words were much more pleasant than Aunt Wu's, but the meaning was the same—refusal. One was blunt, and the other was more tactful, but there was no difference.

Even though I am still young, I won't rely on you for my education. I'm just looking for a reason to gradually showcase my knowledge.

If I wait until you pass the scholar exam, it will be too late. If what I sensed when I entered just now was fortune, then Uncle is unlikely to pass the exam anytime soon. Although the white pillar of fortune above Uncle's head is

somewhat denser than that of others in the family, it is still white. White represents commoners. To ascend to a higher position, one needs to have blue fortune.

Zhu Ping'an silently criticized.

Although the food was not delicious, adhering to the principle that saving is honorable while wasting is shameful, Zhu Ping'an still ate his flatbread and the congee in his bowl completely clean, even licking the bowl a few times. After all, he was barely a little chubby.

Zhu Ping'an's good appetite formed a sharp contrast with Zhu Pingjun, who was picky and choosy on the opposite side.

"Second brother's family, go serve Little Pig another bowl of congee,"  
Although the old man favored the eldest and youngest families, he was still very protective of his own children. Seeing Zhu Ping'an eating well, he was satisfied, fearing the child might go hungry.

At such times, Chen Shi always wore a proud expression.

As dinner was about to end, someone knocked on the door from outside, delivering a message from the town that Grand Uncle's family would be

moving to join their son who was doing business in the south, and they wouldn't be able to come to pay respects to their ancestors during the New Year. Therefore, they would come to pay respects to the ancestral graves three days later before leaving.

In the Zhu family, there are three siblings: Grandpa Zhu is the youngest, with an elder sister who married into the town. Grand Uncle went to the town to apprentice from a young age and moved there after starting his own family.

Although they lived in different places, they would always meet during holidays or market days.

Now, upon hearing that his elder brother was moving to the south and would be hard to see again, Grandpa Zhu couldn't help but feel sentimental. He sighed and went back to his room without finishing his meal.

After the old man left, Grandma Zhu, feeling worried, quickly went to comfort him, and everyone gradually dispersed, returning to their own homes.

The news of Grand Uncle's family moving to the south didn't greatly affect the rest of the family, except for Grandpa Zhu. After all, even though Grand Uncle's family had a good relationship with them since moving to the town,

they were not particularly close. At most, it would just mean one less place to stay when visiting the town.

The Zhu family courtyard is somewhat similar to the Siheyuan in modern old Beijing, but it is slightly wider and more complex, divided into the main house and two side rooms. There is a well in the courtyard. The main house consists of three large rooms: one serves as the living room, one is the bedroom for Grandma Zhu and Grandpa Zhu, and the other is the residence of the eldest uncle's family. Each side has a side room; the east side room on the left is where Zhu Ping'an's family lives, while the west side room on the right is one and a half times larger than the east side room, separated in the middle to accommodate the families of the third and fourth aunts. Additionally, close to the entrance, there is a kitchen and a firewood room next to the courtyard wall.

Under the bright moon and sparse stars, the left side room is lit by an oil lamp, the light as small as a broad bean, dimmer than the moonlight that has not yet streamed in through the window. Although the side room isn't completely bare, there aren't any valuable items, but the room has been tidied up by Chen Shi, making it clean and orderly, with everything arranged neatly.

Chen Shi is sitting at the table, sewing pants for Zhu Ping'an under the dim light, while Father is sitting nearby doing some simple carpentry work.

Biting off the thread with her teeth, Chen Shi places the garment beside Zhu Ping'an, saying, "Try it on to see if it fits!"

"It fits, it definitely fits! Whatever you make, Mom, it fits perfectly. You're the best, Mom!" Zhu Ping'an grins widely, his sweetness comparable to honey. His protests have finally worked; he will no longer have to wear open-crotch pants.

"You little brat, just know how to sweet-talk! I must have owed your grandpa and uncles something in my last life!" Mother complains, but her affection cannot be hidden.

"Using light during the day and wasting oil at night."

Grandma, passing by the window, sees the lights in the east and west side rooms and can't help but scold a few words. These daughters-in-law are really wasteful, using so much oil. If they had been careful like before and not used oil lamps at night, the money would have been enough for my eldest grandson's studies.

"Okay, I got it, Mom. I'll put out the oil lamp now," Father Zhu Shouyi immediately responds.

"I still have other clothes that need mending!" Chen Shi glares fiercely at Father, who just grins foolishly, making her unable to vent her anger and just stare at him.

"Laugh, laugh, laugh! All you know how to do is grin like an idiot while your wife and children are bullied by your mother!" Chen Shi can't stand Father's soft demeanor and pinches his arm hard.

Zhu Shouyi is a sturdy farmer, and Chen Shi's pinch has no effect on him; he still wears a silly grin, as if a punch had landed on cotton, which only angers Chen Shi further.

"Marrying you is truly the worst luck I've had in eight generations!" Chen Shi, infuriated, pokes a finger forcefully on Zhu Shouyi's forehead.

"I must have accumulated eight generations of virtue to marry such a good wife like you."

Zhu Shouyi usually appears to be a dull and simple farmer, but now he speaks with a surprisingly high level of eloquence, refreshing Zhu Ping'an's view of his "cheap" father. It turns out that this father, who is three points

duller than Guo Jing, also has a charming side; otherwise, how could he marry such a wonderful woman like Mother?

Chen Shi's face flushes, feeling a bit embarrassed, not caring about setting a bad example for the children!

Under the lamp, seeing the beauty, especially the rare bashful side of the spirited Chen Shi, Zhu Shouyi is momentarily mesmerized.

"Brother, I'm so sleepy." Zhu Ping'an chuckles, pulling his elder brother, who is meticulously weaving bamboo baskets, to the small bedroom separated by wooden boards in the side room for a rest.

Uh, it seems the next part isn't suitable for children.