

Rise 54

Chapter 54: Rag Business

Until she walked out of the store with 130 wen in her pocket, Chen was still somewhat unable to believe that her youngest son had managed to earn her 60 wen by picking up some scraps. Making this pouch took even less time than she usually spent on her own pouches.

As soon as fourth aunt and the eldest aunt stepped outside, they asked Chen about the origin of the pouch. Chen, who had a habit of showing off, immediately threw her youngest son under the bus, praising him for finding the scraps in the fabric shop and bringing home a whole basketful. Since his father had bought fabric there, the storekeeper had given it to him for free.

Upon hearing this, fourth aunt's eyes widened, and she eagerly urged, "Let's hurry to the fabric store and pick up some scraps!" The eldest aunt immediately took action and headed toward the fabric shop.

The several sisters-in-law hurried toward the fabric store and asked the shop assistant when they arrived.

"Oh, you also want scraps? But you came too late; someone just bought up all the recent scraps for two wen," the shop assistant replied nonchalantly.

Came too late?

Someone had gotten there first?

Fourth aunt and the eldest aunt's expressions darkened, as if all the white silver they could have earned had slipped away.

Chen, however, didn't mind. Last time, Zhu Ping'an had brought back more than half a basket of scraps; that was enough to sew dozens of pouches. The lack of scraps this time didn't matter much; they could come back next time.

But Chen overlooked the shop assistant's business acumen. Seeing someone buy scraps for two wen and soon after being asked by others, the assistant thought that the scraps must have some value and decided that next time he should raise the price on them.

Fourth aunt and the eldest aunt dejectedly went to find Zhu Shouyi and fourth uncle to see how much the wild boar had sold for. Halfway there, they saw Zhu Ping'an, a chubby kid, happily carrying a large basket of scraps. Fourth aunt and eldest aunt were immediately stunned; it turned out that it was Zhu Ping'an who had bought the scraps.

Chen's eyes lit up. "Good job, you little rascal! My son is so clever; he bought such a large basket of scraps for just two wen. How many pouches can this make? Each pouch is worth 20 wen..." Chen suddenly felt that Zhu Ping'an and Zhu Pingchuan weren't carrying a basket of scraps but a basket of copper coins.

"Zhu'er, why did you get so many scraps? You should give half to your aunt when we get back," fourth aunt said without any hint of embarrassment, immediately wanting half.

The eldest aunt wasn't going to be left behind either; she quickly chimed in for half as well.

Zhu Ping'an was at a loss for words. How could they have the nerve to ask for half? If he gave them half, wouldn't his mother end up with no scraps at all?

"No way! I'm going to sell them to my mom to earn money for a wife," Zhu Ping'an insisted, shaking his small head vigorously like a rattle drum, using the excuse of saving money for a wife.

Fourth aunt and the eldest aunt recalled the incident with the New Year's money and realized Chen had no way to deal with him.

"Are you really going to sell even to your mother?" Fourth aunt asked in surprise.

Zhu Ping'an nodded.

"Then sell to us instead. You spent two wen at the fabric shop, so how about this: Auntie will give you four wen, and you can give it all to me," Fourth aunt suggested, her eyes glinting as she immediately tried to entice him. "You'll make two wen profit just by flipping it—what a bargain!"

"Zhu'er, your eldest aunt will give you five wen, so you should give it to her," the eldest aunt said, not willing to back down.

Chen began to feel anxious, fearing that Zhu Ping'an might impulsively agree.

You really know how to do the math, she thought. Zhu Ping'an ignored them and instead turned to Chen, asking, "Mom, how much did you sell the pouches made from scraps for?"

"Twenty wen; the regular ones only sell for ten wen," Chen replied excitedly.

"Oh, two pieces of scrap make one pouch, so I'll sell you two pieces for five wen. Who told me we're so familiar?" Zhu Ping'an said, counting on his fingers for a long time before looking up seriously at fourth aunt and eldest aunt.

Five wen for two pieces of scraps! Fourth aunt and the eldest aunt's mouths dropped open. There must be thousands of pieces in that large basket of scraps! He bought them for two wen and was now trying to sell them for a hundredfold profit! How greedy could he be?

This little brat really got lucky! If only they had discovered the usefulness of the scraps earlier. Fourth aunt and the eldest aunt thought to themselves, believing Zhu Ping'an was just lucky rather than clever.

Chen had been happy, but upon hearing Zhu Ping'an say he was charging money, her expression immediately soured.

"I told you to give the money to your mother! I told you..." Chen grabbed Zhu Ping'an, pinning him on her lap as she threatened to spank him.

"Alright, alright, I won't charge you! I won't charge you!" Zhu Ping'an quickly surrendered. He hadn't intended to take Chen's money; he was just saying that to impress fourth aunt and the eldest aunt.

While Chen could intimidate Zhu Ping'an into submission with the threat of a spanking, fourth aunt and eldest aunt couldn't do the same. However, getting them to spend five wen on two pieces of scraps was even harder, especially knowing that Zhu Ping'an had only spent two wen in total on the large basket.

Chen wanted to keep the entire basket for herself, but she knew she couldn't be too greedy, or it would hurt their sister-in-law relationship. Besides, with such a large basket, it would take her ages to finish sewing them. Moreover, a gentleman loves wealth and gains it through proper means; how could she turn her attention to her own family?

"Your eldest aunt and your third and fourth aunts shouldn't pay either," Chen said, keeping Zhu Ping'an pinned to her lap and putting on a show.

The eldest aunt and the others immediately looked at Chen with grateful expressions.

"No way! I still need to save money to get a wife!" Zhu Ping'an insisted.

Zhu Ping'an was pinned on Chen's lap and stubbornly refused to relent, thinking to himself that he was just a child, and at this age, it was the perfect time to protect his things.

"Save up! Save up!"

Chen found it both amusing and frustrating that a little brat like him was already talking about saving money to get a wife. She playfully swatted Zhu Ping'an's small bottom twice.

"That hurts!" Zhu Ping'an yelped.

"Do you still want the money?" Chen paused her hand and asked.

"No more, I don't want any!" Zhu Ping'an shouted repeatedly. He had just realized that with such a large basket, the eldest aunt and fourth aunt wouldn't be willing to spend five wen on just two pieces of scraps, and even if they did, there were too many scraps for his mother and the eldest aunt to use up in a short time. Collecting money from family members in this era wasn't a good reputation; it wasn't like the modern world where brothers clearly settled accounts.

It was better to earn a good reputation and let them use the scraps; after all, they wouldn't be able to use them all. Why focus on family members when there were so many skilled seamstresses in the village? Instead, he could give the extra scraps to them to process and then charge ten wen for each pouch. They

wouldn't need to provide materials, and with just a little effort, they could earn the same amount of money they originally made without having to run to town. They would definitely be willing.

Seeing Zhu Ping'an come to his senses, Chen couldn't help but smile with satisfaction. The eldest aunt and the others also smiled, expressing their gratitude toward Chen.

The whole family was happy together.