

Rise 55

Chapter 55: Flower Shooter

When the group reunited with Zhu Shouyi and the others, they had already negotiated a price with a local tavern.

Zhu Shouyi, along with fourth uncle and Zhu Pingjun, who was too lazy to get off the cart, didn't know who to sell the wild boar to when the tavern's manager approached them proactively and seemed very sincere.

The price of ordinary pork was about 18 wen per jin, while live pigs (those that had just been released from the pen and not yet slaughtered) went for around 10 wen per jin. This price difference was understandable since the cost of slaughtering the pig and removing the blood and entrails meant that the meat yield from live pigs was roughly 80%. The tavern manager offered 15 wen per jin for the wild boar, a price that exceeded Zhu's father and fourth uncle's expectations; it was even 50% higher than the price for their farm-raised pigs, so they naturally agreed. The wild boar weighed a net total of 268 jin, which would typically amount to 4,020 wen. However, to build goodwill, the manager gave them 4,050 wen, tossing in an extra 30 wen, which was a nice little windfall. Of course, the tavern manager stood to gain even more; one wild boar could be used to create over a hundred delicious dishes, potentially netting him nearly a hundred taels of silver in profit.

The eldest aunt, fourth aunt, and the others were all wide-eyed with excitement over the four taels of silver and 50 wen in copper coins. They had never held so much money at once, and seeing it all made their eyes light up; they wished they could grab it all and keep it for themselves.

However, Zhu Ping'an's attention was not on the money; he noticed that Zhu Pingjun, who should have been with Zhu Shouyi and the others, was missing. Where could Jun Ge go alone? He didn't know the way! It was fine if he was running around playing, but if he got tricked by someone, that would be disastrous; given Jun Ge's character, the chances of that happening were high.

"Dad, Fourth Uncle, where's Jun Ge?" Zhu Ping'an interrupted the adults who were surrounding the money, worriedly reminding them that Zhu Pingjun was missing.

"Jun'er is right with us..." fourth uncle started, but he abruptly swallowed his words, realizing that Zhu Pingjun was indeed gone.

At this, the adults grew anxious. Where had that little rascal run off to? Remembering past rumors of children being abducted by beggars in the town, they became even more worried. They hurriedly stuffed the silver and copper coins into their money bags and quickly split into groups to search for Zhu Pingjun, not daring to lose him.

After calling for him several times with no response, the eldest aunt was nearly in tears from worry.

Suddenly, Zhu Ping'an spotted a child sucking his finger at a candied fruit stall, looking a lot like Zhu Pingjun. However, he was surrounded by a man and a woman who appeared to be middle-aged and looked anything but trustworthy; they were haggling with the candied fruit vendor.

"Aunt, is that Jun Ge?" Zhu Ping'an quickly called out to the flustered eldest aunt.

"Jun'er, why are you running off?" The eldest aunt took one glance and was certain it was Zhu Pingjun. When she saw the suspicious-looking middle-aged couple next to him, she gasped and rushed over.

The eldest aunt's shout caught the attention of Zhu Shouyi and Fourth uncle, who were searching nearby, and they all ran toward her.

Realizing the situation was getting out of hand, the middle-aged couple, who had been haggling with the vendor, abandoned Zhu Pingjun and dashed into a narrow alley to escape.

The eldest aunt pulled Zhu Pingjun into her arms, checking him over multiple times to ensure he was safe before letting out a sigh of relief.

At that moment, the adults finally had time to ask Zhu Pingjun what had happened.

Zhu Pingjun was biting his finger, staring longingly at the candied fruit stall, swallowing hard as he recounted the whole situation in a nonsensical way.

While Zhu Shouyi and Fourth uncle were busy negotiating with the tavern manager and helping unload the wild boar, Zhu Pingjun had been bored and counting ants by the ox cart. Then he heard storytelling at the entrance of a teahouse nearby, and it just happened to be his favorite story about heroes ridding the world of evil. He wandered over to listen.

It was a middle-aged couple—yes, the very same couple who had just made a run for it—who told Zhu Pingjun that they had a great hero visiting their home. They said that Zhu Pingjun had a unique physique and must be a martial arts prodigy, and they wanted to take him to meet this hero and learn from him.

Without hesitation, Zhu Pingjun eagerly followed them.

Fortunately, Zhu Pingjun had a sweet tooth; when he saw the candied fruit stall, he asked for some. Just as the couple was buying the treats, Zhu Ping'an, with his sharp eyes, spotted him and quickly alerted their eldest aunt, who rushed over to retrieve him.

After hearing this, the eldest aunt's face turned dark, and she grabbed Zhu Pingjun, giving him a good thrashing while also lecturing him about how those people were likely child traffickers.

For a long while, Zhu Pingjun was crying so hard that his voice became high-pitched.

Once the eldest aunt felt she had taught him enough of a lesson, she asked, "If someone says there's a hero or a great warrior again, will you still go with them?"

Zhu Pingjun, still sniffing and with tears and snot all over his face, perked up at this question.

He looked up at his eldest aunt and quickly asked, "Where? Where's the hero?"

Once again, he was met with another round of smacks from the eldest aunt, her face dark with anger...

"Is this how children should behave?" Zhu Ping'an thought, his eyelid twitching. He certainly couldn't learn from this. Even if he thought about it, he wouldn't act so foolishly.

Chen and others quickly intervened, fearing that the eldest aunt, almost bursting with rage, might act against Zhu Pingjun out of frustration. They embraced her and protected Zhu Pingjun. After a long time of coaxing, they finally managed to calm her down.

It wasn't until they got home that Zhu Pingjun began to realize that the well-meaning couple who had wanted to take him to meet the hero were likely the very people his eldest aunt warned him about. He muttered to himself that next time he would only follow a hero if they were real. If he had spoken louder, the eldest aunt would have surely caught him for another lesson.

When they sold the wild boar, Zhu Ping's father handed all the money over to their grandmother as soon as they got home, but she refused to give him a single coin. Chen was not happy about this at all; after all, her husband and eldest son had gone through so much effort to bring back the wild boar and had even sustained some injuries. Why should they get nothing?

After dinner, Chen remained in a gloomy mood. However, her expression finally brightened a little when Zhu Ping'an emptied a large basket of scraps on the ground and revealed 270 wen, which he had earned from selling honeysuckle, handing it to her.