

Rise 57

Chapter 57: The Bet

People crowded together, the sound of gongs and drums filled the air; laughter and joy were everywhere, never ceasing.

The long-awaited day for the water contest between the two villages had begun. If one didn't witness it firsthand, it would be hard to imagine that such a serious event as a water contest between two villages could be so lively. Whether young or old, everyone had carefully washed and dressed up, looking as if they were celebrating the New Year. Especially the young men, who gathered in groups of three or five, bathed and put on new clothes, trying to show off in front of the girls from their own or the neighboring village. The girls' families, unusually lenient on this day, gave them rare freedom.

The location of the water contest was at the border between the two villages, near the river, and close to two hills about seven or eight meters high. In the open area, a huge crowd of villagers from both villages gathered, creating a bustling scene. In the center of the crowd stood a wooden platform of over twenty square meters. On the platform sat the two village heads, elders, and some highly respected people from both villages. Among them was Master Sun, enjoying wine and conversation with another elderly man of similar age.

Upon closer observation, however, one could detect a hint of seriousness beneath the liveliness, particularly in the demeanor of the two village heads and elders sitting together at the same table. Although they were exchanging toasts with smiles, there was an undercurrent of rivalry between them. But the most serious presence of all was the 60 children, who were the main participants in the water contest between the two villages.

Zhu Ping'an stood with over twenty rowdy children, forming two rows, listening to an elder in front of them who was passionately giving a motivational speech. He boasted about the victories the village had achieved

in previous water contests and listed the rewards that awaited them if they won this time. The speech fired up the group of children, making their faces flush with excitement, as if they had just drunk chicken blood.

Amid the group of excited, red-faced children, Zhu Ping'an stood dumbfounded, showing no reaction to the elder's words.

"Shame, shame, Zhu Ping'an, you big fool... Just wait, you'll definitely get beaten so badly that you'll roll on the ground..." A mischievous little girl suddenly appeared, riding her little red horse, making faces at Zhu Ping'an.

"Miss, wait for me..." Her little maid, Hua'er, lifted her skirt as she chased after her, panting heavily.

That vengeful little brat! She must have given a heads-up to the kids from her village.

The mischievous little girl was too adorable to scold, so the elder giving the motivational speech couldn't bear to tell her off, which made her even more smug.

"You'll lose," Zhu Ping'an ignored the little girl's antics and said calmly.

It was like being told by the referee that you'd lose before a swimming race had even started while you were still warming up.

The mischievous little girl, who had been happily making faces, was suddenly doused with cold water by Zhu Ping'an's words, and she jumped up in anger.

"You're talking nonsense!" Li Shu, the little girl, waved her small whip at Zhu Ping'an, puffing with fury.

"I might be talking nonsense, but a whole group of us wouldn't be, right?" Zhu Ping'an said indifferently, then turned around and loudly asked the group of children who had been fired up by the elder, "Do you think they'll lose?"

The excited, red-faced children, eager for a chance to let off steam, immediately shouted at the top of their lungs, "They'll lose! They'll lose so badly they'll lose their pants, hahaha..."

Lose their pants...

The little girl's face turned red with both embarrassment and anger, and Zhu Ping'an's level of hatred in her eyes soared to new heights.

"Shut up, all of you! Zhu Ping'an, do you dare to make a bet with me?" The little girl was so furious that she exploded, silencing the children's laughter.

But after hearing the little girl's challenge, the children began jeering again, "Bet, bet, Zhu Ping'an, bet with her! If she loses, she'll become your little wife, hahaha..."

"You scoundrels, shut up! I would never marry a toad, I'm a little swan!" The furious little girl almost wanted to ride her red horse and whip every one of them to vent her anger.

"Zhu Ping'an, do you dare to bet with me?" The scheming little girl shouted loudly at Zhu Ping'an.

"What are we betting on?" Zhu Ping'an, after being described as a toad by the scheming little girl, was feeling quite unhappy.

"If we win, you have to agree to do something for me," the scheming little girl shouted at Zhu Ping'an.

"And what if you lose?" Zhu Ping'an retorted.

"We won't lose!" The scheming little girl seemed to have confidence from nowhere.

"But what if you do lose?" Zhu Ping'an pressed on.

"If we lose, I'll agree to do something for you as well." The scheming little girl finally spoke after thinking for a while.

"Oh oh, if you lose, you'll end up becoming Zhu Ping'an's little wife, hahaha..." A group of overly excited kids nearby started jeering.

The scheming little girl coldly shouted, "You're the ones who will lose!" Then, she angrily rode away on her little red horse.

Before leaving, the little maid with buns in her hair shot Zhu Ping'an a fierce glare. This brat is so bad! It was bad enough when he hit the young lady on the butt, but he even told scary ghost stories on purpose to frighten her! So mean. Hmph, just wait until you lose, let's see how the young lady will deal with this brat! Hmm, should she beat him up or scold him? Oh, it's such a tough choice.

"When they lose, make him be your companion, a servant, and let's see if he still acts so high and mighty!" The scheming little girl, still angry, said while riding her little red horse.

"Huh? Miss, please no..."

The little maid Hua'er, who was running behind, softly complained, but secretly she seemed a bit expectant. If that brat also became a servant like her, wouldn't that mean she could listen to stories every day? Oh no, what am I thinking? No way, I'm a first-class maid! I'd have to make him sweep, fetch water, and feed the yellow dog every day. He'd have to start working before dawn and wouldn't be allowed to rest until after dark... After all, he did spank me once—such a bad person!

Thanks to the scheming little girl's antics, the group of rowdy kids from Xiahe Village became even more eager, each rolling up their sleeves as if they couldn't wait to make the kids from Shanghe Village look bad.

The village heads and elders of the two villages had a brief meeting, then got up from the platform, each facing their own village to pay respects to their ancestors. They then slaughtered a rooster and dripped a drop of its blood into each person's wine cup. It was a bit like a blood pact. They made a vow together, promising that no matter the outcome of the village contest over water, both villages would adhere to the agreement. Then, they downed the blood-stained wine in one gulp.

At that moment, the crowd erupted into cheers, and the village contest for water officially began.