

Rise 58

Chapter 58: Capture the Flag

The village elders from both villages, under their respective supervision, handed over ten flags to thirty mischievous children from each village. The flags from Shanghe Village had the word "Shang" (upper) written on them, while those from Xiahe Village had the word "Xia" (lower) written on them. The flags could be held or placed on the ground—any way was fine, as long as they weren't hidden. During the engagement, neither side was allowed to use any tools to avoid injury. Other than that, there were no restrictions, and both sides were free to use their imagination.

The first round was Shanghe Village defending their flags and Xiahe Village attacking to capture them.

When Zhu Ping'an stood at the foot of the hill with a group of mischievous children, he marveled at the water dispute tradition between the two villages. Truly, it was the wisdom of their ancestors! This kind of dispute avoided casualties and deepened the bond between the two villages. Most importantly, it solved the problem. For hundreds of years, the tradition of fighting over water had been followed, and regardless of the outcome, both sides strictly adhered to it—there had never been a single exception.

"Go, go..."

The spectators from both villages cupped their hands around their mouths, shouting loudly to cheer on their children.

As Zhu Ping'an listened to the crowd shouting "Go, go!" he was dumbfounded. Wait a minute—wasn't it commonly accepted that the phrase "go" (or "cheer") only emerged with modern racing? So why were these people shouting it now?!!!

He felt as if he'd been struck by thunder.

Could the rumor be true? Back in graduate school, when researching the term "go," there was a rumor about the Ming Dynasty—specifically about Liu Bowen from this dynasty.

There's a saying: "The strategist of the previous dynasty was Zhuge Liang; the strategist of the latter dynasty was Liu Bowen." After Liu Bowen helped the founding emperor unify the country, he became quite proud of his intellect, believing that for 500 years before and 500 years after, no one could surpass him. Sometimes, he even regretted that Zhuge Liang, revered by all, wasn't from the same era—otherwise, he would have shown the world who was truly the wisest. Then, a rather legendary story began. One day, while leading troops through a small forest, Liu Bowen spit out some phlegm, possibly because a bug flew into his mouth. Coincidentally, the phlegm landed on a stone tablet, which had an inscription that essentially read, "Liu Bowen, you fool, why are you spitting everywhere?" It was signed by Zhuge Liang. Liu Bowen was shocked. Could Zhuge Liang really have foreseen this? Was he provoking me? Then, his subordinates reported finding an ancient tomb nearby, and Liu Bowen guessed it must be Zhuge Liang's. He decided to enter the tomb, thinking, "You might have predicted my spitting, but surely you didn't foresee me entering your tomb!" Once inside, he found Zhuge Liang's eternal lamp burning with only a tiny flame, almost out of oil. Seeing this, Liu Bowen laughed. "Everyone says you're clever, Zhuge Liang. What nonsense! You couldn't even predict that your eternal lamp would run out of oil, let alone compare to my wisdom!" But just as Liu Bowen's laughter faded, he noticed a silk scroll in front of the lamp that read, "Old Liu, add oil (keep going)." And so, the phrase "add oil" became a way to encourage people.

At the time, I thought the story was too mythological to take seriously, but if you strip away the myth, it made sense that the phrase "add oil" could have originated in ancient times. When you think about it, the story about "add oil" coming from foreign race car drivers shouting because they were running out of fuel doesn't seem all that credible, given how different the pronunciation is from Chinese.

Regardless, the fact was that I heard the phrase "go" in the Ming Dynasty.

"Oil leak, Zhu Ping'an has an oil leak!" A faint voice came from the crowd, seemingly from two or three little girls shouting together.

Zhu Ping'an turned his head and saw the scheming little girl Li Shu riding on her little red horse, leading a couple of young maid servants who were mocking him.

Seeing Zhu Ping'an notice her jeers, the scheming little girl couldn't help but make a face at him with glee.

Zhu Ping'an, spotting the arrogant little girl, couldn't resist making a gesture as if to slap her butt in mid-air.

This gesture was lost on others, but the scheming little girl Li Shu and the dumpling maid Hua'er turned bright red the moment they saw it. They bit their lips tightly, glaring at Zhu Ping'an with reddened eyes, wishing they could rush over and bite him to relieve their anger.

The village elders from both villages lit an incense stick on the high platform, and at the moment it was lit, the bare-armed drummer swung his arms vigorously, striking the large drum made of cowhide.

Boom boom boom! The first round of the water contest officially began, with Shanghe Village defending the flag and Xiahe Village attempting to seize it.

A chorus of cries erupted as twenty-nine little troublemakers swept Zhu Ping'an along with them, screaming as they dashed up the hillside, completely like a rabble with no strategy whatsoever.

In fact, before rushing up the hill to seize the flag, Zhu Ping'an had thought of various strategies suitable for the troublemakers in his village—what with wave tactics, front-and-back encirclement, and flanking maneuvers. But unfortunately, very few of the kids were willing to listen. Just think about it: they were all around eight or nine years old, while he was just a five-year-old little brat. It was strange if they listened to him.

Whenever he thought about this, Zhu Ping'an couldn't help but sigh up to the sky. Damn it, others who crossed over had mighty warriors and cunning strategists flocking to them, like Guan Yu and Zhang Fei, or at least Zhang He and Liao Hua. But what about him? He couldn't even gather a bunch of eight or nine-year-olds despite stomping his feet for ages.

It's true that comparisons make you feel inferior.

The hillside where Shanghe Village defended the flag was only about eight or nine meters high, but if you considered the slope, it was over twenty meters.

Zhu Ping'an ran up the hill with his short legs, panting and feeling exhausted. How could these troublemakers have so much energy? But then again, it was understandable; every foodie was essentially a lazy person. If they could sit, they wouldn't stand; if they could sleep, they wouldn't sit; if they could think, they wouldn't do manual work. Zhu Ping'an learned while riding an old yellow ox, unlike the troublemakers who rolled around in the dirt all day.

He realized this way wouldn't work; he would be too exhausted to seize the flag after climbing. The defenders would just be waiting for him. He didn't want to lose because this was related to his family's grain yield for next year. Moreover, if he lost, who knew how that little brat would retaliate against him.

Among the crowd, very few were willing to listen to him. Zhu Pingjun was one, along with Er Niu, Black Dog, and a few other playmates. Including himself, there were only eight of them. However, eight people among thirty was still a considerable force.

"Jun Ge, Er Niu, Black Dog, Dong Dog... slow down and listen to me..." Zhu Ping'an called out to his playmates while panting heavily.

In his rush to call out to them, Zhu Ping'an didn't pay attention to the ground beneath him. He stumbled over a bump and fell flat on his face. Fortunately, it was just a fall; his feet were fine.

Although Zhu Pingjun and the others didn't understand why Zhu Ping'an called them, they still obediently moved closer to him.

Down the hillside, the scheming little girl and her young maidservants saw Zhu Ping'an fall and excitedly hugged each other, squealing with delight before loudly mocking him.

"Hahaha, stupid Zhu Ping'an fell flat on his face! Serves him right, serves him right..."