

## Rise 63

### Chapter 63: The Poor Family, Let It Rise

The door of the Old Zhu family's house was closed from the inside, isolating them from the curious gazes of the neighbors. Only faint sounds could be heard, muffled and indistinct.

Inside the courtyard, the atmosphere was even more tense.

Under the relentless questioning from everyone, First Uncle finally couldn't hide any longer and revealed the whole truth.

"Father, it's not that I wanted to; I only had so little money in my hands, how could I possibly afford to treat my friends and teachers? I had no choice but to borrow some money. As for why I filled in the name of my second brother, it was also a helpless act. I still need to take the imperial examination! If my name is on that loan note, it would be a stain on my record for the examination. Who would still be willing to vouch for me? Even if I were to succeed in the examination and become a scholar, with that stain, I might find it hard to hold an official position in the future. Father, father, all of this is so helpless!"

Uncle Zhu Shouren said this while kneeling on the ground, crawling a few steps, hugging his grandfather's leg, and crying out heart-wrenchingly.

First Uncle's words clearly indicated that he was trying to distance himself from the situation, portraying himself as someone who endured humiliation for the sake of the family's revival, like the historical figure Gou Jian!

"How dare you still speak!" The grandfather's face turned black with anger, his whole body trembling. He raised his hand and slapped First Uncle fiercely across the face, "The whole family has tightened their belts to support your studies, and you tell me this is what you've done?!"

Uncle Zhu Shouren did not dodge; he took the slap, and his face was even twisted from the blow.

"Father, I did this for the family!" Uncle Zhu Shouren's cries became even more sincere after taking the slap. "I also did this to revive the family. Father, I've seen that teacher; he has received secret teachings. I cannot leave a stain on my record, father!"

The grandfather looked at his eldest son kneeling at his feet, then glanced at his second son lying on the stretcher with a leg covered in blood, the two grandsons with faces full of anger, and the second daughter-in-law who looked ready to scratch First Zhu to pieces. He felt a wave of powerlessness rising in his heart.

"Oh, here we have a future scholar, a future graduate! Old Zhu has such a son; this is indeed something to celebrate..." The fat man with a roll of flesh on his body watched this farce with a smirk, fully enjoying the spectacle. "However, no matter who you are, it is only natural to repay debts."

At this point, the smile on the fat man's face disappeared, replaced by a fierce expression. His eyes shone with malice as he spoke with a hidden threat, "I don't care how you guys manage your affairs; the money you owe me cannot be less by a single coin. The repayment is still 15 taels of silver. If I come back three days later, it will be 16 taels of silver. By then, it won't just be these few people with me. If they don't handle it properly and something happens to your future scholar, don't blame me for being merciless."

After saying this, the fat man darkened his face and waited for Grandpa Zhu's family to respond.

15 taels of silver—where could the family possibly find that much money? Grandfather closed his eyes, feeling utterly exhausted, pondering for a while. He walked over to the fat man and cupped his hands in a salute, saying, "The family has encountered misfortune, and I'm afraid we've made you laugh. I, Zhu, also know that debts must be repaid. Today, we truly cannot come up with 15 taels of silver. Let's not even mention the 16 taels in three days. Would you please come back tomorrow afternoon? We will prepare 15 taels of silver; does that work for you?"

The fat man grinned, pondered for a moment, and nodded. "Fine, I'm not unreasonable. After all, we might do business together in the future. Alright, I'll bring people over tomorrow afternoon to collect the money. But let me be clear: money makes for good negotiations. If you don't have the money, my brothers here aren't known for their restraint."

"We're leaving!" The fat man declared, leading his lackeys out the door.

At that moment, a youthful yet resolute voice stopped him.

"Stop!"

Everyone was startled, and upon hearing Zhu Ping'an's voice, they were all filled with dread. Little ancestor, why are you stopping him? Hurry up and send this plague away!

The fat man was taken aback, thinking, what's going on? Is he going back on his word? There's no need for a little kid to intervene if he's having second thoughts!

"What's the matter?" The fat man halted, turned around with a sullen face, and asked.

Zhu Ping'an lifted his head, unflinching. He locked eyes with the fat man for a moment, his eyes red, and shouted loudly:

"You hurt my father, and you think you can just leave without a word? Now you know that my uncle is the true borrower, yet you still injured my father!"

"It's only right to repay debts, and though I'm young, I've heard that blood must be repaid in kind! It was your mistake to confuse the borrower, and it was also your mistake to hurt my father!"

"You think you can just walk away after injuring my father?"

Hearing the repeated questions from Zhu Ping'an, the fat man felt a bit embarrassed. He darkened his expression and said, "What, do you want blood for blood?"

"Zhi'er!"

"Little Zhi!"

The family members were deeply worried.

"I may be small and unable to fight you, so I'll let blood for blood go for now. But you must give us an explanation. If you were injured for no reason, would you just let it go?" Zhu Ping'an insisted, maintaining eye contact with the fat man.

Zhu Pingchuan also stepped forward, standing beside Zhu Ping'an, and stared at the fat man with the same resolute expression.

The fat man stood there for a moment, recalling the saying often told by storytellers: "Do not underestimate the poor youth." He looked at Zhu Ping'an, this little brat, and the boy beside him, muttering something about bad luck. Then he pulled out a handful of coins from his pocket and tossed them onto the ground.

Fine, let them fall to the ground.

Zhu Ping'an didn't press the fat man to pick up the coins and hand them to him like some protagonists in novels would. Come on, what kind of scene is this? What was he? Just getting this much compensation was good enough. Forcing the fat man to pick up the coins? Ridiculous, right?

A man's blood and guts should not be lacking, but he also understood that those who know how to bend with the times are the real talents.

The fat man left, but the issue of the usury was still unresolved.

His uncle had borrowed money under Zhu Shouyi's name, causing Zhu Shouyi to suffer a beating. This was something the family needed to address.

Chen led her two sons, standing there, looking at the grandfather and grandmother.

"Father, soon I'll have to take my exams, and I can't have a stain on my record! I'm also helpless in this, I'm doing it for the family!" The uncle cried out, clinging to his father's leg.

"Stop crying." The grandfather patted first uncle on the shoulder and sighed.

The uncle immediately stopped his tears and began to sob, which made Zhu Ping'an look down on him. This method was too low.

The setting sun cast its last rays over the land, staining the ground with mottled shadows. The Zhu family's door opened once again! Zhu Ping'an's family emerged, each person carrying bags and packages. His mother, Chen, and older brother, Zhu Pingchuan, carried a stretcher, upon which lay the man who had been beaten but hadn't shed a tear, now weeping as he looked at the Zhu family courtyard.

All kinds of paths are inferior; only studying is supreme!

It was at this moment that Zhu Ping'an truly understood this phrase!

"Adopted son, I'm sorry for you!"

No matter how regretful the grandfather was, how his old tears flowed, he could not hide the fact that to preserve the uncle's reputation, for the sake of his examinations, Zhu Ping'an's family had been divided! Or rather, they had been expelled from the family! Zhu Shouyi would still carry the reputation of having borrowed from a loan shark!

Two acres of rice fields, five acres of dry land, several bags of grain, incomplete pots and pans, and the thatched house at the east end of the village that didn't even have a wall.

In the morning, he was a farmer, and by evening, he climbed into the halls of the emperor.

There is no lineage for generals and ministers; a man must strengthen himself!

Looking at the Zhu family courtyard, Zhu Ping'an silently recited to himself, then whispered, "Let the poor rise!"