

## Rise 64

### Chapter 64: New Life

Just a light breeze can cause tremors.

In the evening, Zhu Ping'an stood in the desolate and barren yard, looking at the two old thatched houses trembling in the wind, unable to utter a word; it was truly desolate and unprotected from the wind and sun.

"It's all my fault for dragging you three down," said his father, lying on a stretcher, filled with self-blame and a look of desolation.

Hearing this, his mother, Chen, lightly hit Zhu Shouyi and smiled brightly, "What are you talking about? We can consider this a blessing in disguise! Let me tell you, Zhu Shouyi, I've long wanted to split the family! If it weren't for your injured leg, I would have lit some firecrackers to celebrate today!"

"I think this is great; it's very close to the river. I'll catch a couple of fish later to make soup," said Zhu Pingchuan, the elder brother, who also stepped forward with an optimistic grin on his face.

"Great! This time I can finally eat some fish in the fish soup," Zhu Ping'an seemed to be infected by the optimism of his mother and elder brother, and at that moment, he was also beaming with childlike joy.

Listening to his wife and children, Zhu Shouyi rarely revealed a smile.

"What are you grinning about? The doctor said your leg isn't broken. When Dachuan catches the fish later, you need to drink plenty of fish soup. Get better soon so you can work for us three!"

The harsh words spoken by Chen made Zhu Shouyi feel sweet inside.

Being close to the river made cleaning the yard much easier. The family took advantage of the fact that it wasn't completely dark yet to sweep the yard and sprinkle water to remove the dust...

The thatched house at night was so comfortable. After dinner, the Zhu family lay in the thatched house, dreaming of a bright future.

Chen quietly excitedly talked about their possessions, and the family listened quietly, "I had saved more than three taels of silver as my private funds. Zhi'er's New Year money is nearly one tael, and the first time Zhu Pingchuan and Zhi'er sold honeysuckle for 120 wen, and the two silver coins given by the noblewoman for Zhi'er also weigh more than one tael. Last time, Dachuan picked honeysuckle and sold it for more than 270 wen. My pouch also earned 130 wen. You, this rotten wood, brought back a few hundred wen from the town these two times, and that bad guy compensated one tael of silver. Oh, and there were scraps of cloth that earned more than one tael when given to others for sewing... Tomorrow, we'll ask someone to help tidy up this yard..."

The family now roughly had around 9 taels of silver left; more than 9 taels of silver was a substantial amount for a farming family. Fortunately, Zhu Ping'an had helped generate quite a bit of income during his time here, or else the family might have struggled significantly.

The next day, without needing Chen to call for help, someone came to assist.

Third Uncle, Third Aunt, and the lazy little Fourth Uncle also came, and of course, the ominous little Fourth Aunt didn't miss out. Additionally, several close friends of Zhu Shouyi also came to help. Not only did they come to assist, but they also brought various items—food, clothing, and necessities. Even little Fourth Aunt secretly slipped Chen over a hundred big coins.

The happenings in the Zhu family were not something that could be hidden from everyone's eyes. Those familiar with them were all aware of the underlying issues, and the concerned villagers in Xiahe Village held sympathy for Zhu Ping'an's family.

"I'm not saying this to you, second sister-in-law, but with so many of us here, why go looking for outsiders? Spending that extra money is better used to buy some food to help second brother recover," said little Fourth Aunt, as usual, unable to stop talking, continuously chatting while adding straw to the mixing mud.

Zhu Ping'an found his Fourth Aunt, who had a crow's mouth, to be so adorable for the first time.

With many people helping, Zhu Ping'an's family transformed their thatched house significantly. They reinforced the adobe walls, and the thatch was entirely renewed, so the sky was no longer visible through it. The yard was also renovated, surrounded by mud walls tall enough to keep them safe.

Thanks to these people's support, Zhu Ping'an's family spent a bit over a couple of taels of silver to tidy up the yard, fill it with household items, and arrange their little home.

At noon, the village head also came by, saying that the village elders had decided to allocate five acres of wasteland surrounding Zhu Ping'an's family's five acres of dry land to them. As long as they cultivated it in a timely manner, they could get a land deed according to the policies in place.

With two acres of rice paddies, five acres of dry land, and an additional five acres of wasteland, it seemed like a lot. However, given the productivity during the Ming Dynasty, it wouldn't yield much. The output of five acres of dry land was less than that of two acres of rice paddies, not to mention the five acres of wasteland.

But regardless, with these fields, Zhu Ping'an's family no longer needed to worry about starvation.

Zhu's father had a strong constitution and was a robust man. Although he looked terrifyingly bloody after the injury, it was merely superficial. He lay in bed for about seven or eight days before getting up and walking around.

Ten days later, Zhu Shouyi was back to his usual self, as strong as an ox, which brought even more laughter and joy to Zhu Ping'an's family.

With so much land at home, especially the five acres of wasteland that needed to be cultivated promptly, otherwise they would miss the opportunity to secure the land deed.

Zhu Shouyi had just recovered, and Zhu Pingchuan was still a half-grown child. Their mother, Chen, although a bit fierce, didn't have much strength, and as for Zhu Ping'an, he was still not even as tall as an adult's thigh.

The family discussed that they should buy a plow ox. Since the establishment of the Ming Dynasty by Zhu Yuanzhang, a decree was issued prohibiting the killing of plow oxen for meat, and even if an ox died from old age, there would be penalties. Therefore, plow oxen were not very expensive now. The Zhu family spent less than three taels of money to buy a strong, tall black ox.

With the help of this black ox, Zhu's family's five acres of wasteland were cultivated in time, and the village head assisted them in obtaining the land deed.

Zhu Shouyi and his first son went into the mountains from time to time to catch some rabbits and wild chickens to supplement the household income. Their mother, Chen, worked day and night to mend pouches for money, and Zhu Ping'an, aside from his studies, felt he should contribute as well.

Just as they finished plowing the fields, the black ox was left idle. To make the most of the ox's value and to contribute some income for the family, Zhu Ping'an pondered for several days and finally came up with a good idea.

"Will it work?" Chen was quite skeptical.

"It doesn't matter if it fails; I'll give it a try." Zhu Shouyi agreed with Zhu Ping'an's idea.

A few days later, something new spread across the villages. Of course, the reason it spread so quickly was that Zhu Ping'an had given twenty small children twenty wen to promote it in the surrounding villages.

In any case, a few days later, Zhu Shouyi set off in a bullock cart. The cart was quite peculiar; it was much longer and wider than the usual bullock carts and had two rows of bench seats. This was Zhu Shouyi's newly crafted wooden bullock cart, made from trees he had chopped down in the mountains at no cost. A bell was hung around the neck of the big black ox, ringing as it walked, making a sound that traveled far.

"Shouyi, did this bullock cart really cost only one wen to get to the town?" The villagers had already received the news, but now they wanted to confirm it, with an older woman asking.

"Others pay one wen, but I can't charge you, Auntie, since you've taken care of me since I was little," Zhu Shouyi replied with a smile.

"You little rascal, do you look down on your aunt? I can still afford one wen. This bullock cart is really convenient for us; otherwise, my old bones wouldn't be able to make it to town," the old woman jokingly scolded as she climbed onto the cart.

Indeed, Zhu Ping'an had transplanted the concept of modern public transportation into this era. It took about half an hour to walk from the village to the town—an hour being two hours of exhausting effort. Sitting on the bullock cart would save a lot of time and effort, and since it only cost one wen, people were still willing to pay.

After Zhu Shouyi left with the bullock cart, Chen anxiously stood outside the door waiting. Even until the evening when Zhu Shouyi returned, her anxious heart had not calmed down.

When Zhu Shouyi drove the bullock cart into the yard, he sneakily pulled Chen into the house.

"Ah, our son is here!" Chen blushed and gave Zhu Shouyi a glare, thinking he was up to something embarrassing.

Zhu Shouyi also turned beet red and shook his head repeatedly, pulling Chen into the room.

As soon as they entered, Zhu Shouyi began to unfasten his belt.

Seeing this, Chen's face turned even redder, and in anger, she pinched Zhu Shouyi's waist hard, scolding, "You rascal, I know you've been pent up during your injury; tonight, tonight I'll indulge you..."

At this point, Chen suddenly stopped talking and then raised her voice, "Zhu Shouyi, you didn't go robbing, did you?!"

Zhu Shouyi was unfastening his belt because he was stuffed with copper coins; the money bag in his sleeve was already full.

With a clatter, Zhu Shouyi poured all the copper coins onto the bed and excitedly looked at Chen, "How could I be robbing? This is all from today's trips to town to pick up passengers!"

"Really?" Chen's eyes sparkled with excitement.

Zhu Shouyi nodded vigorously, "Today happened to be the big market in town, so there were more people, and I made a few more trips. Normally, I wouldn't have this much."

Chen's eyes were filled with gold as she excitedly began counting; it took a long time before she finished, totaling two hundred thirty-seven wen.

Transportation, especially monopolized transportation, undoubtedly brings in profits. Zhu Ping'an, as the initiator, was not surprised by this at all.