

## Rise 67

### Chapter 67: Snow and Green Bamboo

The slices are thin as paper, simple to eat, and delicious in taste.

Leaving the wealthy Li family's house, it was around noon. The snow and wind outside were still fierce, but just thinking about the mutton hotpot he had just eaten gave Zhu Ping'an a feeling of spring on his tongue, making him feel warm despite the heavy snow and wind.

Humming a strange tune, a book annotated by Zhu Xi lay quietly in the side-slung schoolbag. Zhu Ping'an stepped back into the snowstorm once again.

The saying "A timely snow promises a good harvest" is a sign of a prosperous year in folklore. Every time it snows, it brings joy to the farmers. This year's heavy snow ensures a bountiful harvest next year. The saying has been proven true over thousands of years. Along with the snow comes building snowmen, snowball fights, skiing, and more. However, after the snow falls, there's an unavoidable issue: roads are blocked by snow, making transportation difficult.

By now, the snow was already as deep as a palm, making walking on the road quite difficult. With every step, Zhu Ping'an trudged through the snow, sometimes sinking deeper, on his way home. Suddenly, he remembered that Master Sun's children were no longer around, and he was getting older, making snow sweeping a challenging task. So, Zhu Ping'an changed direction and headed towards Master Sun's house.

The route to Master Sun's house was well-known to him. Over the years of learning, Zhu Ping'an had often gone there to seek knowledge.

Master Sun's house was not far from the wealthy Li family's, and after walking for less than ten minutes, he arrived. Master Sun's family was also well-off, with a house made of wood and earth, making them middle-upper class in the village.

Those of you who have read many novels might think: Master Sun would be moved by Zhu Ping'an's diligence and love for learning, recognizing his great potential, and offer to marry his daughter to him, and so on.

Haha, you're overthinking it. Master Sun was almost sixty years old, his daughter was in her forties, and even his granddaughter had long been married. His children had settled in town after starting their own families. Master Sun and his wife lived together, known for their harmonious and respectful relationship.

The doors of Master Sun's house were never locked, so Zhu Ping'an walked right in. There was a cluster of bamboo in the courtyard, adding a touch of poetry to the scene.

Upon entering, he saw Master Sun tidying up the bamboo. The strong winds and heavy snow had bent the bamboo under the weight of the snow, and Master Sun, worried that it might break, was using a small broom to sweep the snow off the bamboo.

"Teacher," Zhu Ping'an bowed respectfully to Master Sun as he entered the courtyard.

"Oh, it's Ping'an," Master Sun didn't need to turn around to know it was Zhu Ping'an. Inspired by the moment, while tidying the bamboo, Master Sun asked, "Ping'an, what insights do you have about this bamboo?"

Insights about the bamboo?

Zhu Ping'an wasn't quite sure what Master Sun meant. He looked at the bamboo Master Sun was tidying. Though the wind and snow weighed it down, the bamboo remained green and resilient. There was an old saying about the three friends of winter: pine, bamboo, and plum. So, Zhu Ping'an responded, "The bamboo stands proud in the snow, unafraid of the cold. I should learn from its integrity."

Master Sun, hearing this, put down the broom and shook his head. "It's true that winter bamboo is resilient, standing tall against the frost and snow. But as snow accumulates, some bamboo refuses to bend under the weight, eventually snapping. There's another kind of bamboo that bends after the snow falls, patiently waiting for the sunny days when the snow melts. As the snow melts into the ground, nourishing its roots, the bamboo grows stronger and stands tall once again."

Upon saying this, Master Sun turned his head to look at Zhu Ping'an. "Ping'an, we should strive to be like the bamboo that stands tall in the winter, defying frost and snow. But more importantly, we must be like the second kind of bamboo—able to bend and adapt. As long as we stay true to our roots, we won't stray from our principles! If we keep the green hills, there's no fear of running out of firewood."

"I have learned much from this lesson," Zhu Ping'an responded gratefully, bowing deeply.

Master Sun waved his hand and stroked his beard. "In this regard, I have high hopes for you. In a few months, the student examination will be held. This exam will be like the wind and snow to the bamboo. Don't let yourself be crushed by it."

So, it turns out that Master Sun was worried about this—concerned that Zhu Ping'an might not perform well in the upcoming exam and that failure would be too heavy a blow for him to recover from. Thus, he used the bamboo as a metaphor to offer guidance.

"Rest assured, teacher, I understand," Zhu Ping'an immediately reassured him, not wanting Master Sun to worry.

"Good, now I can rest easy," Master Sun laughed heartily.

"Old man, why are you making Ping'an stand out in the wind and snow? Ping'an, come in quickly and try some of the tea I just brewed," called out Mistress Sun.

Though Mistress Sun's hair had turned gray, she was neatly dressed and carried an air of scholarly elegance.

"Hehe, thank you, Mistress. In ancient times, there was the tale of warming wine before Hua Xiong's execution. Today, let me leave behind a name for clearing snow while warming tea," Zhu Ping'an joked as he picked up a shovel and broom from the courtyard and enthusiastically started clearing the snow.

"You child!" Mistress Sun playfully scolded.

Master Sun smiled, stroking his beard, and continued tidying up his bamboo.

At first, when Zhu Ping'an started shoveling the snow, his hands were freezing as they gripped the broom. But after a while, the heat from his body started rising, and soon, he felt warm all over. If he weren't afraid of catching a cold, he might have taken off his coat.

Before long, Zhu Ping'an had cleared a large open area in Master Sun's courtyard, and he had even shoveled a long path outside the door.

The combination of sweeping snow and brewing tea was delightful. After drinking Mistress Sun's tea and bidding farewell to Master Sun, Zhu Ping'an braved the wind and snow on his way home.

The thatched house where Zhu Ping'an's family once lived had now been replaced with a courtyard house of blue bricks and red tiles. In recent years, Zhu Shouyi had made considerable money by driving the ox-cart between the town and the nearby villages. Madam Chen, being a frugal and capable housewife, had saved enough money to renovate the courtyard.

"Ugh, what's the point of all this snow?" Madam Chen complained as she looked at the heavy snowfall with displeasure.

"Hehe, a timely snow promises a good harvest—it's a good omen," Zhu Shouyi chuckled as he swept the snow.

"Good omen, my foot. If it weren't for the snow, we could earn at least a few dozen, if not a hundred, coins a day with the ox-cart," Madam Chen said regretfully.

"Hehehe, mother is just the same as always. Mention money, and her eyes light up," Zhu Ping'an thought to himself with a smile.

"Ah! Zhi'er is back! Come in quickly and warm yourself by the stove," Chen, with her sharp eyes, was the first to spot Zhu Ping'an returning through the snow. She immediately called him into the house.

"I'll help Father finish shoveling the snow first," Zhu Ping'an chuckled.

"Don't worry about him—he's full of energy and probably looking for an excuse to put it to use anyway," she responded, dismissing his offer.

Without giving him a chance to argue, Chen took a few quick steps, grabbed Zhu Ping'an by the arm, and pulled him inside. She dusted the snow off his clothes and sat him down in front of the stove.

Knowing it was all out of her good intentions, Zhu Ping'an didn't resist and sat down to warm his hands by the fire.

"Where's my brother?" Zhu Ping'an asked, noticing that his elder brother wasn't around.

At the mention of Zhu Pingchuan, the eldest brother, Chen's face darkened slightly. "Not long after you left, your brother went off happily to the Zhang family's house to shovel their snow. Honestly, he's forgotten all about his own mother just because of that fiancée of his! And they aren't even married yet, and he's already acting like this—what will happen after the wedding?"

Zhu Pingchuan had gotten engaged last year to the daughter of Old Zhang, a family from the same village. Since Old Zhang's family doted on their daughter, they had insisted on waiting until she turned eighteen before marrying her off. By their reckoning, the wedding should take place next year.

"Hehehe, my mother is jealous," Zhu Ping'an teased with a grin. "Don't worry, when I get married, I won't be like my brother. I'll make sure to shovel snow with you by my side."

"You heartless boy!" Chen scolded, although her tone softened, clearly in better spirits after his playful remark. "Your brother only went to shovel snow by himself, but you—you want to drag your poor mother along to help!"

Though she pretended to be upset, Zhu Ping'an's teasing had clearly lifted her mood.