

RISE OF THE POOR

Chapter 9: The Foolish Boy Who Fell into the Eyes of Money

After a while, Father Zhu really couldn't bear it anymore. In his simple thinking, boys shouldn't be tangled up with flowers and plants. They should either study hard to pass the imperial exams or honestly work on the farm. Picking flowers wasn't something a proper boy should be doing.

"Well, we've got a decent harvest today, let's head down the mountain," Father Zhu stopped his two sons, who were still busy picking flowers, to prevent them from going astray. "We need to head down while the sun is still up. It'll be harder and unsafe to walk in the woods once it gets dark."

Zhu Ping'an, seeing that his small basket was already full of honeysuckle, gently pressed down on the flowers to make more space but, realizing it couldn't fit any more, reluctantly patted his hands and followed his father down the mountain.

On the way back, Father Zhu took the two of them to check the traps they had set for rabbits earlier.

The first trap was empty, with no catch. Zhu Ping'an was a bit disappointed.

But soon, his spirits lifted as the next two traps each had a fat, live rabbit inside.

Father Zhu tied the rabbits' legs with wild grass and let Zhu Ping'an pet them to his heart's content before placing them in the basket.

It was Zhu Ping'an's first time in the mountains, and they had harvested wild chickens, rabbits, fish, bamboo shoots, mountain mushrooms, and honeysuckle. Filled with excitement for future trips, Zhu Ping'an didn't even mind the aching pain in his legs.

"Ah, Second Brother is back!"

As soon as they entered the gate, Fourth Aunt Zhao rushed over like a wolf that hadn't eaten for days, her eyes practically glowing green.

Even Chen, who had been waiting for her husband and children by the door for a while, didn't react fast enough as Fourth Aunt was already grabbing at the basket on Zhu Shouyi's back.

Anyone who didn't know better would think Fourth Aunt had been waiting for her husband and children.

Zhu Ping'an stared, dumbfounded, at Fourth Aunt's unusually eager behavior.

"Wow, Second Brother caught two fat rabbits and two wild chickens! And so many fish! Mother, Mother, come quickly..."

In that moment, Fourth Aunt transformed into an airport security officer, frantically rummaging through the basket. Every time she found something, she shouted out loud, as if afraid others wouldn't know.

Father Zhu Shouyi stood there awkwardly, glancing at Chen, unsure what to do with his hands, embarrassed by Fourth Aunt's fussing.

Chen looked at Fourth Aunt with utter disdain.

Really, do you think everyone is as stingy as you and Fourth Uncle, secretly hoarding things?

Fourth Aunt continued to howl, and at that point, Grandmother came hurrying over too. Without asking whether her sons and grandsons had any difficulties or faced any dangers in the mountains, she immediately asked, "Is this all? Did anything get left behind?"

Suspecting hidden goods?

"Without his mother, he collected quite a lot this time. With the help of the two of them gathering wood ear mushrooms, mountain fungi, and bamboo shoots, the harvest is much better than the last time he went into the mountains," Zhu Shouyi replied honestly, as if he didn't pick up on the hidden meaning in Grandma Zhu's words, even giving his son some credit.

Grandma Zhu knew that her second son was honest and that as long as the second daughter-in-law didn't intervene, there wouldn't be any issue of hiding anything. Besides, the fourth daughter-in-law was overseeing everything, so she felt reassured.

However, when her gaze fell on the small basket on Zhu Ping'an's back, Old Lady Zhu rubbed her eyes. Why did it seem like her little grandson was carrying wildflowers?

Old Lady Zhu reached into Zhu Ping'an's small basket and rummaged around, finding that it was indeed full of wildflowers.

"You silly child, why are you carrying so many flowers?" Old Lady Zhu wondered if there was something wrong with her grandson's head. It was understandable for a girl, but what was a boy doing with so many flowers?

"To sell!" Zhu Ping'an answered promptly.

The glow of the setting sun shone on Zhu Ping'an, illuminating his small white teeth, making them gleam like gold—a spitting image of a foolish boy obsessed with money.

Fourth Aunt laughed so hard beside him that she couldn't stand up straight, coughing repeatedly. "Hehehe, Little Pig really cracked me up! Selling wildflowers, hahaha! Second Sister-in-law, did you put that idea in his head?"

Grandma Zhu shot a glance at Chen.

Chen was so angry that she wanted to slap the laughing face of Little Zhao right off! Stirring up trouble and causing drama! The fourth family really couldn't stay out of trouble for even a moment!

"It wasn't my mother's idea. I thought of selling them myself," Zhu Ping'an hurriedly said before Chen could get angry.

Grandma Zhu was right in front of them, and if his mother and Fourth Aunt got into a fight, it wouldn't end well.

"Hahaha, Little Pig must have been exhausted from climbing the mountain. Wanting to sell wildflowers—if that could make money, then everyone in our village would be rich! You'd have to see the sun rise in the west for that to happen."

Fourth Aunt really had no filter. Her sharp tongue and bitter heart, smiling on the surface but scheming beneath, was like a hidden fire or a concealed dagger.

"Watch your mouth! Don't you know how to speak properly? You're the one who's exhausted!" Chen couldn't take it anymore. Her precious son could be scolded by her, but no one else could say a word! It was one thing for the old lady to say something, but now this? Even though she thought her son

gathering a basket full of wildflowers was a bit strange, she wouldn't let anyone else criticize him!

"Alright, stop arguing. Go help the second one organize and put away the stuff," the grandmother said, focused only on the goods. She waved her hand, signaling for Chen and Little Zhao to follow Zhu Shouyi and put things away. As for the wildflowers in Zhu Ping'an's basket, the grandmother didn't care at all. What could wildflowers be good for? Not even pigs would eat them. "Little Pig can keep his wildflowers to play with."

It seemed no one in the village recognized the value of honeysuckle, which worked out perfectly for Zhu Ping'an.

Honeysuckle was arguably the easiest medicinal herb to prepare. You just needed to spread the flower buds on a reed mat or flat stone and dry them for a day or two. The only thing to be mindful of was not to turn them while drying, as it could break the flower stamens.

A reed mat was out of the question—Grandmother wouldn't allow it. So Zhu Ping'an had to find another place to dry them. The yard wouldn't work either, as the chickens could ruin them. Hmm, the roof of the pigsty should do the trick.

With his little legs, Zhu Ping'an stood on a small stool and successfully spread the honeysuckle to dry above the pigsty.

Looking at the neatly laid-out honeysuckle, Zhu Ping'an felt as if he could see copper coins running toward him.

This was hope!

That evening, it was Chen's turn to cook. Zhu Ping'an eagerly followed her, helping with the fire. Chen tried to chase him away, but he wouldn't budge. He had overheard Grandmother requesting fish soup for dinner. Although they had eaten fish at noon in the mountains, the seasoning hadn't been complete, and the cooking had been rough, so the true flavor of the fish hadn't been brought out.

Chen was skilled at cooking fish. She removed the scales, gills, and thoroughly cleaned the guts before rinsing the entire fish with water. Then, she placed it in a pot of water, adding bamboo shoots from the house and dried mushrooms before lighting the fire to slowly stew the fish. Cooking it slowly and carefully, the rich aroma began to waft from the pot not long after.

Chen glanced at her second son, who was staring at the pot with wide eyes, and couldn't help but laugh. "Look at you, drooling like that! Come, try the fish

soup for me, see if it's salty enough." She picked up a piece of fish, placed it in a bowl, and carefully removed the bones.

She said it was to check the seasoning, but really, she was just giving Zhu Ping'an a little treat.

"Alright, I'll give it a try," Zhu Ping'an washed his hands in the nearby basin and waved his chubby hands, pretending to be reluctant. But the way his mouth was watering made Chen laugh even more.

The soup was fresh and delicious, a hundred times better than the fish his father had made earlier that day. It was so good it made him feel like swallowing his tongue, almost bringing him to tears.