

Genius 88

Chapter 88 Appraising Calligraphy Slips_1

After Qin Fang and his companions had taken their seats, the venue gradually filled up. Most of the attendees looked well-dressed and successful at first glance. Although not everyone was in full regalia, each person's attire was clearly expensive. Especially the women seated around, who were dolled up to the nines, looking breathtakingly beautiful and captivating.

"Quite a lot of people here..."

Ning Weiqiang often chatted with Tang Cheng, while Qin Fang sporadically talked with Chen Jiangnan, exchanging words now and then. By this time, Qin Fang's new phone already contained the contact details of Tang Cheng and Chen Jiangnan.

Their relationship wasn't particularly close, but it certainly wasn't distant. Tang Cheng, perhaps because of his personality or profession, didn't show much warmth towards Qin Fang, though his looks were quite friendly.

On the other hand, Chen Jiangnan, who was a generation older than Qin Fang, seemed to hit it off well with him. Any initial barriers had already disappeared.

"I heard that many of the auction items are rare gems, especially several pieces of jewelry made for the Imperial Family that almost have those ladies over there drooling in anticipation..."

Chen Jiangnan gestured towards the flamboyantly dressed, excited women around them, and indeed, they all seemed almost desperate, their eyes nearly shooting flames of desire.

"Alright, cut the chatter, it's starting..."

Just then, the auctioneer took the stage, and the charity auction commenced. Each attendee received a brochure, a brief introduction to each auction item, which also indicated that the proceeds from these items would be donated to charity.

Qin Fang briefly looked through it and saw items such as porcelain, calligraphy, paintings, and jewelry. Just by looking at the age of these auction items, one knew the prices wouldn't be low. However, the starting bid, set at merely 1 yuan, was astonishing; it was what one might call a 'no-reserve' auction.

"It would be fun if I could snag a bargain..."

Qin Fang joked with Chen Jiangnan beside him with a chuckle.

"Don't get your hopes up. I've had a rough look, and none of them will go for less than a hundred thousand..."

Chen Jiangnan shrugged helplessly, "However, Brother Qin, could you take a look at this piece of porcelain for me? If it's genuine, then I really must have it today... The elder master gave me a good tongue-lashing last night, and getting this would perhaps calm him down a bit!"

Qin Fang looked at the information provided for the piece of porcelain in question. It was a Song Dynasty official kiln product with decent condition, estimated to fetch between 300,000 to 500,000 yuan; it wasn't the top-tier stuff but could be considered a fine item of its time.

"I'll try my best..."

Qin Fang naturally agreed, having previously thought Chen Jiangnan was just a profligate gambler, only to learn now that the man was a millionaire who ran a financial business in Ninghai.

This made sense, as Chen Jiangnan's family senior was a professor and doctoral supervisor at the Economics Faculty of Ninghai University, as well as a renowned expert in the economics field. Even if Chen Jiangnan could not inherit the full legacy of his family's elder, learning sixty to seventy percent of it was enough for him to make his way in the world.

While the two were conversing, the auction officially began. Items were continuously brought onto the stage, with the auctioneer giving a meticulous introduction to the item's provenance, history, anecdotes, and more—covering details not listed in the brochure.

After the introduction, there came the physical authentication phase, where each bidder could send up a representative to examine the item on stage.

Although the Elite Salon had hosted several auctions before and had even formed what might be called a professional auction team with collaborations from major auction houses, they were not a true auction house in essence. Therefore, they had previously declared that even the best appraisers can make mistakes, and thus they could not guarantee the authenticity of the auctioned items.

Although this declaration was quite infuriating, the chance of encountering a forgery was not very high. Besides, those who could make it here were not the type to haggle over every little bit of money; as a result, people naturally accepted it.

Chen Jiangnan had originally felt the same, but the incident that occurred last night had caused him to lose a considerable amount of face, and his family's elder also suffered a significant loss of prestige. It just so happened that Qin Fang was also present, which led to today's episode.

The previous items had all followed the same process, but Qin Fang had always been observing the situation as a bystander, watching these wealthy gentlemen from the upper echelons of society squander money like dirt.

Not only him, but Ning Weiqiang, Tang Cheng, and Chen Jiangnan also showed no intention of making a move, indicating that none of the items were to their liking. That is, until a piece of calligraphy appeared.

"Ladies and gentlemen, one-third of this charity auction has already passed, and now we arrive at our first minor climax. Please look at this piece of calligraphy..."

As the auctioneer's voice rose, two beautiful women carefully lifted a framed piece of calligraphy encased in a glass cover onto the display stand.

"This is a piece from Zhao Mengfu, a renowned calligraphy master of the Yuan Dynasty... According to the owner of this item, this piece of calligraphy has been passed down from ancestors and has been treasured for hundreds of years..."

Qin Fang couldn't be bothered with the auctioneer's drivel, which was nothing more than an attempt to inflate the value of the calligraphy. However, those who truly appreciated this piece and were seated here would certainly not spare any expense, like... Tang Cheng.

"Qin Fang, go check it out when it's time. If it's authentic, we'll make our move..."

Tang Cheng and Ning Weiqiang were whispering something to each other. Qin Fang couldn't make it out clearly, but soon Ning Weiqiang frowned and looked around, then he quickly remembered Qin Fang, smiling broadly as he spoke to him and nodded towards Tang Cheng.

"It's up to you now..."

Unexpectedly, the usually stern-faced Tang Cheng even bestowed upon him a rare smile, then left him with these few words.

"I know what to do!"

It was clear that Tang Cheng was very fond of this piece of calligraphy; his normally calm eyes also showed a hint of excitement. It was at this moment that Ning Weiqiang secretly told Qin Fang.

Apparently, the Elder Master Tang had a profound love for calligraphy, especially for pieces by masters from all dynasties. He always hoped to gaze upon them. However, the elder's prestigious status meant that he couldn't do many things himself, and descendants like Tang Cheng were naturally expected to fulfill such wishes of the elder.

"Understood..."

Qin Fang nodded gravely, and as soon as the auctioneer announced the start of the physical inspection, he promptly stood up and walked towards the display.

However, aside from himself, several other people also expressed interest in this piece of calligraphy, and they too sent representatives to the stage for an on-site appraisal.

Perhaps due to Tang Cheng and Ning Weiqiang's low-key personalities, the seats where Qin Fang and the others sat were not particularly good. So when Qin Fang stepped up to the stage, there were already quite a few people around the edges, careful appraising the calligraphy while murmuring to one another.

They were immersed in technical jargon that Qin Fang couldn't understand, debating either about the quality of the paper or the style of the script, sounding very authoritative, as if that was indeed the case.

When Qin Fang observed the calligraphy from the perspective of these experts, he realized what they were saying did appear to be so.

Soon enough, several "experts" authenticated the calligraphy as a genuine piece, and they slowly left the stage to report their findings. By then, time was up, and all Qin Fang could do was hastily deploy his Scouting Skill...