

## Golden 119

### Chapter 119 The Story of the Antique Dealer

The Confucius Temple on the banks of the Qinhuai River was first built in the third year of the Xiankang era of Emperor Cheng of the Eastern Jin Dynasty, Sima Yan. Based on Wang Dao's suggestion that "governing the country should prioritize cultivating talent," the Imperial Academy was established on the south bank of the Qinhuai River. Originally, only the academy existed; a Confucius Temple was not yet built. The Confucius Temple was expanded from the Eastern Jin academy in the first year of the Jingyou era of Emperor Renzong of the Song Dynasty. Because it enshrines Confucius, it is also known as the Confucius Temple.

Since ancient times, the Confucius Temple has been the crown jewel of the Qinhuai River, shining with captivating brilliance. A place of cultural brilliance and bustling commerce, it has long been renowned as a "beautiful land south of the Yangtze River." However, Nanjing has historically been a strategic military location, suffering numerous battles throughout history. The Confucius Temple has been destroyed and rebuilt four times. In 1984, the reconstruction of the Confucius Temple-Qinhuai Scenic Area began, with an investment of over 1 billion yuan. More than 20 ancient buildings, covering over 300,000 square meters, including the Dacheng Hall, Mingde Hall, Zunjing Pavilion, and the Jiangnan Examination Hall, were restored. On weekdays, the daily visitor flow exceeds 100,000, and on holidays, it surpasses 300,000.

From ancient times to the present, the Qinhuai River has been a place for literati to compose poems and write essays. Therefore, in the Confucius Temple located on the banks of the Qinhuai River, antiques, calligraphy and paintings, flowers, birds, fish and insects have become the most important selling points, often attracting many tourists to stop and look.

Since Confucius Temple is also a combination of antique and flower and bird market, Liu Chuan is very familiar with it. He led everyone into the Confucius Temple market from the east side. As soon as they entered the square, they saw a stone pillar on the east side of the temple with the inscription "Civil and military officials dismount here", which must be a sign of respect for "the most holy and virtuous king".

At that time, the Chaotian Palace Antique Market, which was known as "Panjiayuan in the North and Chaotian Palace in the South" in the antique world, had not yet been rebuilt. As a result, more antique enthusiasts gathered at the Confucius Temple Antique Market. In other cities, after nightfall, the stalls in the antique market would usually disperse, but the Confucius Temple Antique Market, which is located next to the beautiful Qinhuai River at night, was bustling with people and extremely lively.

The long street was lined with Ming and Qing dynasty-style buildings, creating a sense of time travel and placing one in ancient times. Due to the large number of tourists, Liu Chuan was now carrying the black lion in his arms, while the little white lion, unconcerned about its safety, nimbly weaved through the crowds, always closely following Zhuang Rui.

"Wood, slow down, slow down! This isn't a bargain hunt like Taobao, it's a huge market. You can forget about finding anything good here." After walking with the crowd for a while, Liu Chuan couldn't hold back any longer. There were so many people that it was impossible to stop in front of the stalls. Before you could even stand still, the people behind you were pushing you forward.

Actually, most of the people visiting Confucius Temple at this time are tourists from other places who admire its reputation and come for the lively atmosphere. They are not interested in antiques or looking to find bargains. As for the stalls, not all of them are modern handicrafts. Zhuang Rui walked through seven or eight stalls and casually scanned them with his eyes, but he did not find a single item with any spiritual quality. In this way, tourists can buy some souvenirs at a low price, and stall owners can earn some hard-earned money. It is a win-win situation.

The real local veterans also come to Confucius Temple, but they mostly come in the early morning to browse the "ghost market." The so-called "ghost market" is actually what people now call a night market, but before liberation it was called a morning market or "ghost market." Young people have started calling it a night market, but in the antique trade, the name "ghost market" has been used ever since.

Antique ghost markets typically operate from late at night until dawn, which differs from modern night markets. Because transactions take place at night, it's difficult to distinguish between genuine and fake goods, as well as good and bad items, making it easy to be deceived. In particular, many stolen goods are often sold here, which can easily lead to legal trouble and leave one with no way to defend oneself.

After liberation, the People's Government stipulated that no transactions were allowed before the streetlights were turned off, and the ghost markets were gradually abolished. However, ghost markets have now reappeared in various places, the most famous being Panjiayuan in Beijing and Confucius Temple in Nanjing. Other places also have them, though they vary. The hours are generally from 3 a.m. to 7 or 8 a.m., and some secondhand goods vendors may continue until noon. The vendors come from all over the country, and the goods are diverse, mostly replicas of antiques, but there are also some genuine treasures.

Unfortunately, Liu Chuan usually only came here to buy pets and wasn't very familiar with the antique market, nor did he know about the "ghost market." Otherwise, with Zhuang Rui's keen eye, he would

definitely have found many good things there. You see, while the ghost market has a lot of fakes and counterfeits, the chances of finding genuine treasures are far greater than on these street stalls.

Seeing Qin Xuanbing and Lei Lei frowning and constantly dodging the crowd, Zhuang Rui figured there were probably some shady hands trying to take advantage of the women. He said, "Let's go inside the shops. Even if there are any good items here, they've probably already been snapped up. There's no chance for us."

Liu Chuan and Zhuang Rui protected the two women and squeezed behind the scattered stalls, entering a relatively large antique shop from the outside.

It seems that there are quite a few people who think the same way as Zhuang Rui. Regardless of whether the antique shop is doing well or not, it is at least very popular. Three or five shop assistants dressed in ancient short clothes are talking non-stop to recommend the items in the shop to tourists. Zhuang Rui suddenly remembered a story and couldn't help but chuckle.

"Zhuang Rui, what are you laughing at all? Is what that person said wrong?" Qin Xuanbing asked Zhuang Rui, pointing at the eloquent shop assistant.

"No, I just thought of a joke and I'll tell you. There was an antique shop that was hiring sales clerks. GG called out the job postings for over a month and got a lot of applications, but not a single one got the job."

Two young men came that day. One of them arrived a little over five minutes earlier. As soon as he entered the shop, the owner picked up a small piece of wood shavings from the ground, placed it on a red silk mat, and asked the young man, "What is this?"

The young man paused for a moment, then replied, "It's a wood shaving."

The shopkeeper shook his head, casually tossed the wood shavings from the red silk mat back onto the ground, and said, "Young man, you haven't been accepted."

The young man was a little confused, but since the other person was the boss, he couldn't do anything about it. Just as he was about to leave, another job applicant walked in, so he stopped and wanted to see how that person would answer.

Sure enough, the shopkeeper used the same trick again: he picked up the sawdust that had been thrown on the ground, carefully placed it on the red silk mat, and asked the young man who had just entered, "Can you tell me what this is?"

The young man was taken aback for a moment upon hearing this, but then a smile appeared on his face, and he said, "These are toothpicks that Empress Dowager Cixi used to use."

"Excellent, you can start working now." The boss was overjoyed and immediately decided to hire the young man, while the first one left dejectedly, covering his face.

"Xuanbing, look at that shop assistant, doesn't she look a bit like the person I was talking about? All her skill is in her words."

Zhuang Rui's words made Qin Xuanbing and Lei Lei laugh, but Liu Chuan had obviously heard the story before and said unconvinced, "Wood, your story is outdated. Let me tell you one."

"You can tell stories too?" Zhuang Rui's words and the disdainful look he gave Liu Chuan greatly displeased him.

"What are you talking about? Listen carefully. Once upon a time, there was an antique dealer who had been married for over forty years and was nearly sixty years old. He fell in love with his wife's maid and would secretly make advances towards her. When his wife found out, she and the maid devised a plan."

One day, a maid said to the antique dealer, "Master, come to my room at midnight tonight." The antique dealer was overjoyed. At midnight, he secretly slipped into the maid's room. By then, the maid had switched rooms with the lady. After the antique dealer got into bed, he didn't say a word and went at it like a torrential downpour, as if he had taken Viagra.

Afterwards, the antique dealer lay on the bed, happily saying, "You're much better than my old hag." No sooner had he finished speaking than his wife kicked him to the ground, yelling, "You've been collecting antiques your whole life, and you can't even recognize such an old thing!"

"Liu Chuan, you lecherous scoundrel, you're no good at all!"

After Liu Chuan finished telling this joke, Qin Xuanbing and Lei Lei blushed. Lei Lei even went up and pinched Liu Chuan's soft flesh, causing Liu Chuan to beg for mercy in a low voice.

"Young man, you're not talking about me, are you? I am the old man you're talking about, over sixty years old, but my vigor is gone, I'm old, I'm old."

Suddenly, a voice came from behind Liu Chuan, startling the group. If this joke were taken seriously, they could incur someone's wrath for no reason.

The speaker was indeed an old man, plump and fair-skinned with a ruddy complexion. He looked to be in his sixties, with half of his hair black and half white. He wore glasses on his nose and a bright green thumb ring on his right thumb. He smiled and squinted at Zhuang Rui and the others. If this old man were dressed in a brocade robe, he would look like a wealthy and plump man from ancient times.

"Old man, we were just joking. How could we dare to say anything to you? Besides, you're not an antique dealer."

Liu Chuan freed himself from Lei Lei's small hand and said to the old man with a forced smile.

"Hey, what a coincidence, I am indeed an antique dealer and the owner of this shop."

The old man had a good temper and wasn't angry. He replied with a smile, but Liu Chuan was speechless. If what the old man said was true, then what he had just said was indeed calling a monk a bald monk. The age and status matched. How could it be such a coincidence?

"Old man, don't be angry. This guy just has this bad habit. Liu Chuan, why don't you apologize to the boss?"

Zhuang Rui didn't know if the old man's smile was genuine or not, but it was certainly inappropriate for Liu Chuan to make such a joke in someone else's shop.

"I'm not angry, I'm not angry. You guys like these things too? Can you tell which one of my items is the most valuable?"

The fat old man waved his hands repeatedly, not at all like he was angry. The other employees were busy as bees, but instead of offering to help, he had the leisure to chat with Zhuang Rui and the others. Whether he was truly the boss or not, he certainly put on a show of bossy attitude.