

Golden 120

Chapter 120 Attempt to Steal a Chicken Backfires (Part 1)

Qian Yaosi was indeed the owner of this antique shop, and he was also one of the founders of the Confucius Temple Antique City. Moreover, he came from a family with a strong academic background. Before the liberation, his father was a professor of history at Peking University. Later, he disapproved of some of the authorities' practices and published some opinions in the newspapers, which aroused the resentment of the authorities. He then resigned from Peking University and returned to his hometown of Nanjing to open an antique shop.

When this old man was in Beijing, he often visited antique markets such as Liulichang. In those years, many things flowed out of the palace. Even the emperor who was imprisoned in the Forbidden City was selling off items. This allowed him to acquire many good things. In addition, he was very knowledgeable and could quote classics to explain the origin and provenance of each antique. Before the liberation, he was one of the more famous collectors and appraisers in the country.

After returning to Nanjing, he spent his days writing calligraphy for people or appraising antiques and paintings, living a carefree life. The Confucius Temple and Qinhuai River were places that old man often frequented. However, he later fled Nanjing due to the war and did not return to Nanjing until the 1940s. As for Qian Yaosi, he was influenced by his father from birth and developed a strong interest in the antique business.

The chaotic ten years after liberation turned Qian Yaosi's father from an intellectual into a "stinking intellectual," and he passed away after enduring countless hardships. All the antiques and paintings in the family were confiscated. In the late 1970s, Mr. Qian was rehabilitated, and Qian Yaosi repeatedly went to the relevant departments to try to recover some of the things that had been confiscated from the family. However, some of the paintings and calligraphy were burned and could not be restored, which made Qian Yaosi very distressed.

In the early 1980s, when most people in China were still living off the collective resources of the government, Qian Yaosi, just over forty years old, resigned from the job arranged for him as a form of social welfare. He took the few thousand yuan in government compensation and became a self-employed individual—the most despised kind of self-employed: a scrap collector. Qian Yaosi rode his dilapidated tricycle through the streets and alleys of Nanjing all day, collecting only old books, paintings, newspapers, and broken ceramic jars. Some neighbors called him "Crazy Qian."

By the 1990s, Qian Yaosi had turned his fortunes around. With the relaxation of policies, he contacted an old friend of his father in Hong Kong and took several antiques that were not subject to export restrictions to Hong Kong for auction. His value increased a hundredfold. Afterward, he opened several antique shops in Chaotian Palace and Confucius Temple, and his business grew bigger and bigger. He became a well-known collector in the domestic art collecting world.

Since he was in the antique business, he couldn't just buy and not sell. However, Qian Yaosi had an extremely sharp eye and a wide range of interests, from calligraphy and paintings to ceramics and bronzes. As long as the items were genuine, he rarely made a mistake. This increased his chances of finding bargains.

However, while Qian Yaosi could buy things cheaply, no one else could sell them cheaply. It was true that the items that came out of his hands were all old items, but their prices were often comparable to the prices he would have paid at auction. Over time, people gave him a nickname: "Dead Money-Grubber".

The purpose of doing business is to maximize profits, so Mr. Qian was not angry about the nickname; in fact, he was quite pleased with himself.

The nickname sounds somewhat similar to his name when read backwards, but Qian Yaosi was indeed wronged. He was given this name because his mother's surname was Yao. Mr. Qian and his first wife were very loving, and after Qian Yaosi's mother passed away, they changed his name to the one he has now. Originally, it was "Si" meaning to miss, but they thought it was a bit inelegant for a man to have such a name, so it was changed to "Si" meaning refined.

In recent years, Qian Yaosi, having gotten older, has rarely gone out. He spends his free time browsing between two antique shops, mostly chatting and drinking tea with old friends. He no longer personally handles these mundane matters. He would normally be out of the shops by now, but today an old friend he hadn't seen in years called, saying he had an item he wasn't sure about and wanted Qian Yaosi's opinion, so he was waiting in the shops.

To succeed in the antique business, you need a good eye. Otherwise, you can't do it at all. This eye is not only about looking at things, but also about looking at people. Qian Yaosi has been in this business his whole life, so it goes without saying that he can tell at a glance that all the guests in this room are just ordinary tourists, not experts. These people will not spend a lot of money to buy things they are not sure about.

When Zhuang Rui and the others came in, Manager Qian didn't pay much attention. Although they were all dressed well, these days, people who can afford to travel are usually those with some spare money, so dressing nicely isn't unusual. However, the two Tibetan mastiff puppies caught Manager Qian's attention. But as the saying goes, "a trade is like a mountain," and since they were puppies, he wasn't sure if they were purebred. So he took a few steps closer to take a good look.

Shopkeeper Qian's original intention was just to take a look. He wasn't a pet owner, so even if the Tibetan Mastiff was valuable, it had nothing to do with him. However, when he got closer, Zhuang Rui raised his hand, revealing his wrist to Qian Yaosi behind him. Shopkeeper Qian immediately noticed the dzi bead on Zhuang Rui's wrist, and once he saw it, Qian Yaosi was hooked and couldn't take it off.

The dzi beads on Zhuang Rui's wrist were a deep red, almost blackish-brown color. They weren't particularly eye-catching on his wrist, but Qian Yaosi knew that top-grade natural agate and chalcedony dzi beads were this color, and after special processing, the color would be even deeper.

Manager Qian himself had a string of dzi beads, but it only had two old dzi beads on it, and the rest were made of other jade stones. When he suddenly saw a string of beads made entirely of old dzi beads, Qian Yaosi naturally wanted to see for himself whether he had misjudged it or whether the young man was wearing genuine dzi beads.

Dzi beads are the most precious amulets for Tibetans. Sincere worship and wearing of dzi beads can eliminate karmic obstacles, bring good fortune, prevent strokes and protect against harm from evil spirits, as well as enhance physical strength and increase wealth, etc.

These are all folk beliefs. As you know, Dzi beads are made from nine-eyed shale, a type of sedimentary rock containing jade and agate components. Red Dzi beads have the strongest magnetic waves and are a rare gemstone. The magnetic field of Dzi beads is three times that of crystal. Wearing them for a long time can prevent and treat heart disease, high blood pressure, and various other blood-related illnesses. They can also prevent and treat nightmares, insomnia, headaches, and other nervous system diseases.

The price of a genuine Dzi bead is not calculated based on the price of jewelry, but by the bead itself. A genuine old Dzi bead is worth more than 100,000. As people get older, they cherish their lives. Qian Yaosi has a heart condition and high blood pressure. The two beads on his wrist cost him nearly 400,000. When he saw the bracelet on Zhuang Rui's wrist, which looked very much like a genuine old Dzi bead, and just then he heard Liu Chuan's vulgar joke, the scene of him trying to pick up Zhuang Rui in the

Zhuang Rui noticed the waiter's gaze and the old man's obvious awe, which suggested he was indeed a man of high status. He felt a bit awkward; Liu Chuan was a loose tongue, and his joke was essentially a veiled insult. Someone with a bad temper might have kicked them out.

"Grandpa, I'm just a beginner, how dare I embarrass myself in front of you?"

Zhuang Rui looked around the antique shop and found various ceramics and exquisite bronzes on the shelves, ancient calligraphy and paintings by famous people on the walls, and some jade, ancient coins, writing implements and miscellaneous items in the counter. He didn't even know the names of many of them, so he didn't dare to make any comments.

Qian Yaosi had already moved his eyes away from the dzi bead on Zhuang Rui's wrist. He looked at Zhuang Rui with a harmless smile and said, "Young man, as the saying goes: 'Young people should be arrogant, and old people should be steady' (this saying can also be reversed, and each side has its own logic). I think you're quite pleasing to the eye. How about we make a bet?"

Zhuang Rui was taken aback, somewhat confused by the fat old man's intentions. Why was he making a bet with him for no reason? Zhuang Rui was always quite cautious and rarely did things he wasn't sure of. He immediately said, "Sir, I'm just taking a stroll. Let's forget about the bet. Liu Chuan, Xuan Bing, let's go."

This whole thing felt a bit eerie, and Zhuang Rui didn't want to stay in this shop any longer. Anyway, there were dozens of shops on the antique street, so why not just wander around somewhere else? There was no need to waste time with this strange fat old man.

When Qian Yaosi saw Zhuang Rui about to leave, he became anxious and hurriedly said, "Young man, don't be in such a hurry to leave. Let me tell you what I have to say. I have an old item in my shop. Although it's not very valuable, it's still worth seven or eight hundred thousand RMB. If you can find it, I'll give it to you for free. If you can't find it, I want to buy something from you. I hope you'll part with it. How about it? Do you dare to gamble with this old man?"

Old dzi beads are not something that money can buy. Today, Qian Yaosi came across one, and he was not about to let it go. Qian Yaosi knew the taboos of wearing dzi beads, so he did not touch it. However, he was already certain that it was indeed a pure old dzi bead. Fearing that Zhuang Rui would not sell it, he simply used a provocation tactic.

As mentioned above, the saying about "fishing" in the antique trade is specifically used to attract some newcomers who are only half-knowledgeable. The so-called drowning people are mostly swimmers. When these people see old items in the store, they often assume that other things are also genuine. However, what they buy and take home are all fakes.

The antique worth seven or eight hundred thousand that Qian Yaosi mentioned was probably the one he used for fishing in the shop.