

Golden 125

Chapter 125 Attempt to Steal a Chicken Backfires (Part 6)

Zhuang Rui didn't answer Qian Yaosi's question. Instead, he was thinking about where he had gone wrong. The shop was so small that it was easy to see through. He had already examined all the ceramics in the shop, and none of them were genuine. Besides, since it was an opening item used for "fishing," it should have been placed in a more conspicuous place, not hidden in a corner.

While pondering his thoughts, Zhuang Rui searched for a teapot on the table. The dishes he had eaten tonight were a bit salty, and he was feeling thirsty. The cup was too small, and one sip of tea wasn't enough to quench his thirst.

Zhuang Rui looked around the table and finally saw that the purple clay teapot, which was only slightly larger than a fist, was covered by Qian Yaosi's chubby hand. He said with dissatisfaction, "Boss Qian, why are you holding a teapot? You don't have to be so stingy to drink some water from your cup."

"Hehe, how could that be? Let me pour tea for Brother Zhuang. This tea is Fujian Da Hong Pao. Although it doesn't grow on those six tea trees, it's still something you can't buy on the market. If it weren't for Brother Gu's visit today, and the fact that I got along well with these kids, I wouldn't have brought out this tea."

As Qian Yaosi refilled the teapot with water, he muttered to himself that Zhuang Rui had heard of the Da Hong Pao tea he mentioned when he was staying at the Song Army Tea House a while ago.

"Da Hong Pao," also known as the Cong tea tree, grows on the high cliffs of Jiulongke in Wuyi Mountain. The cliff face still retains a stone inscription of "Da Hong Pao" made by a monk from Tianxin Temple in 1927. This unique natural environment, characterized by short hours of sunshine, abundant reflected light, large temperature differences between day and night, and a constant trickle of spring water from the cliff top, contributes to the exceptional quality of Da Hong Pao. There are currently six Da Hong Pao tea trees, all shrub bushes with thick leaves and slightly budded stems. The area is steeped in myth and legend, adding to its mystique. Its mystery lies first and foremost in its rarity. Historically, Da Hong Pao was scarce, and today, the universally recognized Da Hong Pao is found only on those few trees on the Jiulongke cliff face. Even in the best years, the yield is only a few hundred grams of tea.

Since ancient times, things have been valued for their rarity. Such a rare item naturally commands a hundredfold price. During the Republic of China era, one jin (500 grams) was worth 64 silver dollars,

equivalent to 4,000 jin of rice at the time. A few years ago, the Jiulongke tea plantation was a vibrant reddish-brown. When sunlight shone on the tea trees and rocks, the reflection of the sunlight made the reddish hue very eye-catching.

The reason why Da Hong Pao tea attracts so much attention is not only because when its tea leaves were auctioned on the market, 20 grams of which fetched a sky-high price of 680,000 yuan, setting a new record for the highest price per unit of tea! Such a rare and precious tea is something that ordinary people can hardly see, let alone appreciate.

Upon hearing Qian Yaosi say that this was Da Hong Pao tea, Zhuang Rui paid some attention. However, tea tasting is not something that can be learned in a short time. When he tasted it, he felt that it did not taste as good as the tea brewed by the tea masters in the Song Army teahouse.

"Mr. Qian, you've really hidden this item well. I'm truly impressed... Oh, hehe, I really have to thank you, Manager Qian, today. I've recently taken a liking to tea, but unfortunately, I don't have a good tea set. It's rare for you to be so generous, Manager Qian, so I'll politely decline."

Zhuang Rui had already decided to admit defeat, but he didn't intend to sell the dzi bead. As he was thinking about how to decline, his eyes inadvertently swept over the purple clay cup in his hand, and a thought crossed his mind.

The scope of pottery is very broad. Qin bricks and Han tiles are pottery, terracotta warriors can also be considered pottery, and this purple clay cup is naturally also pottery. Therefore, Zhuang Rui did not continue to say his words of admitting defeat, but instead used his spiritual energy to examine the cup. Sure enough, it contained a large amount of spiritual energy. Although the color was white, its quantity was comparable to that of the purple sandalwood Maitreya Buddha root carving.

"Hahaha, you greedy old man, all your scheming has finally been exposed. Worth it, this old man's trip was definitely worth it. Who would have thought that the infamous greedy old man would actually stumble? Hahaha..."

At this moment, the only one laughing out loud was the old man. Qian Yaosi's fat face was all scrunched up in worry, and he looked so pitiful that Zhuang Rui almost couldn't bring himself to ask for the teapot. However, thinking about how awful the fat old man was, Zhuang Rui still asked for it.

It can be said that Qian Yaosi really schemed everything. No one expected that he would take out this old object, which was so authentic, and use it. Normally, he would put it in a conspicuous place to attract customers. Zhuang Rui still can't understand why, according to Qian Yaosi, this Zisha teapot should be worth hundreds of thousands. Why would this old man be willing to use it like an ordinary object? What if he accidentally broke it? Wouldn't he regret it?

Although Zhuang Rui had learned some knowledge about Zisha teapots during this period, he was still not very clear about collecting them. One of the advantages of Zisha teapots is that they can "encapsulate the aroma and release heat." With prolonged use, they can absorb the fragrance of tea and develop an oily luster. Some people say that the longer a Zisha teapot is used, the more valuable it becomes, which is exactly the point.

When Qian Yaosi is not in the store, this set of purple clay teapots is naturally maintained in the normal way. However, when he comes, he will use this teapot to brew a cup of tea and chat with old friends. Today, he had made an appointment with the vice chairman of the Jewelry Association, so he came to the store early, brewed tea and waited. Unexpectedly, he waited for Zhuang Rui and his group first.

Seeing Qian Yaosi's expression, Qin Xuanbing and the others knew that Zhuang Rui had won the bet. Although they were a little confused, they were all very happy. Liu Chuan even snatched the purple clay cup from Zhuang Rui's hand and examined it over and over, trying to figure out how this broken thing could be worth hundreds of thousands.

Seeing Qian Yaosi's bitter face and silent expression, Liu Chuan teased, "Old Mr. Qian, aren't you regretting it now?"

"This is truly a case of the younger generation surpassing the older one! Brother Gu, we're all getting old, it's up to these young people to take over from now on. Brother Zhuang, don't worry, although I, Old Man Qian, love money, I've never gone back on my word. This set of purple clay teapots, I'll pack it up later, you can take it with you!"

Qian Yaosi looked somewhat dejected. Since he was old enough to understand things, he had never suffered such a big loss. Although he had made mistakes and paid tuition fees in the antique business, those were only expenses of ten thousand or eight thousand. Just a few days ago, a Hong Kong businessman offered him 400,000 Hong Kong dollars for this set of teapots. Due to the rising prices of Zisha teapots in recent years, especially the excellent works of modern teapot masters, they often exceeded the prices of famous teapot makers from the Ming and Qing dynasties. This set of teapots was in perfect condition and had a clear provenance, so it had great potential for appreciation. Qian Yaosi

did not agree to sell it at the time. He never expected that in the blink of an eye, it would become someone else's.

"Old man, if I may ask, who is your teacher, young man Zhuang? You are so knowledgeable at such a young age, it's truly remarkable. By the way, since you can tell me that this teapot is an authentic antique, could you tell me its origin? Of course, this set of Yixing teapots is already yours, so it doesn't matter if you can't tell me."

Qian Yaosi is a man who has seen many ups and downs. Although this pot is worth several hundred thousand, it is just a drop in the ocean compared to his wealth. It is only natural that he felt disappointed just now. After all, if a bet that was supposed to be won by a sure thing is suddenly overturned, no one would feel comfortable.

As Qian Yaosi spoke, he handed the teapot to Zhuang Rui. Zhuang Rui first poured out the remaining water from the teapot, then turned it over and looked at the inscription on the bottom. There was a bell seal with the three characters "Zhu Kexin" written on it.

Upon seeing this inscription, Zhuang Rui couldn't help but chuckle. Although his expertise in appraising antiques was not particularly outstanding, Zhuang Rui possessed an exceptionally good memory. Not long ago, he had come across the name Zhu Kexin in a book introducing Yixing clay artists, and her unique contributions to modern Yixing clay teapots had left a deep impression on him.

Zhu Kexin was born in Dingshu Town, Yixing City in 1904. His original name was Zhu Kaichang, and his art name "Kexin" means "a humble person who can learn from others" and "a cup of water in the mountains can purify the heart of heaven and earth". In 1931, Zhu Kexin was hired as a kiln worker at Jiangsu Provincial Yixing Ceramic Vocational School. During this time, he created purple clay coffee sets. The following year, he carefully made the Yunlong Ding and Zhujie Ding to participate in the Chicago World's Fair in the United States and won the "Special Award". Zhuang Rui was impressed by him because of this.

Zhu Kexin's early work, "Bamboo Tripod," was even collected by Soong Mei-ling. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, he produced even more exquisite works. In December 1953, when invited to participate in the "National Folk Artists' Imitation Conference" organized by the Ministry of Culture, his work "Cloud Dragon Teapot" shone brightly. In 1956, he was appointed as a Zisha (purple clay) forming technology instructor. His designs and creations, such as the Round Pine, Bamboo, and Plum Teapot, Squirrel and Grape Teapot, One-Section Bamboo Teapot, and Antique Bamboo Teapot, were exhibited in countries such as Sri Lanka during the "China Arts and Crafts Touring Exhibition" and won first prize. These works are now in the collection of the Nanjing Museum.

"Master Qian, this set of Zisha teapots should be a work from Zhu Kexin's middle age, right? The body of this 'Cloud Dragon Teapot' is decorated with summer clouds, which are ever-changing and have a continuous and vivid style. It must be the Cloud Dragon Teapot that Zhu Kexin made in 1953. Moreover, this set of eleven pieces is well preserved, which is also very rare. I wonder if what I said is correct?"

Zhuang Rui counted them; the set of purple clay teapot, including coasters, teacups, and lids, consisted of eleven pieces. Each piece had an inscription on its bottom. What was rare was that the set of purple clay teaware was completely undamaged, and the patina was smooth and natural. Even to an outsider like Zhuang Rui, it was clear that it was an extraordinary piece. It was no exaggeration to say that it was an authentic item.

"To be honest with you two gentlemen, I only recently became fascinated with collecting. I've read some books on the subject, but no one has really guided me through the process."

Zhuang Rui's words are not wrong. Uncle De had tried to teach him some knowledge about appreciating antiques time and time again, but Zhuang Rui was not interested in this business at that time. His knowledge of Zisha teapots and Zhu Kexin was really from books.