

## Golden 145

### Chapter 145 Investment

"So, old man, is the three thousand yuan monthly rent for this place worth it?"

Reaching the sixteenth floor and opening the door, Zhuang Rui immediately fell in love with the apartment.

This is a three-bedroom, two-living-room suite. There is an entryway at the entrance, where a ceramic Buddha statue of Guanyin is placed. The living room is not very large, but it is decorated very elegantly. On the wall opposite a row of gray fabric sofas, there is a 34-inch LCD TV. The fact that the owner of this house bought an LCD TV in 2004 suggests that he is quite wealthy.

Zhuang Rui looked around, casually placed the braised dishes on the glass table in the dining room, and went to check out the bedrooms. There were two bedrooms and a study. The bedding in the rooms was all new, presumably changed by the eldest brother. However, this guy didn't have any good intentions; leaving a room for himself definitely meant no good.

This apartment isn't actually very big; it's just over 100 square meters with three bedrooms and two living rooms. However, it's in a good location, very close to the Bund, and the community is quiet and elegant with 24-hour security patrols. Plus, it's on the 18th floor, so you can enjoy the Bund view from the balcony. The rooms are fully furnished. For such an apartment, a monthly rent of 3,000 yuan is indeed not expensive.

According to the eldest brother's introduction, the landlord is quite a character. It is said that he is a descendant of a former dynasty's scion. However, this second-generation scion, after inheriting his ancestor's vast fortune, refused to inherit his ancestral culture. He is a surrealist painter living in Shanghai, who is interested in foreign famous paintings with little clothing, such as "The Bathers of Valpinçon" and "Cupid Flirting with Venus." In the bedroom left for Zhuang Rui, there is a half-naked woman holding a jar. Perhaps due to a lack of artistic talent, Zhuang Rui admired it for a long time but still felt that it was not as good as the nude art photography magazines sold in Xinhua Bookstore.

However, it's fortunate that this young master had a forward-thinking mindset; he decorated the house in a way that was very internationally compatible. It had everything: air conditioning, a color TV, a refrigerator, and a washing machine. Even the telephone had fax and caller ID. More remarkably, in the

study, there were several peach wood shelves, empty but clearly made specifically for displaying antiques.

"Hey, take a shower first, then we'll have a drink together. Tell me all about your experiences over the past two months." The eldest brother's voice came from the living room. Zhuang Rui took out a few changes of clothes and went into the bathroom, which had a water heater and a washing machine. He threw his dirty clothes in there.

After leaving the bathroom, the eldest brother had already set up a small round table on the balcony. The balcony was also decorated quite uniquely. In one corner of the balcony, a miniature rockery had been built, and a water circulation system had been installed. Several goldfish that Zhuang Rui couldn't name were swimming around leisurely in it. Seeing this, Zhuang Rui couldn't help but admire the homeowner's ingenuity, which had successfully blended the mountain scenery with modern civilization.

"Boss, where is the landlord now?"

Zhuang Rui brought over a case of beer that was by the door, opened one bottle and handed it to Yang Wei, then took out one for himself and opened it too. The two of them didn't use glasses, just clinked their bottles together and drank straight from the bottle, which was incredibly enjoyable.

Yang Wei picked up a piece of braised meat and put it in his mouth, answering vaguely, "I don't know, I just heard that the guy squandered all the things left by his ancestors, and in the end he got a lot of money and went abroad to study some kind of performance art. He's a complete spendthrift. Why are you asking about this?"

"This house is nice; if possible, I'd like to buy it."

Looking at the beautiful Bund view from the balcony, Zhuang Rui was truly tempted. He bought a house in Zhonghai so his mother could come and live with him. Even if she couldn't bear to leave her old friends in Pengcheng, she could come and stay for a few months each year, allowing him to fulfill his filial duty.

Most importantly, Zhuang Rui was extremely satisfied with this house. Even if he didn't develop his career in China Overseas in the future, he could keep it as an investment. The house prices in China Overseas were changing almost every day, and the upward trend was very strong. A lot of funds from

other places, such as Wenzhou, had entered the China Overseas real estate market. The upward trend in house prices had already affected various cities across the country. Even the house that Zhuang Rui bought in Pengcheng more than a month ago had increased by 20%.

"You want to buy this house?"

Yang Wei was taken aback for a moment upon hearing this. After receiving Zhuang Rui's definite answer, he said, "The landlord originally wanted to sell this house, but the asking price was a bit high, so it has been listed for a long time without selling. I know the property manager, so I helped you rent it. So, the landlord wanted to sell this house for 9,000 yuan per square meter, which is 1,000 to 2,000 yuan more expensive than a typical high-rise apartment with an elevator. Are you sure you want to buy it?"

Yang Wei actually wanted to ask Zhuang Rui if he had that much money, but he was too embarrassed to ask directly, so he brought up housing prices instead. What he said was true. In early 2004, the average housing price in China Overseas was around 5,100 yuan, and high-rise apartments in slightly better locations were around 7,000 yuan. This descendant of the former dynasty priced it at 9,000 yuan per square meter, and indeed, few people were interested.

However, neither of them knew that in three to five years, due to the fact that land near the Bund would basically no longer be approved, the housing prices here would skyrocket, and the price of this house would increase by at least four or five times, probably even fifty or sixty thousand yuan per square meter.

"A slightly higher price isn't a big problem. This house is in a good location, and the price will only go up, not down. If you don't buy it now, you might not be able to buy it later. Oh, right, I almost forgot about that."

As Zhuang Rui was speaking, he suddenly jumped up as if his butt was on fire, rushed into the bathroom, found the shirt he had thrown into the washing machine, and took out the check for 1.5 million. Luckily, he didn't have the habit of using the washing machine. If he had turned it on after taking a shower, the 1.5 million would have been lost.

Back on the balcony, Zhuang Rui handed the check to his boss and said, "Brother Wei, this money should be enough to buy this house. Please help me with this. As for the rest, just deduct the deposit and expenses and give it to me later."

Yang Wei took the check, glanced at the number, and laughed, "You've really struck it rich, throwing over a million around like that. You know, my monthly allowance is only a few thousand. I'll be begging you for money from now on."

After asking Zhuang Rui, Yang Wei learned that the money was what Zhuang Rui had won gambling on jade in Nanjing that day. He smacked his lips for a long time but couldn't say a word. It seems that sometimes when fortune comes, you can't stop it. However, Yang Wei was also very happy to see his brother, who had been the worst off in the past, get rich.

The major they studied in university was always dominated by women, and there were only five boys in the class, so they were naturally assigned to the same dormitory. The eldest one, needless to say, was a local tyrant. The second eldest was from Beijing and rarely mentioned his family, but his background must be very strong. He got a job in a ministry in Beijing right after graduation and is doing quite well now.

The fourth brother's family is in Guangdong. Judging from his extravagant spending habits, he even surpasses the eldest brother in some respects, so his family must be quite well-off. Of the five brothers, only the third brother and Zhuang Rui come from ordinary families. The third brother is from Weinan, Shaanxi Province, which is close to Xi'an. His parents are farmers, and his family is considered the poorest. However, after returning home, he has a good job and is now living a comfortable life.

As for Yang Wei's words about ripping off Zhuang Rui, they weren't entirely unfounded. When Yang Wei was young, his family was relatively poor, and he lived an ordinary life until the early 1990s when things started to improve. Yang Wei's parents were quite strict with him, giving him at most ten thousand or twenty thousand a month. You could tell from the beat-up cars he drove. The children of wealthy businessmen of his parents' level all drove BMWs and Ferraris.

"Alright, stop bothering me. Even a single hair from your father's head is thicker than my waist, and you still want to take advantage of me."

Zhuang Rui looked at Yang Wei with disdain and opened two more bottles of beer. It was almost April, and the night breeze wasn't too cold on his face. Looking at the beautiful lights of the Bund, drinking beer and chatting, Zhuang Rui felt indescribably happy.

"Don't mention my father. He spends all his money on junk. If he bought the real stuff, that would be fine, but he still can't bear to throw away that whole room full of fakes. Enough said, let's drink."

Wei Ge harbored deep resentment. A while ago, he ran out of money and took a vase from his father's room that was supposedly worth over a million yuan, intending to sell it for some cash. However, when he showed it to Uncle De, it turned out to be just a modern craft item, worth maybe a hundred yuan. Wei Ge was so angry that he smashed the vase on the spot, and was later scolded by his own father for being a spendthrift.

The two brothers drank until after 2 a.m., leaving a pile of empty bottles on the balcony before going back to their rooms to sleep. However, Zhuang Rui had to go to work the next day, so he was woken up by his phone alarm after only a few hours of sleep. He went to the eldest brother's room and saw him sleeping like a log, so he didn't disturb him. After washing up, he took the white lion downstairs.

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At 7:50 a.m., Zhuang Rui parked his car in the backyard of the pawnshop, tucked the box containing the Zhu Kexin purple clay tea set under his arm, held the couplet by Lian Sheng in his left hand, and carried a plastic bag in his right hand containing a gift for Uncle De. Then, he led Bai Shi into the pawnshop and ran into the cashier Xu Ling, who was exchanging money with bank staff.

"Zhuang...Rui, oh no, Manager Zhuang, good morning." Xu Ling greeted Zhuang Rui as soon as she saw him.

"Xiao Zhuang, you're back to work. How's your recovery going?"

"Good lad, not bad, you've got guts. When you got injured, we guys were saying we'd come to visit you, but who knew you'd be discharged so quickly."

Upon seeing Zhuang Rui enter, several bank security guards who were on good terms with him surrounded him, asking him all sorts of questions about his situation.