

## Golden 147

### Chapter 147 Teachings

Zhuang Rui always had an excellent memory; he could remember any name or short number he had ever heard perfectly. However, the name "Miao Feifei" was completely unfamiliar. Zhuang Rui was certain he had never heard of it before. However, the voice on the phone sounded somewhat familiar.

"Hey, why aren't you saying anything? It's me, Miao Feifei."

The clear voice continued to come from the phone, as if Zhuang Rui should know who Miao Feifei was.

"Excuse me, you've dialed the wrong number. I don't know Miao... Wait, are you Officer Miao?"

Zhuang Rui was about to hang up when a pretty policewoman suddenly appeared in his mind. Combined with the familiar voice, he immediately guessed the other party's identity, and the word "you" instantly became "you" (formal).

Zhuang Rui's performance greatly displeased Miao Feifei on the other end of the phone. She had to say his name twice before he remembered her, which meant that he hadn't taken her seriously at all yesterday. However, Miao Feifei didn't consider that they were just strangers who had met by chance. Yesterday's situation was like one of them being a soldier and the other a thief, and they were trying to avoid each other. Who would pay special attention to remember you?

"Hello, Officer Miao, how can I help you? By the way, how did you get my phone number?"

Zhuang Rui asked himself, from the moment he woke up this morning until now, he had absolutely not violated any traffic management regulations of the People's Republic of China. He wondered what this female police officer, who looked more like a public security officer than a traffic police officer, wanted to see him about. Moreover, he was certain that this female police officer had not left her phone number yesterday.

"Well... well... it's nothing really. I just wanted to wander around Zhonghai, but I didn't know where to go. I was just calling to ask if you had time to come out with me. I hope I'm not bothering you?"

After saying these words, Miao Feifei felt awkward. She didn't mean anything by it, so why was it so hard to say? It felt like she was begging him.

Miao Feifei took five days off from her team under the pretext of a foot injury. She originally planned to fly back to Beijing to meet up with her senior colleagues in the criminal investigation team. However, when she talked to her father on the phone last night, he told her to take good care of her injury and not to run around. This angered Miao Feifei, and she had a big argument with her father on the phone. However, she couldn't win against her father's power, and in the end, under his combination of threats and coaxing, she chose to stay in Zhonghai.

Miao Feifei is a lively person who can't stay at home. Now that she has taken five days off, she doesn't know what to do. She thought about it for half the night yesterday but couldn't come up with anything. This morning, when she saw Yang Wei's driver's license, she suddenly had an idea. That guy named Zhuang Rui doesn't seem so bad. She could ask him to be her tour guide and have a good time in Zhonghai for a few days.

You should know that Miao Feifei has been working at Zhonghai for almost three months and holds a minor leadership position. Every day, she goes back and forth between the office and home. Firstly, she has no time to travel, and secondly, she doesn't have anyone suitable to accompany her. So, she has never even been to a bustling place like Nanjing Road.

The reason Miao Feifei asked Zhuang Rui to accompany her was that she felt Zhuang Rui was honest and kind, and he spoke Northern Mandarin, which made communication very comfortable. At least she didn't have to guess what the other person meant. When she was at the traffic police station, Miao Feifei had to guess nine out of ten sentences when a group of local traffic police officers from Zhonghai were talking, and she couldn't understand them at all.

Although she didn't have Zhuang Rui and Yang Wei's contact information, this small matter was no problem for her. She made a call to the team, retrieved Yang Wei's information from the internal computer system, and then had his phone number. Miao Feifei then called Yang Wei and got Zhuang Rui's number from him. Yang Wei had drunk a bit too much the day before, and even after giving out Zhuang Rui's phone number, he still didn't know who was calling and was lying on the bed, still fast asleep.

"Hey, are you listening? Don't get me wrong, I took a few days off, but my foot is fine now. I just wanted to go out with a friend. If you don't have time, that's fine."

Zhuang Rui was also puzzled on the other end of the phone. Going shopping with his buddy? This seemed unbelievable to him, so he was stunned for a moment and didn't say anything until Miao Feifei's voice came through the phone again. He then snapped out of it and quickly said, "Officer Miao, it's definitely not possible during the day. I've been on leave for two months, and today is my first day back at work. I can't skip work. How about this, I'll treat you to dinner tonight as an apology on behalf of my classmate."

In the past two months, Zhuang Rui has certainly learned a lot and his emotional intelligence has improved significantly. If it were before, he would definitely have wondered if the pretty policewoman was interested in him. But now Zhuang Rui knows that things are just as Miao Feifei said. She was just bored and looking for someone to keep her company. Even if he didn't have any feelings for her, Zhuang Rui would feel embarrassed to refuse a beautiful woman's invitation. Besides, he also wanted to help his boss get his driver's license back.

"It wasn't you who hit me, why should I apologize? Tell your classmate that he won't get his notebook back until he's practiced his skills. He's irresponsible with his own life, but I'm responsible for the safety of the general public. This is a matter of principle, no room for sentimentality. However, if you want to treat me to dinner, I can do you the honor. Well, we can go out for a walk after dinner. That's all. Give me your office address, and I'll come to you tonight."

Miao Feifei's clear voice rattled off a string of words over the phone like a machine gun, giving Zhuang Rui no chance to interrupt. This made Zhuang Rui break out in a cold sweat. He had actually run into the legendary Beijing accent. This girl talked so much without pausing. It was such a pity that she became a traffic cop instead of a TV host.

Seeing that Uncle De had finished appraising the dzi beads and was brewing tea for him, Zhuang Rui didn't want to say anything more. He quickly gave the pawnshop's address and hung up the phone.

"So, it's a girl, right?"

Uncle De, though old, was still sharp-witted. He could tell from Zhuang Rui's expression at a glance that he had introduced Zhuang Rui to a girl before. However, the girl thought Zhuang Rui's position was too low and that he didn't own a house or a car in Zhonghai. After meeting Zhuang Rui twice, she disappeared without a trace, which made Uncle De very embarrassed.

"It's nothing, Uncle De. Don't look at me like that. It's not illegal to know a girl, is it? Oh, good tea, Uncle De. Where did you get this tea?"

Zhuang Rui sat down, picked up the lid of the purple clay teapot with two fingers, brought it close to his nose and smelled it. Immediately, a refreshing fragrance wafted into his nose, and he couldn't help but praise it.

"You're lucky, kid. An old friend came to see me yesterday and brought me some good tea. He brought some over today, and before I even got back to my office, you dragged me here."

Uncle De pointed to an open package of cotton paper on the coffee table. Zhuang Rui looked closely and saw a small, dark object about the size of a baby's palm in the middle of the paper. It didn't look like tea at all.

Zhuang Rui was somewhat incredulous that the enticing aroma he had just smelled could have come from this dark, unappetizing substance. After filling Uncle De's teacup with tea, he poured himself a cup as well. As soon as he took a sip, he was struck by an indescribable flavor that filled his taste buds.

The taste of this tea was unlike any other tea Zhuang Rui had ever tasted. When he first took a sip, he felt as if he were drinking Chinese medicine. However, upon closer tasting, the rich and mellow aroma filled his mouth and tongue. The tea was smooth and had a sweet aftertaste, which immediately made Zhuang Rui feel his tongue moisten.

Bitterness is inherent to tea; in ancient times, tea was called "bitter tea." The earliest wild teas were so bitter they were almost inedible. The initial bitterness gives way to a sweet aftertaste, a principle Zhuang Rui understood. However, the tea's initial taste was so peculiar that the subsequent sweetness was all the more poignant.

"How about it, Xiao Zhuang? This tea has a very special flavor, doesn't it? Let me tell you, this is Pu'er tea. We don't drink it much around here, but this tea can be considered a collectible. Just this small piece of mine is worth tens of thousands of yuan. If it were a Pu'er tea brick left over from the Qing Dynasty, it would be priceless."

Uncle De's words startled Zhuang Rui. This tiny bit, probably weighing less than two ounces, could be worth tens of thousands of yuan. Did that mean he had drunk several hundred yuan in just one sip?

"Uncle De, is this tea really that expensive? Isn't everyone saying that new tea tastes the best?" Zhuang Rui asked, somewhat puzzled.

"What you're talking about is just a simple beverage. Tea leaves like that would turn to ash after a hundred or two hundred years. But Pu'er tea is different. The longer it's stored, the richer and more mellow its aroma becomes. So it can also be collected as a collectible."

In 1963, when the Palace Museum was organizing its tea warehouse, it discovered that while other teas had turned to ash, only Pu'er tea, including "Wanshou Longtuan," remained intact. These teas are considered "breathing antiques" and "drinkable cultural relics." That Pu'er tea brick weighed only 5 kilograms, but when it was recently exhibited in Pu'er, its insurance premium alone reached 19.99 million yuan. You can imagine the intrinsic value of this tea.

Zhuang Rui was speechless upon hearing this. He had never imagined that even tea could be collected; his knowledge was truly too shallow.

"Xiao Zhuang, the answer to your question can be found in this tea. You are young, inexperienced, and lack a foundation. These are your weaknesses. However, I have high hopes for you because you have a strong ability to accept new things and a high level of comprehension. This is especially important. In the antique business, without a bit of luck and comprehension, you will never be able to figure it out in your entire life."

Doing things is like drinking tea; it's bitter at first, then sweet. Those two "sea turtles" (overseas returnees) definitely don't approve of you being in the manager position, so you need to learn to be patient, learn more, observe more, and speak less. When you have the ability, you can rise from the ashes and make a name for yourself. Do you understand what I mean?

Zhuang Rui nodded heavily. Although he had no intention of staying here for long, the manager position would indeed help him mature. Whatever Zhuang Rui chose in the future, it would be beneficial.

"Uncle De, please tell me about the work I need to do now."

Zhuang Rui used to be in charge of finance, but he saw Uncle De drinking tea and chatting all day, so it seemed that the manager didn't need to do anything.

"Hehe, you're already eager to get into the role? Actually, our pawnshop only has five or six people, so it's very easy to manage. The manager's main responsibility is to make external contacts and establish long-term, good cooperative relationships with auction houses."

"Because we're a subsidiary of an investment company, you'll also need to prepare an investment report, outlining a general investment strategy for the pawnshop's cash flow. Of course, with your finance background, this shouldn't be too difficult for you, Xiao Zhuang. If your investment suggestions are adopted and yield substantial returns, there will be a considerable commission. Those two guys have been eyeing this manager's position, mainly for that money."

Uncle De's words gave Zhuang Rui a general idea of his future work. He really didn't know that as the manager of a pawnshop, he could make investment advice on the pawnshop's own funds. Presumably, since the investment company has this rule, it will definitely take this advice seriously.

The two young men Uncle De mentioned were the other two pawnbrokers at the pawnshop. One of them was named Lai Jingdong. He rarely came down to the lobby and would go straight to his office on the second floor as soon as he started work. Although Zhuang Rui's finance office was also on the second floor, he had hardly ever seen him. The cashier, Xiaoling, and another girl privately told him that he was too lazy to move. Lai Jingdong specialized in appraising foreign art. There weren't many such items in the pawnshop, so he was relatively free and spent his days hiding in his office doing who-knows-what.

Another pawnbroker named Wang Yiding specializes in appraising domestic and international luxury goods. He often goes down to the lobby on the first floor, but he usually just jokes around with the sales staff in the unclaimed pawn section and rarely gives Zhuang Rui a second glance.

Both men were in their early thirties and had been in the industry for a while. They were both formally trained, but they were arrogant and had never been favored by Uncle De. However, there were quite a few people who came to pawn luxury goods, and they could occasionally see foreign artworks. Otherwise, Uncle De would have fired these two guys long ago.

"Uncle De, in which areas have you focused your investments previously?"

Zhuang Rui is quite optimistic about the real estate market. However, real estate investment involves a relatively large amount of money. Although he is very familiar with the amount of funds available in

pawnshops, he cannot guarantee that his suggestions will be approved by higher authorities. Therefore, he wants to be on the safe side and ask Uncle De for advice first.

"Me? This old man has lived his whole life and only knows about antiques, so of course I'll invest in that. Last year, I mainly invested in two areas. One was coins, not ancient copper coins, but commemorative coins issued by the government. I invested 16 million in them last year, and by March of this year, these commemorative coins had increased by 30%, which is not bad. Xiao Zhuang, do you know how much bonus I received last year?"

Uncle De spoke with a hint of pride. This investment last year was not initially well-received. Even the two turtle appraisers raised objections and made suggestions to the head office in their personal capacities. However, the investment company leaders approved Uncle De's investment proposal out of trust. When the accounts were settled this year, the increase in the value of that currency surprised everyone.

This single investment brought the pawnshop a net profit of 4.8 million. Wang Yiding and Lai Jingdong, who had previously looked down on Uncle De, have been keeping a low profile these days, too embarrassed to face him.

Zhuang Rui hadn't been to the pawnshop for the past few months, so he didn't know how the pawnshop's funds had been flowing during that time. He asked, "Uncle De, have you sold all those coins? Why didn't you keep them to continue appreciating?" In Zhuang Rui's mind, now that the bonuses had been paid out, the coins should have been disposed of.

"Sold off ten million, still holding six million. Last year, I, the old man, received a million in bonuses alone. Xiao Zhuang, the investment company's reward is thirty percent of the profits. You better watch out, kid. Your future is bright. Buying a car and a house in Zhonghai won't be a problem."

Uncle De clearly didn't know Zhuang Rui's current net worth, nor did he see that Zhuang Rui drove to work; otherwise, he wouldn't have said those things. However, Uncle De truly cared for Zhuang Rui. The reason he sold those coins that were still appreciating was to leave some investment funds for Zhuang Rui so that Zhuang Rui could benefit from them. Otherwise, all the funds would be tied up in the initial investment, and Zhuang Rui would only be able to get a fixed salary. Uncle De's actions were truly well-intentioned.

Uncle De agreed to work at the pawnshop not for the salary—with his wealth, a few hundred thousand wouldn't even register—but mainly because working at the pawnshop would give him the opportunity

to come into contact with more antiques. For Uncle De, who had been obsessed with antiques all his life, this was the most important thing.

"Uncle De, you're losing too much by doing this. Actually, my life is pretty good now. In the past two months, I've also found some good items while I was in Pengcheng..."

After listening to Uncle De's words, Zhuang Rui was also very moved. Uncle De's actions were tantamount to handing over his annual dividends of hundreds of thousands. After thinking for a moment, Zhuang Rui told Uncle De about how he had acquired Wang Shizhen's manuscript and obtained Tang Bohu's authentic work in Tibet.

"Hey kid, why are you so calm today? Not a bit of the excitement of a new official taking office. Turns out you've made quite a fortune, huh? You've found more bargains on Taobao in the last two months than I have in my entire life. So you were just lying in wait for me. What a pity you sold those items. Otherwise, I could have seen some of the best. No way, you have to treat me to lunch. I'm going to rip you off."

After hearing Zhuang Rui's words, Uncle De's eyes lit up, and he slapped his thigh hard. Zhuang Rui's experiences over the past two months were indeed as Uncle De said. Even someone who had been collecting antiques all his life might not be able to find a great bargain, but Zhuang Rui's few bargain finds were enough to ensure he would never have to worry about food and drink for the rest of his life.

"No problem, Uncle De. We'll go wherever you say we want to eat lunch. I'm so lucky. It's all thanks to your teachings. If you hadn't explained antiques to me every day, I wouldn't even know what antiques are."

Zhuang Rui subtly flattered Uncle De, who was quite pleased. As the saying goes, it's easy to find a fine horse, but hard to find a discerning eye. Uncle De had always believed that Zhuang Rui could make a name for himself in the antique world, and now that this blockhead had finally seen the light, Uncle De was overjoyed.

"By the way, Uncle De, what is your other investment?"

Seeing Uncle De's smug look, Zhuang Rui figured that his other investment must also be a sure thing.

"That's lacquerware from Shanxi, which is also a type of miscellaneous item. I started collecting this kind of item a few years ago. Before 1996, a decent lacquerware box could be bought for about 70 or 80 yuan, but now it can sell for 8,000 or 9,000 yuan or even 10,000 yuan."

"Xiao Zhuang, think about it. In just five or six years, the price has increased many times over. I reckon the market for these items will only continue to rise. Last year, I invested five million, specifically sending people to various parts of Shanxi to buy lacquerware. You should know where that money went, right? You were the one doing the accounting back then."

Uncle De's words made Zhuang Rui's face flush. In his work last year, Zhuang Rui had only fulfilled the financial responsibilities he had learned and done his job. As for the flow and use of funds, he knew nothing at all. Anyway, with the supervision of the financial system, he was not afraid that anyone would embezzle funds. It was only when Uncle De mentioned it that Zhuang Rui realized that even as a financial staff member, he was not so qualified.

"Investing in lacquerware is a long-term endeavor. It will take three to five years to see the results. By then, I probably won't be doing this anymore. Xiao Zhuang, when that time comes, I'll let you pick these fruits."

What Uncle De said next moved Zhuang Rui deeply. The old man in front of him was genuinely protecting him, without any ulterior motives involved. Zhuang Rui felt he couldn't hide it any longer, so he said, "Uncle De, my friend and I have started a mastiff kennel in our hometown and invested in some businesses. Actually, I originally wanted to quit my job at the pawnshop, but I wanted to learn more about antiques from you, so I came back. As for whether I will work here again in the future, I'm not sure."

Uncle De was stunned when he heard this. He didn't expect that Zhuang Rui would change so much in just two months. From a young man who was happy to earn a few thousand yuan a month, he had now started his own business. However, he still agreed with Zhuang Rui's idea. Young people should go out and explore more.

"Alright, that's good. From now on, you should mind your own business and not get involved in those dirty things. I'll try my best to teach you everything I know. Come on, let's go out and have a meeting with those two sea turtles. Don't interrupt me when I'm talking."

After thinking for a moment, Uncle De gave Zhuang Rui a brief instruction, and then made two calls to the other two appraisers, asking them to gather in the conference room in half an hour. Zhuang Rui was quite confused, not understanding what Uncle De meant by "dirty things".

Uncle De looked at Zhuang Rui's blank expression and said with a smile, "What's wrong? Don't understand? You'll naturally understand as you deal with pawnshops more."