

## Golden 211

### Chapter 211 Blind Bidding (Part 3)

"Cousin, your taste is terrible! How could such an ugly stone possibly contain jade? Brother Zhuang, don't you agree?"

Zhuang Rui had just walked to Lei Lei's side when he heard Wei Zijiang's words and couldn't help but laugh.

They're not like Emperor Huizong of the Song Dynasty who collected rare stones, valuing their exquisite craftsmanship, charm, and artistic conception when selecting rough jade. As long as the jadeite rough stone contains green, who cares about its shape on the outside? Wei Zijiang's words sound somewhat childish.

"So what if it looks bad? I still like it. Zhuang Rui, can you take a look and see if it's okay? If it's alright, I'll buy it."

Lei Lei was a little unhappy after hearing her cousin's words. She had only thought the stone's shape was too unique and had no intention of buying it. However, after hearing Wei Zijiang's words, her competitive spirit was aroused.

"Let me take a look first..."

Zhuang Rui squatted down and began to examine the piece of raw material that Lei Lei had mentioned.

To be honest, this piece of rough jade is rather unsightly. Its shape is extremely irregular, with a large indentation at the head of what was originally an oval shape, somewhat resembling the forehead of an old man in a TV show. The entire piece of rough jade lacks any pine flower or python pattern, and its outer skin is smooth, suggesting it is a newly mined rough jade from a machine-mined factory.

Zhuang Rui tried to hold it; it weighed about fifty or sixty pounds. He glanced at the starting price next to it; it wasn't expensive, only 100,000 yuan. Zhuang Rui couldn't help but feel a little strange. This rough stone, which looked more like a rock than a jadeite rough, was actually being sold. This was clearly a semi-gambling area for rough stones; why didn't he see any cuts or windows?

After turning the ugly piece of raw jade over, Zhuang Rui realized that it wasn't that there was no skylight, but rather that someone had flipped the side with the skylight facing the ground.

People who do this probably have one of two reasons: either they've got their eye on the rough jade and don't want others to see it, or the jade is so bad that someone is angry and flipped it over.

Zhuang Rui carefully examined the window. It was probably rubbed open, not a cut surface. It was only the size of a baby's palm, and you wouldn't notice it if you weren't paying attention. The window didn't show any green, but instead showed granular white cotton and a slightly grayish-brown misty jadeite layer, all intertwined. This appearance could only be described in two words: garbage.

"Zhuang Rui, what do you think of this rough jade? The price isn't too high. Do you think I should bid on it?"

Lei Lei and Liu Chuan have similar personalities; they can't stand being provoked. Her younger cousin's words just now made her very unconvinced. As long as Zhuang Rui says it's acceptable, she's determined to bid on this rough stone.

"Old classmate, to be honest, I'm not very optimistic about this rough stone. Look at the surface; not only is there no green, but the white cotton and fog are all tangled together. Even if there is jade inside, the grade won't be very high. The owner of this rough stone must be desperate for money; he dared to set a bid of 100,000 yuan just because there's fog..."

Zhuang Rui's frank words made Lei Lei's face turn ugly. From Zhuang Rui's words, she naturally understood that the rough stone was not very valuable and there was no need to buy it.

Zhuang Rui indeed thought so too. Based on the knowledge of raw stone appreciation he had learned from Grandpa Gu over the past few days, he felt that this rough stone was a piece of junk. If it were put in the area for selling finished stones, no one would give it a second glance. He guessed that the owner of the rough stone saw that it had produced some fog and was trying his luck by setting a starting price of 100,000 yuan here.

Lei Lei stood up, somewhat disappointed. In this semi-gambling, sealed-bid area, the price of raw jade stones was often hundreds of thousands or even millions of yuan. Her meager funds were simply

insufficient. She had finally found a cheaper piece, but Zhuang Rui's actions had completely shattered her confidence.

Zhuang Rui supported the base of the rough stone with his right hand and forcefully flipped it over again. This piece of junk was indeed not worth wasting other people's time. The rough stone turned over and lay on the grass, no different from ordinary stones by the roadside.

"Huh?"

Just as Zhuang Rui was about to get up, he habitually used his spiritual energy to scan the rough stone. This one thing made Zhuang Rui unable to move his feet. It wasn't that he saw some top-quality imperial green glass-type jade, but rather that the color inside the rough stone was something he had never seen before.

It was a light blue hue, which was clearly visible in Zhuang Rui's eyes, as clear and bright as seawater under the sunlight. Although the color was a bit light, the texture and water content were excellent, with high transparency. If it weren't for a slight flaw inside, it could almost be considered glass-type jade.

As friends know, icy jadeite is already very transparent, but it is slightly less transparent than glassy jadeite. As the name suggests, glassy jadeite is as pure as glass, and any tiny impurities inside are clearly exposed. Icy jadeite, on the other hand, is less transparent. Although it is also very transparent, it has more impurities.

The highest quality and most transparent icy jadeite is often referred to as "high icy jadeite" in the jade industry. This means that it is the best type of icy jadeite, but it does not reach the level of glassy jadeite. In Zhuang Rui's eyes, this piece of blue jadeite can definitely be called high icy jadeite, which is much better than the piece that Liu Chuan cut in Nanjing.

Jade stones usually give people a sense of warmth, but the jade inside this stone gave Zhuang Rui three parts warmth and seven parts coldness, just like its color, like a piece of frozen seawater.

"Blue Water Jade?"

A term popped into Zhuang Rui's mind. This is a type of jade ornament that has become very popular in recent years. It refers to jadeite with a bluish base. However, not all blue jadeite can be called this. In addition to being blue in color, the jadeite must also be old, have fine texture, good water content, and high transparency. Only when combined with the color can it be called this.

Good blue jadeite is very expensive. A deep blue color without any inclusions, combined with good carving, makes it a highly collectible item. Of course, blue jadeite is not as expensive as green jadeite because the color of jadeite is all about a bright, pure green, which is why imperial green is the most valuable.

Blue water jadeite is bluish in color, so it's not a true color. However, good blue water jadeite is very expensive. The legendary top-grade blue eyes jadeite is on par with blood jade bracelets and imperial green jadeite. But in Zhuang Rui's judgment, this piece of jadeite can only be called blue water jadeite, which is far inferior to the red jadeite rough he found.

However, although this piece of blue jadeite is not very large, only about the size of two fists, its value is already over five or six million. If it comes from a skilled jade carver who can make a pair of bracelets, its value will be even higher.

"Zhuang Rui, why aren't we leaving? Didn't you say the rough jade wasn't good?"

When Lei Lei saw Zhuang Rui squat down to look at the rough stone again, she couldn't help but feel a little strange. Zhuang Rui had just glanced at so many rough stones, so why was he focusing on this one that was almost a waste?

Zhuang Rui looked up at Lei Lei, a thought creeping into his mind: "This girl is just like Da Chuan. She was only a few meters ahead of me, and she already found such a good piece of material..."

The same thing happened in Nanjing last time. Liu Chuan and Zhuang Rui chose different directions when selecting raw jade, but Liu Chuan also picked out the only valuable piece of raw jade in that direction. These two are really like birds of a feather.

"Old classmate, are you really thinking of buying a piece of raw jade to play with?" Zhuang Rui asked casually.

"What are you talking about? How can this be a game? I'm going to unearth some fine jade and make my grandfather jealous..."

Lei Lei said somewhat angrily that when she recommended Zhuang Rui's skill in gambling on stones to her maternal grandfather and uncle yesterday, she was ridiculed by the two elders. Although it was meant as a good-natured joke, it still made Lei Lei very angry, so she went to wait for Zhuang Rui early this morning.

"If you want to buy good raw materials, how much money do you have left?" Zhuang Rui asked immediately.

"I...I still have over 1.1 million..."

Lei Lei felt a little embarrassed upon hearing this. She had been wandering around here for the past two days and knew that a piece of rough jade with even a slightly better appearance would cost over a million. With her meager funds, trying to gamble on a good piece of rough jade was undoubtedly a pipe dream.

Zhuang Rui laughed and said, "Old classmate, I think you should buy this rough stone. Although it looks terrible, at least the window has some fog, so there might be jade inside. But the quality is hard to say; it depends on luck."

"Brother Zhuang, you're spending 100,000 yuan on this?" Wei Zijiang asked, thinking to himself, if it's a good thing, why don't you buy it yourself?

In fact, Zhuang Rui was also very conflicted. Of course, he wanted to buy it himself. The rough stone was only worth 100,000 yuan. Judging from its poor quality, he could probably win it at the starting bid. After cutting it open, he could definitely sell it for three to five million yuan. This would be a huge profit.

However, Lei Lei was the one who first took a liking to this rough stone. Zhuang Rui wouldn't stoop so low as to lure Lei Lei away and secretly bid for it himself. He couldn't do such a thing. Besides, when the bidding is opened, everyone will know who won which rough stone, and Zhuang Rui will be looked down upon then.

Of course, Zhuang Rui wasn't that noble. The value of this rough stone wasn't outrageously high. If the jade inside had blue eyes, Zhuang Rui would definitely have gotten his hands on it.

“Even a good rough stone can be a bad gamble, but a mediocre rough stone can be a pleasant surprise if it turns out well. Lei Lei, do you want it? If not, I'll bid on this one.”

Seeing Lei Lei hesitate, Zhuang Rui added fuel to the fire. If Lei Lei really didn't want it, he would bid on it, and no one would say anything. It was better than letting a stranger bid on it.

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Upon hearing this, Lei Lei returned and squatted down to examine the rough stone from all angles. Of course, with her limited knowledge, she couldn't distinguish between a stone and a jadeite rough. Lei Lei was merely using this action to force herself to make a decision.

"I want it. It's just 100,000 yuan. If I lose it all, I'll just give it to Zijiang as pocket money." After a few minutes, Lei Lei made up her mind.

Standing next to Lei Lei, Wei Zijiang rolled his eyes upon hearing this and said unhappily, "Cousin, when have you ever given me 100,000 yuan for spending money? You've only ever given me 30,000 at most..."

Lei Lei widened her eyes and said, "Can't I give you an example? If you keep rambling, you won't get 30,000 in the future."

Perhaps because of his guilt towards Lei Lei and her mother, the maternal grandfather treated Lei Lei better than his own grandchildren after she arrived in Hong Kong. She was very pampered, so his cousins all treated her with great respect. After hearing Lei Lei's words, Wei Zijiang shrugged and didn't dare to say anything more.

"Zhuang Rui, how much do you think I should bid?"

Lei Lei was a little undecided. The starting bid was 100,000, but at least a thousand people had come and gone in the past few days to look at this rough stone, and it was possible that someone would bid against it.

Zhuang Rui thought for a moment and said, "Let's invest 130,000, not too high and not too low..."

Rough stones like these that don't yield any green are generally rarely bid on. However, at jade gambling conventions, there are some people who have some spare money and specialize in picking cheap, poor-performing rough stones. They can afford to lose money if they gamble badly, but if they win, they can make a fortune.

Zhuang Rui's offer is slightly higher than the others' offers, but not outrageously so that the owner of the rough stone will notice something. If there are no surprises, he should be able to win the bid.

Some friends might say at this point, "The higher the bid you set, the happier the owner of the rough stone will be. In this day and age, who would complain about having too much money?"

In fact, sealed-bid auctions are much more complex than open bids, involving many techniques. At jade gambling conventions, the owners of the rough stones can know the sealed-bid prices in advance, which leads to a situation where bidders block the bidding.

The term "bid blocking" refers to a situation where the owner of a raw jade stone is dissatisfied with the auction price and offers a slightly higher price to bring the stone back to their possession.

For example, Merchant A sets a starting bid of 300,000 RMB for a piece of rough jade, and his desired final price is 1.5 million RMB. However, the highest bid from others is only 1 million RMB, which is far from the price Merchant A expects. So, Merchant A bids 1.01 million RMB himself, and the rough jade ends up back in his hands. Whether he handles it differently or participates in the next jade gambling event is up to him.

It's important to know that these raw material dealers are very patient. They won't lower the price just to sell the raw material quickly. Often, because of the price, they can keep a good piece of raw material for ten or twenty years.

Another situation where the owner of the raw material might intervene in the bidding is when the bid price in the sealed bid far exceeds the owner's expected price.

Using the same example as above, if Merchant A discovers that the raw jade with a starting bid of 300,000 has been bid up to 8 million, then Merchant A will also intervene to stop the bidding.

Because these people who deal in raw jade are all shrewd, a bid that is dozens of times higher than the asking price can only mean that the raw jade is actually very valuable and that the merchant A misjudged it. Usually, when this happens, raw jade merchants will choose to take back the raw jade and clean or trim the edges themselves to maximize their profits.

Of course, this can result in both gains and losses; only the parties involved truly know the reality. However, these raw jade merchants often take the gamble because they believe that no one will bid high for no reason, and the probability of winning is far greater than the risk of losing.

Therefore, bidding in a sealed bid is truly a skill. The price you bid must satisfy the owner of the rough stone without making them feel that the price is too abrupt. At the same time, you also have to beat other people who have bid the same rough stone. Relatively speaking, it is many times more complicated than bidding in an open auction. It requires not only a keen eye but also the ability to understand other people's psychology. Both are indispensable.

As for this rough stone, given its poor performance, its owner probably put it in the sealed bid to try their luck. However, to prevent those who specialize in picking up cheap rough stones, Zhuang Rui offered a price of 130,000, which should be enough to secure it. For a rough stone like this, most people would only bid 3,000 to 5,000 or even 10,000 more, since no one's money comes easily.

"Okay, I'll listen to you. I'll go to Grandpa later and ask him to put this number on for me."

Lei Lei took out paper, pen, and a digital camera, and photographed the piece of raw material from various angles. She copied down the label and, ignoring Zhuang Rui, excitedly dragged Wei Zijiang to find her maternal grandfather.

Zhuang Rui looked at the blue jade for a while longer, then sighed and stood up. Liu Chuan and his wife were luckier than him; this was the second time they had managed to snatch it away.

"Zhuang Rui, is there something good inside this rough jade?"

Zhou Rui, who had been silent the whole time, spoke up. He had known Zhuang Rui for quite some time and knew that Zhuang Rui always had a reason for his actions, and he almost never missed.

"I don't know. Judging from the material's appearance, it was dug out by machinery in a new factory. But it looks good to me. If Lei Lei doesn't want it, I'll take the bid." Zhuang Rui casually replied to Zhou Rui and continued walking inside.

"Brother Zhou, what do you think about me starting a jewelry company?"

Suddenly, an idea popped into Zhuang Rui's mind: the money he had earned during this period had come too easily, and it would definitely attract attention over time. However, if he owned a jewelry company, he could take the jade he won in gambling, process it, and sell it. In this way, people would pay much less attention.

Zhou Rui was taken aback when he heard this. He didn't expect Zhuang Rui to ask him this question. After thinking for a while, he said, "Zhuang Rui, I don't know much about running a company. But we've set up a mastiff kennel, and we're busy with a lot of things every day. If you were to run a company, I'm afraid there would be even more to do. As long as you think you can handle it, then go ahead and run it."

Zhou Rui's words were like a bucket of cold water, waking Zhuang Rui from his feverish head. Zhou Rui was right. Opening a jewelry company was not just about having raw jade. Jewelry designers, carving masters, retail stores, employees, and training were all needed. Just thinking about it gave Zhuang Rui a headache.

"Never mind, forget I said anything."

Zhuang Rui was somewhat discouraged and continued to wander around the sealed-bid area. Without Lei Lei and her cousin by his side, Zhuang Rui examined the rough stones much faster. Sometimes he wouldn't even squat down, but would just glance at them and walk past. Zhou Rui knew nothing about gambling on stones and had no reason to doubt him.

After wandering around for about half an hour, Zhuang Rui had looked at over a thousand pieces of raw jadeite with hidden bids. Surprisingly, there were quite a few top-quality jadeite pieces among them, but the starting bids were ridiculously high.

Just like Zhuang Rui had just looked at a rough stone with a good appearance through its outer window. Inside was glass-type jadeite, with a slightly lighter color, but it was quite large, and he estimated that twenty or thirty kilograms of material could be extracted. However, the starting bid was as high as eight million eight hundred thousand. Although he wouldn't lose money if he bought it at that price, the profit wouldn't be much either. Moreover, this was just the starting bid, and it was entirely possible that it would fetch tens of millions of yuan at auction. Zhuang Rui didn't want to get involved in this kind of excitement.

There were also a few pieces of material with mediocre outer skin that contained jadeite inside, and the quality and transparency were very good, but they were colorless. Such jadeite is not very expensive in the market now, and Zhuang Rui was not very interested in it.

The number of people in the sealed-bid area increased, with people stopping every few meters to observe the performance of the rough stones. Some of the better-performing stones even had seven or eight people gathered around them, commenting and expressing their opinions. However, since these people were there to bid, it was worth speculating how credible their words were.

Zhuang Rui stopped beside a piece of rough jade and listened for a few minutes. He found that the people were all talking nonsense, constantly pointing out the flaws of the rough jade and belittling it relentlessly. It was clearly a good piece of rough jade, but they made it seem worthless. If the owner of the rough jade were there, he would definitely be so angry that he would fight them to the death.

As more and more people arrived, Zhuang Rui's pace of examining the rough stones slowed down. There were people looking at almost every piece of rough stone, and he had to avoid their bodies to release his spiritual energy. Just as Zhuang Rui was about to go to the rough stone gambling area, he heard Fatty Ma shout, "Zhuang Rui, come here and take a look over here."

Looking in the direction of the sound, Zhuang Rui saw that Fatty Ma was not far away, just a dozen meters away. There were twenty or thirty people gathered there, seemingly arguing about something. Zhuang Rui had seen them earlier but didn't go over because it was too noisy. Now that Fatty Ma had greeted him, Zhuang Rui went over as well.

"Hey, hey, everyone, make way! Our top bidder from yesterday is here. Let him take a look..."

Upon seeing Zhuang Rui approaching, Fatty Ma shouted for people to make way. In truth, even if he didn't shout, no one dared to disobey, as the White Lion's size caused everyone to scatter to both sides.

"I heard that guy sold that piece of rough jade for over 30 million yesterday. He's really young..."

"They were just lucky. Who knows if Xu's Jewelry will go bankrupt once they get back?"

"Maybe this young man faked it? The world is a strange place... hard to say!"

Zhuang Rui walked into the crowd, hearing all sorts of comments. Some were envious, some were jealous, and some even made malicious remarks. It seemed that he had indeed made quite a splash yesterday.

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Hearing the words around him, Zhuang Rui entered the crowd and said to Fatty Ma with dissatisfaction, "Brother Ma, what you did was not very kind. Isn't this making my brother the target of jealousy?"

"I'm so sorry, Brother Zhuang, I never expected these people to be so tasteless. They're just a bunch of sour grapes, unhappy to see others getting rich. If they're so capable, why don't they go buy some raw jade themselves and try it out?"

Fatty Ma repeatedly bowed to Zhuang Rui to apologize, deliberately speaking in a loud voice so that everyone around him could hear him cursing. He wasn't in this circle and wasn't afraid of offending anyone.

As soon as Fatty Ma said this, the people who were talking stopped talking, and their faces showed some dissatisfaction. For a moment, the place that was originally noisy became quiet.

"Brother, take a look at this rough jade, is it worth gambling on?"

Seeing that everyone had stopped gossiping, Fatty Ma beckoned Zhuang Rui to the side of the wool. As soon as Zhuang Rui walked over, the two people who had been watching the wool quickly retreated, not

because they were afraid of Zhuang Rui, but because they were afraid of the white lion following behind him.

When Zhuang Rui first entered this circle, he saw the rough stone. He was quite shocked. The size of the rough stone was enormous. It lay flat, and its height almost reached Zhuang Rui's chest. It was also more than two meters long. It was a behemoth. Zhuang Rui estimated that the rough stone must weigh at least two or three tons. It was the first time he had ever seen a rough stone of this size.

It is important to know that jadeite is formed by the desilicization of sodium feldspar-containing rocks under low temperature and high pressure conditions, and it needs to be kept at 150-300°C for a long time. The optimal temperature is around 212°C, which allows chromium ions to enter the crystal lattice evenly and continuously. Jadeite formed under these conditions has a very uniform green color. The conditions are very demanding, and it is difficult to meet all of the above conditions at the same time. This is why top-grade jadeite is so rare.

Due to the demanding conditions required for jadeite formation, most jadeite rough stones are not very large, ranging from three to five kilograms to three to five hundred kilograms. A half-ton rough stone with good quality is extremely rare. The piece before Zhuang Rui, which could be described as a behemoth, truly surprised him.

This piece is called rough jade rather than a stone because it looks quite good. On the side facing the sky, there are mottled patterns and blemishes that are nearly a meter long and about half a meter wide. This means that this rough jade did indeed form jade during the earth's crust movement, and was later exposed to the ground and weathered. However, no one can guarantee whether there is still jade inside.

The moss on the surface of the wool fabric resembled dried moss, with pits and bumps forming many large and small patches of color and spots, somewhat like the moss by a pond, making it look quite unsightly.

However, these characteristics are priceless in the eyes of expert jade gamblers, because from the depth, shape, direction, quantity, and density of the pine flower color, experts can deduce the depth, direction, size, shape, and quality of the green color inside the rough stone.

On the piece of raw jade was a bottle of mineral water that was only half full, and there were some water stains on the pine flower pattern, which must have been poured on when others were looking at it. The two people who had moved aside earlier had come closer again after seeing that the white lion seemed harmless.

The older of the two spoke up to Zhuang Rui, saying, "Young man, what do you think of this rough jade?"

Zhuang Rui shook his head and said, "This is the first time I've ever seen such a large piece of rough jade. This is a completely gambled rough jade. Why is it placed here?"

The man in his thirties standing to Zhuang Rui's right pointed to a spot on the rough stone and said to Zhuang Rui, "Hehe, you haven't looked closely yet. Come on, look here. There's a window here, and the green has already appeared."

"Hey, that's true. This piece of raw jade must be incredibly expensive."

Zhuang Rui followed the man's finger and saw that there was indeed a small opening halfway up the rough stone, about the size of a regular textbook. Normally, making such a small opening in ordinary rough stone would be indistinguishable from cutting it, but on this piece, it seemed so insignificant.

It was a little past ten o'clock, and the blazing sun overhead shone directly on the side of the rough stone where the outer skin had been removed, illuminating the area with crystal clarity. Zhuang Rui carefully examined it using the sunlight.

To be honest, judging from the opening, the appearance is only average. Although it has turned green, the color is scattered, with patches of it scattered here and there. Moreover, the texture and water content are not good. It looks rough and dull. Zhuang Rui touched it and it felt a bit rough, without any smoothness.

However, this piece of rough jade is just too big. The appearance of this polished surface certainly cannot represent the condition inside. With jade, the closer to the center of the rough jade, the better the quality. Who knows, there might be a top-quality piece inside this rough jade. That's why so many people have gathered to watch.

"See that? That's a real expert. He doesn't even need a magnifying glass to examine raw materials..." Among the onlookers, someone started mocking Zhuang Rui again.

"Don't talk nonsense, the light doesn't matter much whether you use a magnifying glass or not." The person who said this was obviously very kind.

Zhuang Rui smiled wryly upon hearing this. He hadn't planned to gamble on stones today. His backpack contained swimming trunks and sunglasses, which he had been dragged here by Fatty Ma and the others. His magnifying glass and other equipment were in his hotel room.

"Zhuang Rui, look at yourself, don't pay attention to these idle people, they're all just here to watch the show because they can't afford it..." Fatty Ma quickly said when he saw that Zhuang Rui was affected.

"Can't afford it?"

Everyone who can come here must have a net worth of several million or even tens of millions. Zhuang Rui was a little skeptical. Upon hearing this, he stood up, walked to the side, and looked at the price of the rough stone. He immediately gasped, "My goodness, twenty-two million two hundred and eighty thousand!"

"Brother Song, isn't this bid a bit too high? The quality is only average, who would dare to bid on this rough stone..."

Zhuang Rui was still speechless as he spoke. Although he was quite wealthy, it was absolutely wishful thinking for him to bid on this piece of rough jade. Even if he gave up buying the villa and poured all his money into it, it probably wouldn't be enough.

"Who dares? Hehe, brother, you're underestimating me. Look, the guy next to you is a rich man." Fatty Ma and the two men next to Zhuang Rui seemed to know each other, and they spoke very casually.

"You fatso, if we're talking about money, nobody here has as much as you, right? I'm still using the coal you supply." The speaker was the older one, who looked a few years older than Fatty Ma.

"Mr. Hua, you're insulting me. Everyone knows you guys have so much money that you're throwing it all into football. That stuff is a bottomless pit, and I can't compete with that."

Upon hearing what Fatty Ma said, Mr. Hua looked helpless and said, "Do you think we want to throw money down the drain? Someone's trying to give you a boost to the city's image, and you're not going to pay up? You'll be in for it later."

Perhaps because he's from this circle and doesn't have much interaction with people there, Mr. Hua speaks quite directly. It seems he's been holding back his grievances for a long time and has nowhere to vent them.

Although Zhuang Rui doesn't particularly enjoy watching football, he has some knowledge of the sport due to the national team's qualification for the World Cup a couple of years ago. He believes that domestic football clubs are simply burning money and their playing level is not very good. However, the players are all like stars, constantly earning high salaries and shouting about breaking out of Asia. But he heard that they failed again in this year's World Cup qualifiers.

"That's true. Look at me, just a country bumpkin who runs a coal mine, always asking for sponsorships here and donations there. I'm earning my money through hard work." Fatty Ma agreed and started complaining.

"By the way, please introduce him to us. This is a well-known entrepreneur from Shandong..."

After hearing Ma Pangzi's introduction, Zhuang Rui realized that the man in front of him looked somewhat familiar. He had seen him on TV a few times before. He was the boss of a group company in Shandong with a wide range of businesses. In recent years, he had started investing in football clubs and was quite famous in China. He was a real capital tycoon in the country and a regular recipient of the annual awards.

"Don't listen to that fat guy's nonsense, young man. You're the expert, so tell us what you think of this rough stone. In this circle, we're all laymen."

President Hua treated Zhuang Rui with a very calm attitude and did not put on any airs. It seems that the higher a person's status, the more experienced they become. He is far superior to those people Zhuang Rui has met who are always bossing others around.

Zhuang Rui couldn't accept the title of "expert" and quickly declined, saying, "President Hua, don't listen to Brother Ma's nonsense. I'm nowhere near an expert. Compared to the master next to you, I'm far inferior. Let's hear what he has to say first."

The man next to President Hua was very pleased with Zhuang Rui's words. After seeing his boss nod, he said, "This rough stone is a gamble. It's certain that there is jade inside. Moreover, judging from the black color of the pine flower, it was formed after the dark green color changed and weathered. From this, we can judge that the grade of the jade inside should not be low. Otherwise, the starting price would not be set so high."

What's difficult to determine now is the volume of jadeite inside this rough stone. If the jadeite inside is too small, even if it's imperial green jadeite of the glassy type, the profit from the price difference won't be recouped; the gamble is simply too risky.

The jade expert brought by Mr. Hua clearly didn't think much of the rough stone, but whether he meant to discourage others is unknown.

"What do you think, buddy?"

Fatty Ma turned his face away noncommittally and looked at Zhuang Rui, asking him a question.

"I need to take another look; I didn't examine it closely enough earlier."

Zhuang Rui was also curious about the contents of this enormous rough stone. After speaking, he squatted down and looked at the opening, his eyes filled with spiritual energy.

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Zhuang Rui had used his spiritual energy to see through objects countless times and was very familiar with it. However, this time, after the spiritual energy peeled away the outer layer of the raw stone, the scene inside astonished him.

More than ten centimeters below the surface, what appeared before Zhuang Rui's eyes was like a starry sky. In the transparent night sky, the twinkling lights of countless stars pierced through countless clouds and entered Zhuang Rui's eyes.

"This...this is all jade? How is this possible?"

Others only saw Zhuang Rui squatting there looking at the polishing of the raw material, but they didn't know the shock in Zhuang Rui's heart at that moment.

The largest piece of jadeite that Zhuang Rui had ever seen was the one that was cut open yesterday. However, the jadeite in this giant rough stone in front of him was dozens of times larger than the dry green jadeite from yesterday, and its texture and clarity were also much better.

"It must be icy jadeite!"

In Zhuang Rui's eyes, the jadeite inside the rough stone was so pure and transparent, with an extremely fine texture. From this, Zhuang Rui judged that even if these jadeite materials did not reach the top-grade icy type, they could still be considered high-quality materials.

The only pity is that this piece of rough jade actually contains two colors, namely sky blue and light green. Moreover, these two colors are like scattered flowers, not concentrated, and distributed in two areas of the rough jade. That's why Zhuang Rui had the feeling of being in the starry sky when he first looked at it.

"Icy jadeite with floating patterns?"

A term popped into Zhuang Rui's mind. He had heard it a few days ago when he was cramming on jadeite knowledge with Grandpa Gu. Zhuang Rui had only seen one actual piece from Grandpa Gu and knew that this kind of floating flower jadeite had become very popular with consumers in recent years, especially icy jadeite bracelets and pendants, which were quite valuable.

Icy jadeite with floating flowers refers to jadeite with blue or green flowers floating on its icy texture. These flowers typically appear as scattered, thread-like patterns or clumps of grass within the jadeite, and their shapes vary, resulting in varying prices.

Jadeite with floating flowers that doesn't reach the icy grade belongs only to the category of low-grade jadeite and is extremely cheap. However, icy jadeite with floating flowers that has high transparency and good carving can be ranked among the mid-to-high-grade jadeite jewelry.

Zhuang Rui knew that jadeite with floating flowers required a very high level of craftsmanship, because the color of the floating flowers was not unique, and the shapes were also diverse, including dots, stripes, grass-like patterns, and flakes. The location of these floating flowers also greatly affected the value of the carved ornament.

For example, the old master has a Buddha with floating flowers and a large belly. According to him, this is called "floating flowers and floating belly". The Buddha's belly is full and protruding, and it has floating colors. The texture is clear and bright. If it were sold on the market, it would be worth at least 200,000 to 300,000 RMB.

Of course, if the floating flowers are placed in an inappropriate position, such as on the Buddha's head or face, it will greatly affect the aesthetics and significantly reduce the value.

In today's jade market, the "Floating Flower Guanyin" is also very popular among consumers. The old man always carries a photo of the "Floating Flower Guanyin" ornament with him. Just from the photo, Zhuang Rui could feel that the delicate floating flowers on the body of the Guanyin gave people a feeling of being like a fairy, exquisite and extraordinary.

In recent years, the jade market has continued to heat up, and the price of icy jade with floating flowers has also been rising all the way. In particular, the price of good icy jade with floating flowers bracelets is at least 50,000 yuan. Many merchants sell green jade as icy jade with floating flowers, but there are still big differences between the two. Green jade material is generally very dry and does not have the roundness and beauty of icy jade with floating flowers. It can only fool some consumers who do not know much about jade.

This enormous rough stone can yield at least hundreds of kilograms of floating jadeite. Moreover, except for the area near the outer skin, most of it is high-grade icy jadeite. Zhuang Rui roughly estimated that the jadeite in this rough stone, if carved into jewelry, could be worth hundreds of millions. Even just the raw material itself would be worth at least fifty million.

This discovery made Zhuang Rui's heart race. To say he wasn't tempted would be a lie, but considering his limited funds, Zhuang Rui couldn't help but feel discouraged. All he had, at most, was a little over forty million; the chances of winning this rough jade stone were slim.

That said, Zhuang Rui has been in the limelight these past few days, so even if he wins the bid, he wouldn't dare to cut the stone on-site, as the sales channels would also be a problem.

However, Zhuang Rui was unwilling to give up. His mind was in a mess for a moment, and he stared at the rough stone as if in a daze.

Zhuang Rui had been examining the jade for quite some time, and Fatty Ma was getting impatient. Seeing Zhuang Rui still staring intently at the rough stone after standing up, he couldn't help but ask, "Brother Zhuang, have you figured out anything about it?"

"No, I can't understand this rough stone. Just like what that brother said, there is definitely jadeite inside, but no one knows the grade and quantity. If it is icy jadeite, but the base color is a little worse and the quantity is a little less, it probably won't even be worth the price of this bid. If it is high-green glass jadeite, the chances are too small. You all know that large rough stones don't always have good jadeite."

After being startled awake by Fatty Ma, Zhuang Rui shook his head repeatedly, looking rather pessimistic about the rough stone. He was simply repeating what Old Master Gu had said.

Zhuang Rui's words resonated with the onlookers, who nodded in agreement and their impression of him improved slightly: this young man does have some real skills, and he's not just relying on luck.

"It's similar to what I saw. These large rough stones must be cut open and sold separately. Judging from just this small opening, it can't even be considered a semi-gambling rough stone. The gambling element is just too great."

At some point, Song Jun and Master Peng also wandered over here. After hearing Zhuang Rui's words, Master Peng also shared his opinion.

"Alright, gentlemen, Mr. Hua, you take your time looking around. I can't afford to play with this stone. I'll go check out the other bids first..."

Unable to obtain it either way, Zhuang Rui cupped his hands in greeting to the group, turned around, and prepared to leave. The feeling of seeing something but not being able to have it was truly unpleasant, so he decided to stay far away and avoid seeing it altogether.

"Hey, Brother Zhuang, wait for me! I haven't looked at a single rough stone today. Could you help me take a look and pick one out?"

Seeing Zhuang Rui turn and walk out of the crowd, Fatty Ma, for some unknown reason, followed closely behind.

Seeing Fatty Ma catching up, panting heavily, Zhuang Rui said with a wry smile, "Brother Ma, didn't we already say that my intuition isn't very accurate? You can't expect me to just point to a random spot for you, can you?"

"Hehe, let's not talk about that. It's almost noon, let's go eat first."

Fatty Ma pulled Zhuang Rui along, then turned to him and said, "Yanzi, I have some things to discuss with Brother Zhuang at noon. You should go back to the hotel first, and I'll call you this afternoon."

Yanzi obediently agreed, then handed her handbag to Fatty Ma. Fatty Ma casually pulled out a card from it, gave it to Yanzi, and said, "You know the password. If you don't want to go back to the hotel, go shopping and buy whatever you want."

After Yanzi turned and left, Zhuang Rui said to Fatty Ma, "Brother Ma, what's all this secret? Let me make it clear, Brother Zhou is one of us, I don't hide anything from him."

Of course, the matter of the spiritual energy in his eyes was something that had to be kept secret. Not only from Zhou Rui, but even from his own mother, Zhuang Rui had never intended to reveal this matter.

Upon hearing this, Zhou Rui glanced at Zhuang Rui, a hint of gratitude flashing in his eyes, but he remained silent, still looking around warily.

"Nonsense, Brother Zhou is an old friend, how could I avoid him? The main reason for letting Yanzi leave is that we men are talking, and it's annoying to have a woman around."

Fatty Ma was better at handling people than Zhuang Rui, and his words made Zhou Rui feel quite comfortable.

"Brother Ma, let's transfer again. It's not even 11 o'clock yet, and we haven't digested what we ate this morning."

Zhuang Rui wanted to look at more bids. If he could find another rough stone like the one Lei Lei had encountered, he would bid for it. He wouldn't cut the stone now; he could keep it at home and slowly cut it when he had nothing else to do.

"Alright, let's bet big. What's the point of looking at those junk? Let's go, let's go..."

Fatty Ma seemed a little impatient and pulled Zhuang Rui away from the sealed bidding area.

...

Guangdong has a lot of hotels, and there are several decent hotels around this jade gambling venue. The group booked a private room, and after Fatty Ma sent the waiter away, Zhuang Rui asked, "Brother Ma, what's going on? You can tell me now, right?"

Fatty Ma had been acting all mysterious along the way, which made Zhuang Rui a little uneasy. Could this fatso have figured something out?

Fatty Ma stared intently at Zhuang Rui and said, "Brother Zhuang, what do you think of that giant rough jade we saw today? I'm thinking of taking a gamble, give me your opinion..."

"Brother Ma, didn't I already say that the risk of buying rough stones is too high? You're planning to stock up on them, but you don't know how to cut them, so it's not worth it to buy them. You might as well find a piece..." Zhuang Rui insisted on his previous statement.

"Brother, don't give me any of that fluff. I'll just ask you something honest: what do you think of this rough jade?"

Before Zhuang Rui could finish speaking, Fatty Ma interrupted him, indicating that Fatty Ma had never believed Zhuang Rui's words at the meeting.

"It's possible to gamble, but there are too many spectators. The winning bid would probably be astronomical. I can't afford to gamble, that's why I said that."

Zhuang Rui simply told the truth to someone like Fatty Ma, but he naturally wouldn't say how he figured it out, and Fatty Ma wouldn't ask.

"If you can't play alone, we can play together..."

Fatty Ma's words jolted Zhuang Rui awake. Yes, he was short of money, but wasn't there a rich man sitting right next to him?

Chapter 215 The Flag Rises, the Winds of Change Stir (Part 4)

In Guangdong, especially in the Chaoshan region of Jieyang, there is a well-established and historically significant jade gambling area. It has developed rapidly in recent years, particularly Yangmei Village in Jieyang, which is known as the "Jade Capital of Asia" and has experienced phenomenal growth.

In the Yangmei area of Chaoshan, almost every family gambles on stones. Most people who gamble on stones pool their money from relatives and friends to gamble on stones and have them cut open. If they win, they split the profits according to their share. If they lose, they go their separate ways and each bears the risk.

This practice is similar to the real estate speculation in Wenzhou. They flock to a city, drive up housing prices, and then resell the properties, profiting from the price difference. The surge in jadeite rough prices in recent years owes much to the Chaoshan jade gambling groups.

However, gambling on stones is riskier, and it's common to win big or lose big. This means that people who gamble on stones in a group need to be relatively familiar with each other to avoid conflicts.

Generally speaking, it's a group of people from the same family who form the group, and it's rare to team up with outsiders.

Zhuang Rui knew about these things. For example, Yang Hao, whom he knew, had a family that made their fortune through gambling on stones. Now that they had switched to the rough stone business, they could be said to be making a steady profit. Perhaps deep down, they couldn't stand the thrill of going from heaven to hell with a single cut.

However, Zhuang Rui never considered teaming up with others to gamble on stones. Firstly, he couldn't openly discuss his own abilities, and secondly, the allocation of gambling funds and the profit sharing had to be agreed upon beforehand. It was impossible to cooperate with people he wasn't very familiar with.

After hearing Fatty Ma's suggestion, Zhuang Rui thought about it seriously for a moment and said, "Brother Ma, are you really that optimistic about that piece of rough jade? You know, I only felt that the rough jade was worth gambling on because of the way the moss was seeping into it, but nobody knows the real situation inside. What if we lose money on this gamble?"

Fatty Ma waved his hands repeatedly and said, "Brother, you're wrong. I'm not optimistic about that rough stone; I'm optimistic about you. As long as you think it's worth the gamble, let's gamble. Although we're from Shanxi, we're not stingy. I, Old Ma, can still come up with tens of millions. It just depends on whether you dare to gamble, brother."

Fatty Ma's words put Zhuang Rui in a dilemma. This rough stone did indeed tempt him. According to Zhuang Rui's estimation, while many people had seen it, not many had the financial resources to bid. Furthermore, the gamble involved in this rough stone was too high; others weren't likely to offer an exorbitant starting bid. A bid of 50 million should be enough to secure it.

There's no need to hoard this enormous rough jade. If I win the bid, I'll definitely have to cut it open on the spot. Given the current state of the domestic jade market, selling it for 70 or 80 million shouldn't be a problem, and it might even go higher. But if I do that, I'll be thrust into the spotlight again.

If he really wins the bid for 50 million, he can probably make a profit of around 30 million. If he splits it with Fatty Ma, that's 15 million. It would be a lie to say he's not tempted. However, the aftermath is giving Zhuang Rui a headache. Putting aside everything else, the Song army will definitely come to question him.

"Right, let's just bring the Song army in."

Suddenly, an idea popped into Zhuang Rui's mind: let Song Jun and Fatty Ma bid for the rough stone, and the three of them could split the money. Fifteen million and ten million, the difference wasn't that big. These days, trying to eat alone can easily lead to disaster.

Thinking of this, Zhuang Rui said to Fatty Ma, "Brother Ma, I've thought about it. It's a bit risky for the two of us to gamble on this rough stone. According to my reasoning, the final bid price for this rough stone may not be less than 50 million RMB."

"That means we each have to put up 25 million. For you, that's a drop in the ocean, but I can't afford it. If we lose all our money gambling, I'll be bankrupt. How about this, let's bring Brother Song in too. The three of us can share the risk. That's better than just the two of us, right?"

Upon hearing this, Fatty Ma lowered his head and thought for a moment, then said, "Brother, I can't understand the inner workings of that rough jade, but when it comes to understanding people's psychology, you're far inferior to me."

Although many people have seen this rough stone, I can guarantee that the final winning bid will not exceed 40 million. Mr. Hua, whom we just met, will only bid up to 28 million at most. He won't bid more than that. As for others, I estimate they will be about the same. Therefore, we don't need to bid as high as 50 million.

"But since you've suggested that Boss Song join us, it would be dishonest of me, Old Ma, to refuse. Alright, I agree. Give him a call first. If he's interested, let him come by himself. You don't need to bring that jade expert. You don't want word to get out, right?"

Fatty Ma saw right through Zhuang Rui's thoughts, knowing he didn't want to show his face. Fatty Ma's intuition was frighteningly sharp; he could sense how much someone liked something. The change in Zhuang Rui's expression when he saw the jade inside the rough stone at the event, and the shock he felt, didn't escape Fatty Ma's notice.

Of course, Fatty Ma only thought that Zhuang Rui was just like him, with a particularly keen sense of things. He would never have imagined that Zhuang Rui was looking at the jadeite rough stones with his eyes, and that all the jadeite rough stones were completely unguarded in his eyes.

"Brother Song, are you still at the venue? There's something I need to discuss with you. Come to the xxx Hotel by yourself, don't bring anyone with you."

Zhuang Rui had already dialed Song Jun's number. Song Jun was a shrewd man. After hearing what Zhuang Rui said, he made an excuse to let Master Peng stay at the jade gambling venue, and then took a taxi over.

"Old Ma, it really was you who lured Zhuang Rui away. I couldn't find the kid in the blink of an eye. Tell me, what good thing do you want to do for me?"

Less than ten minutes later, Song Jun arrived and was not surprised to see Zhuang Rui with Fatty Ma.

Zhuang Rui briefly explained the matter to Song Jun. Of course, regarding the rough stone, Zhuang Rui only said that he felt it was good. As for whether Song Jun believed him or not, Zhuang Rui didn't care. Anyway, he had already said it, and whether or not Song Jun joined in was his business.

After listening, Song Jun considered for a moment and then said, "I was also interested in this bid. In my opinion, I should be able to get it for around 30 million. However, if the two of you team up, I'll definitely suffer a loss. Alright, brother, I haven't been ungrateful for you. You still thought of me in this matter, so count me in. Let's talk about the specifics..."

Now that Song Jun had decided to join, the group began to discuss the details. At this time, Fatty Ma's performance impressed Song Jun. It turned out that Fatty Ma had spent the whole day yesterday observing this rough stone. He remembered clearly who had seen it, whether they were qualified to bid, and whether their decisions were sound. Now, he was analyzing it in a very logical and reasonable way.

Finally, the group determined the bid price. To ensure they won the bid without spending too much, the three decided to set the starting price at 36 million, with each contributing 12 million. Song Jun would be the one to submit the bid, and if they won, the stone would be cut on-site. Zhuang Rui would not show up for these matters and would leave them to the two of them to handle.

After the discussion, Song Jun took out his pen and paper and wrote three copies of the agreement by hand. Once everyone had signed them, the agreement was considered to be in effect. Although the agreement did not have much legal effect, given their identities and the relationship between Song Jun and himself, Zhuang Rui was not afraid of anything.

After having dinner at the hotel, the group went to a bank, where Zhuang Rui and Fatty Ma each transferred 12 million RMB into Song Jun's account.

After finishing their business, the group returned to the jade gambling venue. Zhuang Rui said he wanted to take a look around by himself. Before leaving, Song Jun said to Zhuang Rui, "We can't bid so early, otherwise the news might leak out and someone might intercept our bids. The bidding ends at noon tomorrow. I'll bid at 11:50. Zhuang Rui, have you seen any other rough stones that you like? I'll bid for them for you then."

Song Jun had a reason for saying that. The bidding for this jade gambling conference is not something that can be done randomly. Only those who have been recognized and issued membership by the Pingzhou Jade Association can bid. These people all have a deposit held in the Jade Association's account, so there is no fear that they will change their minds after winning the bid.

"Brother Song, don't bother me. If I find a bid I like, I'll just handle the formalities myself. You two go ahead and do your work."

Zhuang Rui had already found out that those who came to participate in this jade gambling conference on short notice could go to the organizing committee to pay a deposit, and then they could bid. The deposit amount was 10% of the bid price for the rough jade. If they won the bid, they only needed to pay the remaining 90%.

However, if someone wins the bid and then changes their mind, 10% will be paid to the owner of the raw material as compensation.

Zhuang Rui didn't care about paying a deposit. After bidding, he was going to bring the winning rough stone back to Pengcheng. If he bid through Song Jun, this guy might encourage Zhuang Rui to go to the site to cut the stone. This was the main reason why Zhuang Rui didn't want Song Jun to bid on his behalf.

After entering the sealed bidding area, Zhuang Rui saw the rough stone that Lei Lei wanted to bid on. After thinking for a moment, he took out a pen and paper and wrote down the bid number. He told Lei Lei to bid 130,000 yuan, and he would also bid around 125,000 yuan himself later. In case Lei Lei couldn't win over her family, he wouldn't let the rough stone fall into someone else's hands.

There were too many people in the semi-gambling sealed-bid area, and the bids for the rough stones that had been opened were also very high. Zhuang Rui did take a liking to a few rough stones, but when he saw the prices, he realized there wasn't much profit to be made. After wandering around the semi-gambling area, he strolled over to the fully-gambling area.

There weren't many fully rough stones, only about seven or eight hundred pieces, less than one-tenth of the semi-rough stones. They were loosely placed in a corner of the semi-rough stone area.

Chapter 216 The Flag Rises, the Winds of Change Stir (Part 5)

The semi-rough jade area with sealed bids wasn't crowded; only about a dozen people were selecting rough stones. These people were probably all there with the same purpose as Zhuang Rui: to find a bargain. Reputable jade dealers usually gamble on semi-rough jade; stones with windows cut open have a lower risk factor, and if they win, they generally keep the jade for themselves.

Although there were fewer people in the semi-gambling area, Zhuang Rui's pace slowed down considerably as he continued his inspection. This was because he not only had to use his spiritual energy to determine whether there was jade in the rough stones, but he also had to stop and observe any stones that showed green color, noting the appearance and markings of the outer skin in his notebook.

Because the basis for setting the bid price for rough stones is entirely determined by the pine flower and python pattern on the outer skin of the rough stone, Zhuang Rui must record in detail the appearance of the outer skin of the rough stone containing jadeite. He simply cannot set the bid price based on the jadeite inside the rough stone.

These unbid rough stones all have excellent outer skin appearance, which is why the owners of the rough stones selected them for sale under the unbid system. Zhuang Rui discovered that the probability of finding green jadeite in these unbid rough stones is quite high. After looking at only forty or fifty unbid rough stones, he found that about twenty of them contained jadeite. Putting aside the quality, just the fact that they contain green jadeite makes them much better than the unbid rough stones on the stalls.

Even if the rough stones have good appearances, the starting price is already high. There are several rough stones with green jade inside, but the value of the jade inside is not as high as the starting price. In the end, Zhuang Rui simply looked at rough stones with average appearances on the outside. Only such rough stones have a chance to win the bid at a relatively low price.

Although Zhuang Rui was fast enough, it was almost 6 p.m. by the time he finished looking at the seven or eight hundred lots of fully gambled jade, the sky was already getting dark, and the venue was closing at 6:30 p.m. After quickly noting down the last piece of raw jade that would turn green, Zhuang Rui and Zhou Rui left the venue with the white lion.

Back at the hotel, Zhuang Rui found that Wei Ge and the others hadn't returned yet. He called Song Jun, but Song Jun was at a friend's place in Guangzhou. Since Fatty Ma was with a beautiful woman, it wasn't appropriate to disturb him. Zhuang Rui had a simple meal with Zhou Rui and then retreated to his room.

The bidding will begin tomorrow at noon, and Zhuang Rui's notebook is filled with notes of more than 300 rough jade stones, some of which contain jade. Zhuang Rui has already roughly categorized these rough stones in his notebook.

Zhuang Rui replaced the various pieces of wool with symbols that only he understood, so even if the notebook were lost, no one else would be able to figure it out.

Of the rough stones noted in the notebook, thirty-six were of the icy variety, and over fifty were of the hibiscus variety, which was slightly inferior to the icy variety in color and had a uniform color throughout. The rest were mid- to low-grade stones such as bean, dry green, oily clear, and golden thread. Although there were some fine pieces among them, Zhuang Rui was not very interested in these rough stones. He was more interested in about one hundred rough stones.

Besides the icy and hibiscus-type rough stones, there are also more than ten colorless jadeite rough stones. Although the lack of green will make them much cheaper, these colorless jadeite ornaments are very popular now. If they can reach the glass type, they are even more expensive, comparable to the price of regular icy jadeite ornaments.

What Zhuang Rui valued most were three pieces of jadeite containing a glassy, bright green color. These three pieces were not large, weighing around fifteen or sixteen kilograms, which is not much larger than a basketball. The jadeite inside each piece weighed about two or three kilograms.

Although the quantity is not large, the jadeite in these three rough stones can all be described as top-quality. The jadeite is bright green and glassy. If a pendant or ornament is made from it, its value will be in the hundreds of thousands or millions. Zhuang Rui roughly estimated that the jadeite in these three rough stones is worth more than five million.

Of the three rough stones, two had exceptionally good outer skin, with visible pine-flower and python-pattern patterns after cleaning. The deep green color was evident from the surface and clearly seeped downwards. However, the starting bids were very high, around 1.8 million each. It's safe to assume there were substantial bids for these two stones, and Zhuang Rui wasn't confident he could acquire them.

The other rough stone was mediocre, with some black spots on it, and wasn't very eye-catching. The starting bid was 200,000 yuan, and Zhuang Rui's main target was this rough stone.

Zhuang Rui guessed that this rough stone wouldn't attract much attention, but he also needed to be wary of those who wanted to find a bargain and cut the stone. After careful consideration, Zhuang Rui decided to set his starting bid at 380,000 yuan. This way, it wouldn't be too high and cause the owner of the rough stone to bid against it, nor too low and cause it to be sold to someone else.

As for the other two rough stones, Zhuang Rui decided to invest 2.6 million. If he won, great; if not, it wouldn't matter. After all, there are many good things in the world, and it's impossible for one person to have them all.

After securing those three rough stones, Zhuang Rui focused his energy on the icy and colorless glassy jadeite. This task was far more complicated than examining the rough stones. Not only did he have to price the stones based on their appearance, but he also had to consider the psychology of other bidders. If he weren't afraid of revealing his secrets, Zhuang Rui would have even considered bringing over Fatty Ma, who was definitely an unlicensed master of psychology.

Zhuang Rui had to complete the bidding procedures before noon tomorrow. Just as he was busy working on his laptop, there was a knock on the door.

"Hey guys, didn't you go to a hot spring? Why do you all look like you've been tortured by gorillas in the forest?"

When Zhuang Rui opened the door, he saw that it was Wei Ge and the others who had returned. However, they had been full of energy when they set off in the morning, but now they looked like defeated soldiers. Except for Lao Si, the rest of them were pale and looked malnourished.

Since these people didn't lend a hand to Zhuang Rui this morning, Zhuang Rui's words were naturally not very pleasant. Wei Ge and the others rolled their eyes, raised their middle fingers, and went back to their own rooms. Only Lao Si was full of energy and went into Zhuang Rui's room.

After chatting with Lao Si for a while, Zhuang Rui learned that they had joined a day tour group. In the morning, they first went to explore some kind of Grand Canyon, which left them exhausted. Then they went rafting, and Lao San and his wife's rubber raft even capsized in the water. Although they soaked in a hot spring in the afternoon, they still hadn't recovered.

"Fourth Brother, is there anything else?"

The fourth brother was well aware of the purpose of this day trip and hadn't gone on the adventure in the morning, which was why he was so energetic now. However, Zhuang Rui found it a bit strange that he was staying in Zhuang Rui's room.

"Hey bro, we brothers got together today and, to show the organization cares about you, we've decided to send you a girl to end your virginity. I'll bring her over later, what do you think?"

"What did you say? Oh my god, it hurts so much..."

The fourth brother's words made Zhuang Rui, who was pouring tea for him, suddenly tremble. Hot water splashed onto his hand, scalding him and making him yell "Ouch!"

"Damn, is it really necessary to be this excited?" the fourth brother said with a lewd grin.

"Alright, Fourth Brother, stop joking..."

Zhuang Rui thought of the woman behind Lao Si that morning, and his heart warmed. But then he thought that these were just public buses, and anyone with money could get on. The heat quickly died down.

"Who's joking with you? I'm serious. I'll definitely find you a virgin..." the fourth brother said very seriously.

"You can keep it for yourself. I'm busy right now. Oh, by the way, I'll leave the task of taking Second Brother and the others to you tomorrow. I'm going to the bidding venue. Hmm, White Lion will guard the gate later. If you're not afraid of death, bring him along."

Zhuang Rui pulled Lao Si up and pushed him out of the room. What a joke! Someone in this public service industry is still a virgin? Speaking of which, the hymen repair business in small clinics in Guangdong is exceptionally good.

After seeing off the fourth brother and using his spiritual energy to heal his scalded hand, Zhuang Rui threw himself back into analyzing and calculating the raw materials. Fortunately, numbers were his forte, and even so, he was busy until after 2 a.m. before he finally compiled a list of the raw materials to be tendered and the bids to be prepared.

As everyone knows, sealed bids are highly unpredictable. Not only are there many bidders, but there is also the risk of the owner of the raw material blocking the bid. Therefore, many people cast a wide net and submit dozens or even hundreds of bids.

Zhuang Rui was in a similar situation, preparing to bid on fifty-three pieces of raw jade, requiring approximately eighteen million in funds, which was almost half of the funds Zhuang Rui had allocated to the Song army, excluding the twelve million.

Of course, only a 10% deposit is required upfront, which is 1.8 million. According to Zhuang Rui's estimate, it would be quite good if he could win about 10 out of his 53 bids.

The next morning, Zhuang Rui's eyes were still red when he got up. After having morning tea with Yue Jing and Lao San, he said goodbye with reluctance. Lao Si took them to the airport, while Zhuang Rui rushed to the jade gambling venue. He wanted to submit his bids for the rough stones he had his eye on the day before the bidding deadline at noon.

There were clearly many more bidders today than in the previous two days. Although the organizing committee and bank staff set up more than ten windows to accept bids at the same time, Zhuang Rui still queued for more than half an hour before it was his turn. After transferring 1.8 million yuan to a designated account and submitting the raw material bid number, Zhuang Rui received a number.

With more than three hours left before the bidding opened, Zhuang Rui walked towards Yang Hao's booth. Yesterday, after returning to the hotel, he received a call from Yang Hao, who said that he had just received a new batch of old mine jadeite and asked Zhuang Rui to come and take a look when he had time.

Just as he was halfway there, his cell phone rang again. It was Song Jun calling, saying he had something urgent to discuss and asked Zhuang Rui to go to the entrance of the venue. Zhuang Rui had no choice but to turn around and walk back the way he came.

"Brother Song, what's up? Didn't we agree on this yesterday?" When Zhuang Rui arrived at the gate, he found that Fatty Ma was also waiting for him there.

"Things have changed a bit, and I'm afraid we need to adjust our bid." Song Jun's words surprised Zhuang Rui.

Chapter 217 The Flag Rises, the Winds of Change Stir (Part 6)

Zhuang Rui dared to invest 18 million in a sealed bid despite not having much money on hand because of the rough stone he was bidding on with Song Jun and Fatty Ma. He was certain that if they won the bid, the stone would be cut on the spot, allowing them to recoup their investment. Now, hearing from Song Jun that things had taken a turn for the worse, he was getting anxious.

Of course, if they fail to win the bid, Song Jun will return the twelve million to Zhuang Rui, but that would mean missing a chance to make money.

Seeing Zhuang Rui's anxious look, Fatty Ma said with a smile, "Brother Zhuang, don't worry. This change may not be a bad thing. However, the bid we agreed on earlier will probably have to be increased a bit."

"Let's talk about what happened first. If the bid price is raised too much, our risk will be much greater." Zhuang Rui couldn't figure out what could have caused the previously agreed-upon plan to change.

"Let's move aside and talk..."

Song Jun noticed that he and his companions, along with Zhuang Rui's Tibetan Mastiff, stood out conspicuously at the entrance. He called out to them and then walked to the rest area set up in the venue.

Song Jun looked around and, seeing that there was no one else in the rest area, whispered, "I learned from a friend yesterday that several military factions in Myanmar, which are divided into different regions, reached an agreement in Yangon yesterday to strictly control the export of jadeite rough stones. Rough stones dug from various new and old mines must be sent to Yangon for centralized sale."

This time, the Myanmar government is determined. Any rough jade stones that didn't leave through the Yangon jade gambling fair will be considered smuggled, and those caught will face the death penalty. It's likely that once this news gets out, the price of rough jade stones at this fair will skyrocket.

"Hey Song, is that all? You scared me half to death. What's the big deal? Myanmar has been controlling the export of raw stones, but we're still doing just fine here. It's nothing serious."

Upon hearing this, Zhuang Rui immediately felt relieved. Since the late 1990s, the Burmese government had issued numerous regulations regarding the export of jadeite rough. However, with policies in place, there are always ways to circumvent them. Furthermore, given the fragmented political landscape of Myanmar, government orders were often not enforced. While this did lead to an increase in rough jadeite prices, the overall impact was not significant.

"You don't know anything, kid. This time it's for real. All the major powers in Myanmar have passed this resolution. I'm afraid that any raw jade entering the country will be priced higher at the Yangon jade auction in Myanmar. Just think about it, the price of raw jade that already has to be bid on in Myanmar will increase several times over once it enters the country."

Upon hearing Song Jun's words, Zhuang Rui also became serious. China is the world's largest consumer of jadeite. If the Myanmar government can really control the export of raw jadeite, the impact on the Chinese jadeite market will undoubtedly be enormous.

Even if these raw stone merchants still have ways to source goods, they are risking their lives to make money. It seems that the rise in the price of raw stones is unstoppable.

Zhuang Rui asked, "Brother Song, how many people know about this?"

Upon hearing this, Song Jun smiled wryly and said, "I know what you're thinking. Let me give you two words: no chance. Even I, who's not in this circle, can get this information. Do you think those raw material merchants who deal with Myanmar every day wouldn't know about this?"

Upon hearing Song Jun's words, Zhuang Rui's face also turned bitter. If this news had come after the sealed bid opening today, it wouldn't have had a significant impact on the Pingzhou Stone Gambling Conference. However, that possibility was unlikely. It was probably true that the blocking of bids and the reserve price of this stone gambling conference would increase significantly.

If this news were to reach China, it would be nothing short of a magnitude 10 earthquake for the domestic jade market. Domestic jewelry companies would be reshuffled due to the need for jade raw material reserves, as the recent rise in raw material prices is sure to trigger a jade consumption boom.

"Mr. Zhao, have you heard? Something happened in Myanmar yesterday..."

As Zhuang Rui and his group were talking, a few people entered the rest area. They walked and chatted, their voices not loud, and they immediately stopped talking when they saw that there were people in the rest area. However, their words had already reached the ears of Zhuang Rui and his group, and they all looked at each other in surprise.

"This year's Pingzhou Stone Gambling Conference is brewing with trouble," Song Jun sighed after the group of people who had come in later left mysteriously.

Undoubtedly, the news has spread far and wide. At this moment, the three of them are somewhat conflicted, as they are afraid that the price they set earlier will definitely not be enough to win the bid for that giant rough stone.

Song Jun said to Zhuang Rui, "Brother, in terms of funds, no one can compare to the three of us at this jade gambling event. But tell me the truth, what's the quality of that rough stone? Is it worth us acquiring it?"

Song Jun brought over 80 million RMB in spare funds to the Pingzhou Jade Gambling Conference. Combined with Fatty Ma's 300 million RMB and Zhuang Rui's 40 million RMB, they would be unstoppable if they put their efforts into a single rough stone. However, Song Jun and Fatty Ma's first consideration was how much the rough stone was actually worth and how much jadeite could be extracted from it.

"Brother Song, if I knew this, I wouldn't be gambling on stones. I could just go to any casino and win a fortune. Why don't we give up on this rough stone?"

In Zhuang Rui's mind, money is never enough, but the matter of the eye is something that absolutely cannot be revealed. Although he knew that the rough stone was worth hundreds of millions, he was unwilling to arouse suspicion because of it. Even in front of Song Jun and Fatty Ma, who had a good relationship with him, Zhuang Rui refused to reveal a single word.

"Old Ma, what do you think?" Song Jun turned his gaze to Fatty Ma.

"I'm betting. I came here specifically for this piece of rough jade. I trust my intuition; it shouldn't be wrong."

Fatty Ma said casually that what he was really looking forward to was probably the cutting of the stone after winning the bid. Moreover, he had been staring at this rough stone for two days and observed from the expressions of those who were studying it that the jade inside should be quite good.

"I think it's good too, Brother Song, you make the decision."

After Fatty Arima spoke first, Zhuang Rui's courage grew a bit. Since others had already voiced their intuitions, it wouldn't be unreasonable for him to share his own.

"In that case, let's take a gamble. With the price of jadeite rough stones skyrocketing, the price of the finished pieces will be even higher than the increase in the price of the rough stones. As long as the

amount of jadeite contained in this rough stone is about the same as our estimate, we won't lose money..."

Song Jun was determined. Last year, he ruined a rough jade stone and was ridiculed by people in his circle for a long time. This year, Song Jun was also determined to unearth a rough jade stone that would yield a huge profit and show those people.

"Brother Song, why don't you tell us how much the bid price is?"

Zhuang Rui knew the situation regarding the raw materials, so he didn't need Song Jun to explain further. What he was concerned about was the revised bid.

After thinking for a while, Song Jun said, "I've been thinking about it. Affected by this news from Myanmar, the price of all raw jadeite will probably more than double. For example, this big piece of raw jadeite has a starting bid of more than 40 million. With other bids, it's estimated to be around 60 million. If we invest 63 million, I think we can get it."

"Isn't three million a bit too risky? Since we've decided to gamble, why not raise the price a bit more?" Zhuang Rui asked.

"Brother, the top lot at this year's Yangon jade auction in Myanmar was only equivalent to 58 million RMB. A single bid of 60 million RMB for a rough jade stone is already very high."

Like that rough stone you had the day before yesterday, the front and back windows were full of green, basically the same as the finished stone. Xu's Jewelry still managed to get rid of it, that's extremely bad luck. The rough stone we're going to gamble on, the window isn't good, we should be able to get it for 60 million. I've already added a little more to 63 million.

Moreover, the news from Myanmar came very suddenly, and many jade gamblers were probably not prepared. Sixty million, hehe, although that amount isn't huge, there aren't many people who can actually come up with that kind of money..."

Song Jun's words dispelled Zhuang Rui's doubts. Seeing that Fatty Ma also nodded in agreement, he said, "Alright, Brother Song, it's settled then. Brother Ma and I will transfer another eleven million to you."

Song Jun waved his hand and said, "It's too late. Let's go bid first. I'm afraid many people will be bidding this morning. If we're late, we might miss the deadline. If we win the bid, I'll pay the money first, and we can settle the rest after the raw material is cut open."

Song Jun knew Zhuang Rui inside and out, so he wasn't afraid of him running away. He also wasn't afraid of Fatty Ma, who had a huge business in Shanxi. If Fatty Ma dared to renege on his debts, Song Jun had plenty of ways to deal with him.

Zhuang Rui and Fatty Ma naturally trusted Song Jun, so they both nodded in agreement. The three of them walked out of the lounge and prepared to bid, but when they got far from the bidding area, they were startled by the crowded people.

When Zhuang Rui was bidding this morning, although there was a queue, there were only about ten people at each bidding window. Now, wow, there's a long line at every window. They're probably all people who heard the news and came to change their bids.

"Brothers, have all these people gone mad?"

Seeing the bustling scene, Zhuang Rui was stunned. Everyone was eager to give him money.

"Alright, you go and queue up first. The bidding will close in less than three hours. I'll explain it to you later."

Song Jun and Fatty Ma were probably somewhat prepared for this scene. The reason why jade gambling was so popular was because of people like them.

Squeezed in the crowd of people queuing to bid, Zhuang Rui pondered, "Should I also change the prices of the bids I submitted earlier?"

Chapter 218 The Flag Rises, the Winds of Change Stir (Part 7)

As noon approached, the number of people at the jade gambling venue gradually dwindled. Aside from the armed police and security guards, very few people were selecting rough stones. Even the jade vendors at each stall had left one person to watch their stall and disappeared. 000000.0000

"Damn it, the organizers of this jade gambling event are so stingy. They should at least get a few more air conditioners. It's so hot!"

Fatty Ma kept wiping his sweat with a towel, looking at the people sitting on the front row of the stage with a resentful expression. Those people were sitting right in front of the air conditioner vent.

The bidding site was also inside the raw material trading hall, which was converted from a closed warehouse. In front of the stage, ten chairs were arranged in a row, totaling more than thirty rows. Even so, more than half of the people were still standing in the aisles on both sides of the chairs, waiting for the opening of the sealed bids.

Actually, there are three or four air conditioners installed here, but the space is just too big, so they don't really work.

Zhuang Rui, Fatty Ma, and Song Jun are currently waiting at the bidding venue of the Pingzhou Stone Gambling Conference. They arrived early and managed to grab seats. Sitting next to Zhuang Rui are Lei Lei, her maternal grandfather, and her uncle. As for Lei Lei's cousin, Wei Zijiang, he can only enjoy the treatment of standing in the aisle.

Zhou Rui just took Bai Shi back to the hotel, and it's a bit inappropriate for Bai Shi to be here now.

"Oh right, Lei Lei, I forgot to tell you, the rough stones at this jade gambling convention are likely to increase in price. You might not be able to get your piece for 130,000."

Zhuang Rui only found out about this this morning, and then he was busy queuing up to bid. He only realized now that he had forgotten to tell Lei Lei about it.

"By the time you tell me, it'll be too late. I bid 180,000 for that rough stone. How about it, you should be able to get it for that price, right?"

Lei Lei had a hint of smugness on her face. She had bid alone; the reason was simple: her grandfather and uncle didn't support her, so she had to put up a deposit of 18,000 yuan herself to bid on that rough stone. 60SH.

Zhuang Rui nodded but didn't speak. He wasn't sure either. Who knew how high the price increase of raw materials would go this time? Judging from the frenzy at the bidding site just now, apart from those raw material merchants, there probably wouldn't be many winners among the rest.

Looking at Song Jun sitting upright beside him, Zhuang Rui suddenly remembered the topic from that morning. He turned to Song Jun and asked, "Brother Song, it seems that about 40% of the people gambling on stones are not actually in the jade business. Are they all like you and Brother Ma, hoarding and investing?"

Upon hearing Zhuang Rui's question, Song Jun scoffed, "They're hoarding goods for nothing, just trying to get a bargain. If the price goes up, they'll make a fortune. And this stuff isn't taxed, it's much more profitable than traditional business..."

Zhuang Rui thought about it and realized that it was true. Since the introduction of jade gambling into China, apart from a symbolic customs duty charged through normal channels (since they were all broken stones, there wasn't much customs duty to be charged), no other fees were incurred for the transactions.

For some reason, there has never been a clear definition of taxes for both parties involved in jade gambling. This has led many people from traditional industries to get involved, resulting in the somewhat distorted prosperity of jade gambling today.

However, this situation is unlikely to last long. The government cannot simply watch tax revenue from this area go to waste. Everyone with eyes can see this. So, while there is still no clear explanation, they are extending their reach into this field. Even if they can't last long, they can still make a quick buck and leave.

"Ahem..." The sound of testing the microphone came from the microphone at the front desk, and the noisy bidding venue immediately quieted down.

"Friends and guests, the 2004 Pingzhou Jade Bidding and Trade Fair is now open for sealed bids..."

At this point, the middle-aged man on the stage looked a little embarrassed, hesitated for a moment, and continued, "Due to the large number of last-minute changes to the bid prices, it's quite troublesome to tally them up. The opening of the sealed bids will be postponed by half an hour..."

Upon hearing these words, the audience erupted in a cacophony of reactions, some expressing dissatisfaction, others understanding, some hurling insults, and still others dismissing them—a true reflection of the diverse reactions from all walks of life.

However, you can't fight city hall. After the commotion subsided, everyone had no choice but to stay put and wait for the bidding to begin. If you're not happy about it, that's fine. Just turn around and you'll see the main entrance. People here would love for more people to leave so it won't be so crowded.

"Isn't this just kidding me..." Zhuang Rui was speechless.

"Hey, what's the rush? Even if others use computers to compile statistics, they still have to manually enter the data. Zhuang Rui, looks like you've submitted quite a few bids, haven't you?" Song Jun said with a smile when he saw Zhuang Rui's impatient look.

"Not many bids, and I bid relatively low. What about you, Brother Song?" Zhuang Rui casually steered the conversation toward Song Jun.

"I submitted more than 200 bids, but it's hard to say how many I'll win. There were many bids that I didn't have time to change because of time constraints."

Song Jun's words left Zhuang Rui speechless. He originally thought that he had submitted more than fifty bids, which was quite a lot. He didn't expect that others would submit hundreds of bids at a time. But thinking about it, it made sense. Song Jun's purpose in coming here was to stockpile raw materials. If he didn't cast a wide net, he wouldn't be able to catch any fish.

"We entered this business a bit late. I heard that a few years ago, you could get these rough stones for just a little over the reserve price. Now, it might cost double that. It depends on what other people are asking for and whether the owner of the rough stone is happy. We've missed a good opportunity."

Fatty Ma was quite resentful that he hadn't ventured into this field in the past few years.

Song Jun said dismissively, "Come on, if you had started playing with raw jade a few years ago, the price would probably have doubled by now."

"The bidding is about to begin..."

Zhuang Rui tensed up when he heard the buzzing sound coming from the two large speakers next to him, which were taller than a person. Not only him, but the originally noisy warehouse also immediately became quiet. The only sound at the bidding site was the sound of the microphone being adjusted.

"Sorry to keep you waiting, friends. The Pingzhou Jade Bidding Conference is about to begin with the opening of sealed bids."

The voice from earlier rang out. Thankfully, there was no speech from the leader; the opening of the bids was announced directly. The opening of the bids for the sealed bids is based on the number of the raw materials, starting from bid number one.

"Bid number 1, 7.5 million yuan, winning bid number 580, congratulations to this friend."

"Bid number 2, 4,365,000 yuan, winning bid number 23, congratulations."

"Bid number three, 11.88 million yuan, winning bid number 198, congratulations."

"Lot No. 4, 2.55 million yuan, winning bid number 68..."

"Bid number five, 9,888,000 yuan, winning bid number 568..."

...

As the sound from the speaker rang out, the entire bidding venue fell silent. The first five bids revealed left everyone in the room stunned. With only five bids, there were already bids worth tens of millions, and all of them were over a million. This was simply too crazy.

Then, the silence was broken by someone. The whole scene exploded like cold water being poured into a hot oil pan. Discussions arose everywhere, even drowning out the sound of the bids being read out from the speakers. The person on stage holding the microphone looked at the audience with some confusion and temporarily stopped the bidding process.

Zhuang Rui knew that the order of the numbers was based on the appearance of the window cut into the rough stone. He vaguely remembered that the number three piece was a semi-rough rough stone weighing more than 40 kilograms. The window cut revealed glass-type jade with good water content and transparency, but the color was a little light, so it could only be considered a top-grade rough stone.

Furthermore, Zhuang Rui had previously examined the inside of that rough stone and found that it could yield at most about three kilograms of jadeite, which was scattered and unsuitable for making bracelets. As a result, its value would be greatly reduced. With a price of over ten million, the person who bought the rough stone would probably lose a fortune just by making a few pendants or ring faces.

The starting bid for this lot was set at 1 million. Zhuang Rui also bid, with a bid of 1.2 million. Although he knew his chances of winning were slim, he never expected that the final winning bid would be ten times higher than his bid. His meager amount wouldn't even be enough to fill someone else's teeth.

It seems that the news from Myanmar has had a huge impact on the Pingzhou jade gambling conference. With such a disregard for cost, Zhuang Rui really can't imagine how the winner will make a profit. It's likely that the person won the rough stone but won't dare to cut it easily. They'll either hoard it or resell it. Otherwise, they'll just lose money no matter what they do.

"This...this is just too outrageous!"

Even Song Jun, who was usually very calm, lost his composure at this moment, muttering to himself with an incredulous expression on his face.

"It seems that in the future, anyone who wants to enter the jade business circle will not be able to survive without substantial funds."

Fatty Ma's words rang out, and the people next to him nodded repeatedly. Lei Lei's maternal grandfather and uncle looked particularly distressed, presumably because they had also bid on these rough stones, and the result was evident from their expressions.

"Brother Ma, do you think we'll win the bid for that raw material?" Faced with such an insane bid, Zhuang Rui had lost all confidence.

"It should... be okay, no rush, let's see first..."

Fatty Ma kept wiping his sweat with a towel, and his usual confidence was gone.

Chapter 219 The Flag Rises, the Winds of Change Stir (Part 8)

Given the current crazy price surge in rough jade, it's really hard to say whether the semi-rough jade with a starting bid of over 20 million will be successfully won. Fatty Ma only bid on this one piece at this jade gambling event, and now he's showing some nervousness.

"Damn it, who put up these bids?"

Fatty Ma angrily cursed, "The bidding only announces the bidder's number, not their name. No one else will know who won the bid. If the winner doesn't cut the stone afterward, the whereabouts of the raw material will probably become a mystery."

"Everyone, please be quiet..."

The people bidding on the stage shouted themselves hoarse, and it took a while for the commotion to gradually subside.

"Please be quiet, everyone. The successful bidders can pay the remaining balance first. If the remaining balance is not paid within 48 hours of the bid opening, it will be considered as an automatic withdrawal from the bid, and the deposit will not be refunded. As for the collection of the raw materials, it will have to wait until all bids have been opened. Please be patient and continue with the bid opening."

"Lot No. 6, 4.88 million, winning bid number: 98..."

"Lot No. 7, 1.15 million, winning bid number: 116..."

"Lot No. 8, 6.95 million, winning bid number: 521..."

"Wait a minute, my bid for number eight was also 6.95 million, so why wasn't I the winner?"

Just as three bids for raw materials were announced, the bidding was interrupted again. A middle-aged man sitting in front of Zhuang Rui and the others stood up and questioned them loudly.

The host who was presenting the bid was obviously unaware of the situation. After exchanging a few words with the people behind him, he temporarily pulled up the bid information on the computer before speaking: "According to the rules of the conference for sealed bids, when bids are the same, the bidder with the earlier bid will be the winner."

"Yes, according to our investigation, bidder number 521 submitted their bid ten minutes earlier than you, sir. So, I'm sorry, you are not the successful bidder."

The bidder's words drew laughter from the room. This guy was unlucky; although he resubmitted his bid, he was a little slower in line than the others, and by just 10 minutes, the rough stone he had in his hands had slipped away.

"Damn it, I didn't just go to the toilet, that would have made me a little late..." the middle-aged man cursed sullenly, sitting down with a disgruntled expression. His words elicited another burst of laughter.

However, after this incident, the originally tense atmosphere at the bidding site dissipated somewhat, and people accepted the fact that the price of raw stones had soared. The bidding process went smoothly until one hundred bids were issued, at which point the host announced a ten-minute break before continuing the bidding.

Of the first 100 rough jade lots offered, not a single one went unsold, which is extremely rare in jade auctions organized in various places in the past. Of course, the rough jade lots that were in the top 100

were all performing quite well, and with the news from Myanmar, it is reasonable that they were sought after. However, the prices are unbelievably high.

Zhuang Rui also placed several bids in the first 100 sealed bids, but without exception, he lost them all. The reserve prices of the winning bids were several times higher than his bids. Zhuang Rui could only accept this with a wry smile. Now, he prays that he can win three or five of these fifty-odd bids, and then he can go and burn incense in gratitude.

Song Jun's expression wasn't good either. He had submitted more than 30 of the first 100 sealed bids, but like Zhuang Rui, he had won nothing. Seeing Fatty Ma repeatedly scrutinizing his expression, Song Jun felt a little embarrassed.

Actually, it's not entirely his fault. When Zhuang Rui got to the queue, it was already past 11 o'clock, and the sealed bid was about to close. Song Jun didn't have much time to change his previous bid. As expected, none of his bids were successful.

"Lei Lei, your grandparents won the bid?"

Zhuang Rui saw that his maternal grandfather and uncle, who were sitting next to Lei Lei, both had happy expressions on their faces, so they must have won some jade stones.

"Well, lot numbers 78 and 92 were won by Grandpa and the others. Zhuang Rui, do you think the rough jade I bid on will win?"

Lei Lei didn't show any joy on her face. She was actually a little anxious about this first time gambling on stones.

"Your rough stone probably won't be up for bidding until tomorrow. Even if it doesn't perform well, the chances of winning are higher, right? Don't worry, I just submitted bids for several rough stones and didn't win..."

Zhuang Rui had intended to comfort Lei Lei, but instead made her even more anxious, wishing the person on stage would announce the material she had submitted first.

Song Jun, who was listening nearby, had an expression that kept changing from sunny to cloudy. He had also bid on those two rough stones, but he didn't expect that the Lei Lei family would win the bid.

About ten minutes later, amidst everyone's anticipation, the bidding process resumed.

"The next auction is a sealed auction for the entire rough stone area. Those who are bidding, please take note."

Because there are too many raw jade stones in the sealed bid, in order to avoid the number of thousands of digits, an English letter is added before every five hundred digits. When it reaches the five hundred and first bid, it starts counting from 1 with another English letter. The number of raw jade stones that are completely gambled is relatively small, and only the letters 'h' and 'i' are used before the number.

"Bid number H1, 1.68 million, winning bid number 12..."

"Bid number H2, 750,000, winning bid number 58..."

"..."

Lot H384 failed to sell...

The bidding process took a long time this time, and the host was hoarse from reading so many bids. However, with tens of thousands of bids to be submitted, and 5,000 to be submitted this afternoon, the time was tight. The original plan to take a break after submitting 100 bids was changed to a 10-minute break after submitting 500 bids.

This full-bet lot number 384 was the first lot to fail to sell since the auction began. All the full-bet lots that had been opened before were sold, including the thirty-eight rough stones that Zhuang Rui had bid on, which also came to nothing. Counting the one hundred semi-bet rough stones that had already been opened, Zhuang Rui now only has twelve lots left, and there is still a sliver of hope of winning.

"Bid number H428, 380,000, winning bid number: 518..."

The person on stage who was submitting the bid had a somewhat hoarse and mechanical voice, but to Zhuang Rui's ears, that voice was nothing short of heavenly music, because the number 518 was Zhuang Rui's number.

"Damn, I finally won one..."

Zhuang Rui excitedly waved his fist, attracting everyone's attention. It was obvious that the young man had won the 380,000 prize. However, this amount was not particularly eye-catching among the bids offered today, and the bid was ranked after 400, so it was probably not a very good result and did not attract much attention.

"Brother, you won? Congratulations! I gambled on all the materials through sealed bids, and I only won three..."

Song Jun sounded somewhat dejected. He had invested a considerable amount of money and cast a wide net this time, but plans are subject to change. Just one piece of news from Myanmar made the jade gambling conference a turbulent and unpredictable event.

It can be said that all the attention of jade and jewelry merchants in China is now focused on Pingzhou. The price of the rough stones traded at this jade gambling conference will directly affect the future price of finished jade products in the domestic market. The price increases of the two are directly related.

"At least we didn't lose everything, Brother Song. I've only won this one piece so far."

To be honest, Zhuang Rui was quite happy, because the rough stone he won was one of the three glass-type rough stones he valued most. The first two rough stones performed better, ranking within the top 30, and were sold for 8.2 million and 5.8 million respectively. Zhuang Rui's hopes were all pinned on this rough stone.

Perhaps because the rough stone was of average quality, others didn't notice it when they increased the price, and the owner of the rough stone didn't seem to care much about the price and didn't try to stop the bidding, which allowed Zhuang Rui to win it without any trouble.

After a short break, the bidding on the stage continued, but it was no longer relevant to Zhuang Rui. All the fully rough stones had already been bid on, and Zhuang Rui had won one piece. Now the stage was displaying semi-rough stones, which were the most competitive. Although Zhuang Rui had bid on a few more pieces, he was too lazy to pay attention to them. With the price he had bid, he had no hope of winning.

The rough stone that Zhuang Rui, Fatty Ma, and Song Jun gambled on together, although large in size, had a mediocre window, so its number was assigned relatively late. The same was true for Lei Lei's semi-gambled rough stone. At the current bidding speed, it probably won't be opened today, and the suspense will have to wait until tomorrow to be revealed.

"Brother Song, I'll go pay the remaining balance for the raw jade I won the bid for first..."

Today's bidding is even more exciting than the stone-cutting he did a few days ago. Zhuang Rui is already feeling a bit suffocated. Anyway, the next bid has nothing to do with him, so Zhuang Rui got up and wanted to go outside for some fresh air.

"Let's go. We won't get any D98 raw materials today, so there's no point in staying any longer. Old Ma, are you still staying here?"

Upon hearing this, Song Jun also stood up. Apart from winning three bids on the full-bet rough stones, he only won one out of the first 1,000 bids on the half-bet rough stones. It could be said that he had almost lost everything, and he had no intention of staying any longer.

"Let me take another look, you guys go ahead."

The bidding site was a microcosm of all walks of life, which was exactly what Fatty Ma loved to ponder. Even though he was sweating profusely from the heat, he refused to leave.

After leaving the bidding site, Zhuang Rui and Song Jun went to the bidding office to pay the remaining balance for the winning bids for raw materials. Zhuang Rui had submitted more than 50 bids, with a deposit of more than 1.8 million yuan. After paying the remaining balance, more than 1 million yuan was returned to his account.

Song Jun, however, lost a lot of money. Although his total bid amount reached more than 90 million including the giant rough stone, the four rough stones he just won were worth more than 18 million. So, after deducting the deposit of more than 6 million for the giant rough stone, he still had to pay more than 12 million.

#### Chapter 220 The Flag Rises, the Winds of Change Stir (Part 9)

Since the raw materials could only be collected after all the sealed bids were opened, the group had nothing to do after paying the remaining balance of the winning bid. Song Jun and Fatty Ma were obviously not in a high mood, so they went to the hotel first.

It was only a little past four in the afternoon when Zhuang Rui remembered that Yang Hao had just received a new batch of raw materials, so he walked towards Yang Hao's stall.

"Hey, Yang Jun, where's your brother? Why did he leave you here to watch the shop?"

Zhuang Rui walked into the shed and saw Yang Jun sitting there angrily eating watermelon, looking very unhappy.

"It's Brother Zhuang! My brother went to check on the bidding process and left me here. Brother Zhuang, have some watermelon, I'll call him back right away..."

Presumably unable to attend the bidding process, Yang Jun was somewhat unhappy. However, upon seeing Zhuang Rui arrive, Yang Jun's eyes darted around, and he took out his phone to call Yang Hao.

"Brother Zhuang, why aren't you watching the bidding process anymore? I just saw you..."

About five or six minutes later, Yang Hao came running up, panting heavily, his face flushed, whether from the hot weather or from the atmosphere at the bidding site, it was hard to tell.

"Brother, you stay with Brother Zhuang, I'm going to check out the bidding site." Before Zhuang Rui could answer, Yang Jun greeted his older brother and ran off in a flash.

"Excuse me, Brother Yang, I'm sorry to have disturbed your viewing of the bidding." Zhuang Rui apologized to Yang Hao. Today's bidding was a big event, a rare sight even for people in the industry.

"It's nothing, we're just going to join in the fun. We took care of everything that needed to be done yesterday."

What Yang Hao was referring to was actually the blocking of the bidding. He received the news much earlier than Song Jun. Just after the Myanmar meeting ended yesterday, the rough jade merchants in China with connections received calls from Myanmar immediately. Therefore, for some rough jade that could obviously fetch a high price, they blocked the bidding yesterday with exorbitant prices.

"Brother Yang, where are your new raw jade stones? Show them to me..."

Zhuang Rui's sealed bids this time were almost entirely unsuccessful, so now he's trying to salvage the situation with open bids. Every little bit helps; even a small profit is still profit.

"Come on, Brother Zhuang, the rough jade we've brought in this time is really good. It's all black-skinned black jade from the Ma Meng mine. This kind of rough jade often yields bright green glass-type jade. Even imperial green jade is often mined from this kind of black-skinned black jade..."

Yang Hao led Zhuang Rui to a corner of the raw material area outside the shed. There were about five or six square meters of ground where several hundred pieces of raw material were piled up. The reason there were so many pieces was that they were all small. The largest piece was no bigger than a child's ball, and most were about the size of a fist.

"This is the black-skinned jade from the Ma Meng factory???"

Zhuang Rui's eyes widened as he looked at the pile of dark rough stones on the ground. He recognized these stones; the imperial green glass-type jadeite the size of an egg yolk that he gave to Qin Xuanbing was taken from these kinds of rough stones. Zhuang Rui had almost thrown those stones away back then.

In fact, Zhuang Rui had seen quite a few rough stones from Wumeng Factory in the past few days, but he had only seen large pieces. This was the first time he had seen such small rough stones that were almost identical to those left by his grandfather.

"Hehe, yes, you've heard of the name 'black-skinned Wusha jade'? Well then I won't lie to you, these materials are indeed from the Wumeng factory, but they're all materials with little gambling potential. After the sealed auction, they'll be sold to tourists to cut and play with."

Yang Hao wasn't very experienced in business, but he felt he had a good relationship with Zhuang Rui, so he told Zhuang Rui all his secrets.

As mentioned earlier, three days before the sealed bid opening, an invitation from the event organizers was required to enter the jade gambling venue. However, after the sealed bid opening, it was open to everyone. The tourists from all over the country who came in at that time constituted a relatively large consumer group. At the very least, they were able to dispose of the waste materials that were a headache for the rough jade merchants, which made them quite popular.

"Since we're here, let's take a look."

Zhuang Rui crouched down under the scorching sun. Unlike others, this was his first time handling jadeite rough, and these stones, seemingly unremarkable, raw materials, filled him with a sense of familiarity.

"You take a look first, I'm going back to get some water. If you see any of these little trinkets you like, I'll give you a few." Yang Hao said impatiently to Zhuang Rui, then turned and went back into the shed.

Picking up a fist-sized piece of black sandstone, Zhuang Rui examined it carefully. He was no longer the novice he was a few months ago, still thinking of using a hammer to crack open the rough stone.

Black jadeite rough is one of the most common rough stones for gambling on jadeite. Because the surface of black jadeite is protected by a layer of black clay such as chlorite, the internal and external characteristics of the jadeite are very different. It is the riskiest type of rough stone for gambling on jadeite. The saying "nine out of ten gambles fail" mainly refers to this type of rough stone.

Because black sandstone often yields high-quality green jadeite, there are also many fake rough stones. Some people will use black dye to coat and protect them, while others will simply smear some soot on them, leaving their hands covered in black soot when they scratch them.

If you buy genuine Wusha jade, you can accept the outcome, whether it's a success or a failure. You can gain wealth or experience. But if you buy fakes, it's like a sudden crash in the sky. The emotional turmoil is indescribable. Many people in the jade gambling circle have suffered heavy losses in this kind of gambling.

Zhuang Rui would never make such a mistake. He didn't even bother to search for it. After throwing the piece of raw material back to the ground, he simply released the spiritual energy from his eyes, covering an area of four or five meters in radius.

"Hey, it really is old mine material from Wumeng Factory."

Through his spiritual energy, Zhuang Rui discovered that among these hundreds of rough stones, there were seven or eight spots that were emitting spiritual energy, though the intensity varied and the feeling they gave Zhuang Rui was different. He reached out and parted the pile of rough stones on top, picking out the one at the bottom, which also contained the most spiritual energy.

The piece of raw jade was slightly larger than a fist. Zhuang Rui took it in front of him and examined it carefully. When spiritual energy seeped into the raw jade, Zhuang Rui was delighted to find that a familiar color appeared before his eyes.

"Imperial green, it must be imperial green..."

When that captivating green came into view, Zhuang Rui was so excited he almost shouted out. It was clear, bright, and vibrant green. This was the second time he had seen such a pure green and such transparent jade. Moreover, it was much larger than the jade he had cut before, about the size of an egg.

After calming his excitement, Zhuang Rui simply took the rough stone in his hand, stood up and walked towards the shed. However, after taking only a few steps, he turned back and randomly selected a few more rough stones before returning to the shed.

"Brother Yang, take a look, how much are these pieces worth?" Zhuang Rui casually placed a few pieces of raw jade that he was holding in his arms on the table.

"Hey, didn't I tell you? This thing, even though it's from an old mine, isn't worth much. You can take it..." Yang Hao glanced at the few pieces of rough jade and said nonchalantly.

"No, your elders have been visiting these past few days. Let's just pay for it. It's the price we're talking about. I don't need these extra few."

Zhuang Rui wasn't going to take advantage of him. "I picked up this bargain with my eyesight, not expecting you to give it to me for free. What? Cheating? Of course! That takes skill too. Let someone else try it."

"Alright, since you're going to give it to me, there's no reason for me to refuse. There are four pieces of raw material in total, so you can give me four thousand yuan."

Yang Hao kept saying it was free, but he was really ruthless in taking advantage of the situation. These raw materials would only cost tourists five or eight hundred each, but he took a thousand yuan from Zhuang Rui for each one.

Zhuang Rui didn't know the price. Even if Yang Hao asked for 40,000, he would still pay. He took out 4,000 from his handbag, had Yang Hao write a receipt, and then the pieces of raw material would belong to him.

Unexpectedly, his unintentional act yielded such a great deal. Zhuang Rui asked Yang Hao to find him a snakeskin bag, put the pieces of raw material inside, and happily returned to the hotel.

...

"Hey, you didn't do anything bad last night, did you? Why do I feel like the third brother looks a lot like you the day after losing his virginity?"

That evening, while having dinner with Wei Ge and Lao Si, Zhuang Rui was still grinning from ear to ear, making the two of them think that Zhuang Rui had taken a girl to his room the day before.

"Sigh, I have nothing to say to you guys. Let's eat and go to sleep. Tomorrow I'll take you to see some big scenes."

Zhuang Rui's enthusiasm was dampened, and he was somewhat depressed. After finishing his meal, he didn't join the two men's nightlife and went back to his room to sleep. However, he was so agitated by the piece of raw jade containing imperial green that he got up in the middle of the night, washed it with water, and placed it on his bedside before he could finally fall asleep.

The next morning at seven o'clock, Zhuang Rui was woken up by Song Jun's phone call. It turned out that this brother hadn't slept very well the night before. Zhuang Rui knocked on Wei Ge and Lao Si's door and woke up the two groggy guys.

The group grabbed a quick bite and arrived at the jade gambling venue a dozen minutes before 8 o'clock. They thought they were early, but the dozens of chairs from yesterday had already been snapped up. Helpless, they could only stand in the aisle and wait for the bidding to begin.

The bidding started promptly at eight o'clock. It was the same host, but today there was no nonsense. He started announcing the bids right away. His hoarse voice showed that even Jin Sangzi throat lozenges are not a panacea.

"Bid number D96, 3.86 million, winning bid number 257..."

"Bid number D97, 1,248,000, winning bid number 658..."

When the host announced bid number d97, Zhuang Rui and the others couldn't help but push forward, because the next bid was for the giant piece of raw jade they had bid on.

"The next spot has special significance. Although not all the sealed spots have been drawn yet, I can tell you about it here."

Lot D98, valued at 66,660,000, winning bid number 88. Congratulations to this bidder! This bid has become the top bidder at this Pingzhou Jade Auction!

The host on stage, disregarding his hoarse voice, shouted loudly, and the crowd below the stage instantly erupted in cheers, just as he had expected.