

Golden 26

Chapter Twenty-Six: The Grasshopper and the Gourd (Part Two)

At that moment, Qin Xuanbing was playing with the cricket gourd in her hand. Hearing Liu Chuan's words, she looked up and said calmly, "2000 yuan, I'll take this."

For Qin Xuanbing, money is just a number. She does like it, especially the melodious chirping of crickets, which makes her feel as if she is in the countryside.

Liu Chuan opened his mouth wide in surprise. He felt that the world had changed. How could even this aloof woman have gone crazy with Zhuang Rui? But what surprised him even more was yet to come.

"No, I'll keep this for myself." Zhuang Rui immediately refused Qin Xuanbing's offer.

"5000." Qin Xuanbing's expression remained unchanged as she uttered another number.

"I'm sorry, Miss Qin, I really can't sell this. It's not about the price; I just really like this cricket gourd. I hope you can understand." Zhuang Rui saw that Qin Xuanbing genuinely wanted to buy it. Although he raised the price, he wasn't trying to sway her with money. So he said sincerely, but the price of five thousand yuan really wasn't enough to sway her.

Qin Xuanbing didn't reply, but glanced at Zhuang Rui indifferently before returning the cricket gourd to Nannan's little hand.

"Ahem, Xiao Zhuang, you asked me to show you this item, but I haven't even handled it yet." Surprisingly, Old Master Lü seemed somewhat interested in the gourd, but was too embarrassed to snatch it from Xiao Nannan's hands, so he spoke to Zhuang Rui.

Zhuang Rui quickly took the cricket gourd from Nannan's hand and handed it to Grandpa Lü. Immediately, everyone in the room focused their attention on Grandpa Lü.

After receiving the cricket gourd, Grandpa Lü first tapped its belly with his fingernail, and the cricket inside immediately began to chirp. The clear and loud sound echoed throughout the shop. Then, Grandpa Lü took out a magnifying glass about the size of a thumb from his pocket and carefully examined the gourd's hollow core. After a full five minutes, he put the magnifying glass away and let out a long sigh.

"Xiao Zhuang, are you really not going to sell this?" Old Master Lü's first words, while fiddling with the cricket gourd in his hand, surprised everyone.

"Not for sale," Zhuang Rui said firmly.

"Even if I offered 50,000, I still wouldn't sell?" Old Master Lü's smile was somewhat amused, and seemed... also tinged with bitterness.

"Uncle Lü, please stop teasing me. I really just want to keep it for myself. Is there some other trick to it?"

Zhuang Rui was taken aback upon hearing this and began to waver. After all, he had been spending money without earning anything lately, having spent over 60,000 yuan on a house and manuscripts alone. He only had 50,000 to 60,000 yuan left. This item, which he had only spent 1,000 yuan on, had increased in value fiftyfold in less than an hour. If the old man's price was reasonable, he might as well sell it to him.

"You got this from that guy Da Xiong, right?" Old Master Lü asked instead of answering Zhuang Rui's question.

"Yes, Uncle Lü, how did you know? Oh, right, Da Xiong said that someone was willing to pay 800 for him. Could it be you, sir?" Zhuang Rui also remembered what Xiong Ge had said back then, and it turned out he wasn't lying to him.

Upon hearing this, Manager Lü gave a wry smile and said, "Where is 800? I offered that kid 100. The kids who've been around in this market are all very shrewd. If I really offered 800, do you think he would have sold it for 1,000?"

The old man's words left everyone present confused. He was only willing to give 100 to Da Xiong, but when it came to Zhuang Rui, it became 50,000. This was quite baffling. However, the two bosses, Song and Wang, next to him, showed a look of realization, as if they understood something.

"Xiao Zhuang, stop pretending. If you couldn't tell the origin of this item, how could you have stolen it from me? Why are you still trying to fool this old man?" The old man stared intently at Zhuang Rui, his smile vanishing and replaced by a hint of anger as he spoke slowly and deliberately.

"Uncle Lü, I really don't know the origin of this thing. I don't know much about these things, and I really don't understand what's so special about this cricket gourd. If you don't believe me, ask Da Chuan. We grew up together, and he knows me best." Zhuang Rui became a little anxious upon hearing this and quickly explained. He thought to himself, "This old man is like a dog. How can he turn on me so easily and show no mercy? Saying this in front of a stranger is like tearing off the mask of friendship."

Liu Chuan finally understood. The old man thought Zhuang Rui had gotten a good deal and was just pretending to be innocent. He quickly said, "Uncle Lü, my brother here really knows nothing about this business. If he says he doesn't understand, he doesn't understand. Although I, Liu Chuan, am young, you all know my character. I've been in this market for several years, and my word is my bond. Zhuang Rui's words are my words!!!"

Hearing Liu Chuan's assurance, the old man's anger subsided, and he said, "This item is a gourd with teeth from Liu of Sanhe. I don't need to tell you its value. I saw that kid Daxiong carrying it yesterday, but it was a bit late, so I didn't take a closer look and couldn't guarantee its origin. I offered him 100 yuan. I was just thinking of taking a closer look in the next few days, but I didn't expect you to buy it. Sigh, this is quite a coincidence. But this is an old item, definitely from Liu of Sanhe. Keep it safe."

Upon hearing the old man's words, everyone in the room reacted differently. Liu Chuan, Song Wang, and the other two were so wide-eyed they could hardly close their mouths, while Zhuang Rui, Qin Xuan, Bing Lei, and the other two looked puzzled, clearly unfamiliar with the name Sanhe Liu or hearing it for the first time.

"Uncle Lü, is this really from Liu of Sanhe?" Liu Chuan's voice trembled slightly.

The old man glared at Liu Chuan and said with displeasure, "I've been collecting miscellaneous items for decades, and I've seen Sanhe Liu's items before, so it shouldn't be wrong."

"Hey bro, you've hit the jackpot again. Sanhe Liu's stuff is really good stuff. You know, Sanhe Liu... well, Brother Song, why don't you tell me about him? I only know the name..."

Liu Chuan slapped his thigh hard. After seeing the puzzled looks on Zhuang Rui and the others' faces, he originally wanted to show off his knowledge, but he realized that he had only heard of Sanhe Liu when he was in the business of selling crickets and gourds. He knew that Liu was a famous person, but he didn't know as much as Zhuang Rui about the origin and value of the item.

Boss Song took the cricket gourd from Grandpa Lü's hand, and like Grandpa Lü, he first took out a magnifying glass and examined it carefully for a long time before saying, "Brother Zhuang, you are really lucky. From the core to the reed, and the workmanship and patina, this gourd really looks like it was made by Liu from Sanhe."

Before Zhuang Rui could answer, Liu Chuan hurriedly asked, "Brother Song, how much is this thing worth?"

"Tacky!"

Old Master Lü forced out a single word through gritted teeth, causing everyone in the room to look at Liu Chuan. However, this fellow was always thick-skinned and completely oblivious to the contemptuous looks from the crowd, still waiting expectantly for Boss Song's explanation.