

## Golden 261

### Chapter 261 A Familiar Feeling

Phrases like "a feast for the eyes" are all nonsense. If you were starved for days and then locked up with a beautiful woman, you might actually "eat" her. Zhuang Rui had been running around all day and was starving; he had no interest in looking at women.

In a place like this, there was no rice or steamed buns to eat. The second brother ordered a few fancy-looking pastries and ate them with some red wine that Zhuang Rui couldn't name, which finally calmed his rumbling stomach.

"Second brother, tell me about your place."

After filling his stomach, Zhuang Rui began to look around and noticed that many of the girls walking around were familiar faces. Although Zhuang Rui didn't watch TV dramas much, the overwhelming number of male celebrities on TV these days had made him remember quite a few of them.

The girl playing the piano was actually a minor celebrity. Zhuang Rui was just a young man in his twenties. He was very curious to see so many female celebrities who he used to only be able to look up to working as waitresses and pianists here.

"This place was originally a manor bought by a rock singer who often gathered entertainment industry people here for parties. Later, someone else took a liking to it, bought the place, renovated it, and turned it into this clubhouse."

The second brother lowered his voice as he continued, "Most of the people here now are influential figures in Beijing. Look at this card I have; it only lets me into Building Two. Most of the people here are around my level, relying on their family connections. Those who can hang out in Building One are the real inner circle."

"Second brother, what kind of status do you need to have a VIP card here?"

Zhuang Rui understood a little after hearing this. It turned out that this place was set up to entertain spoiled brats like the second brother. However, the capital city lacked everything except officials.

Moreover, Zhuang Rui really didn't know much about the background of his second brother, who had been his classmate for four years.

"This place is divided into three VIP buildings. Building No. 3 is where the children of department-level officials play. If you have money, you can get a VIP card there. But here, even if you have money, you can't get in if you're a provincial or ministerial level official. And Building No. 1 is..." The second brother didn't finish his sentence, but instead raised his thumb to the sky.

Zhuang Rui couldn't help but click his tongue in amazement. No wonder there were security checks and safety gates to get in. If someone with ill intentions were to sneak in and cause trouble, the whole of Beijing would probably be shaken.

"Second brother, at your home..."

When Yue Jing was in school, he always kept his family situation a secret, but now that he's brought me here, he probably won't hide it anymore.

"My old man works for the Ministry of Finance..."

Sure enough, the second brother readily told him this time, which startled Zhuang Rui. He might not know who this person was in another department, but as someone who studied finance, he would pay attention to the country's fiscal and financial policies, and he was naturally familiar with the name of old man Yue Jing.

"Damn, you really hid that well..."

Zhuang Rui punched the second brother hard on the shoulder. Back in college, they had all guessed about Yue Jing's family background, unanimously believing that the second brother's family might only have a department-level background. They never expected that the background was so profound. If this were released, he would at least be a regional official.

"Do you think I want this? My family is very strict; they wouldn't even let me go to school in Beijing. I have to think twice before I do or say anything. Now that I'm working, I still have to be very careful. I'm going crazy..."

The second son said with a helpless expression, "My father had two brothers, but in my generation, there are five older sisters. I'm the only boy, so I was destined to pursue a career in government from a young age. Perhaps if I persevere for a few decades, I can reach the same level as my father."

The officialdom is treacherous, and these are things that should never be said. The second brother usually has no one to confide in, so he poured out his grievances to Zhuang Rui, an outsider.

In fact, people in high-level circles are quite strict about their children's education. However, the children of some local tyrants are often arrogant and cause trouble.

Especially after the major case involving Chen Mou in the last century, it served as a wake-up call for many people. As a result, the lives of the princes in Beijing were no longer so comfortable. This club came into being and was recognized by some people. It's better to have fun in a fixed circle than to go out and mess around.

"Second brother, are all the female celebrities at this club there voluntarily?"

Zhuang Rui looked at the women dressed in their finest attire and was still puzzled. The entertainment industry in today's society is far more prestigious than the Peking Opera in the old society, and these people's incomes are not low. Why would they be willing to serve others here?

"Hey, that's a really novel question. You think you can force someone to do this? What era do you think we live in?"

The second brother glanced at Zhuang Rui sideways and then said, "Don't think that just because I'm not as rich as you, I can still make someone famous. Not to mention me, among the people here, as long as they can win over just one person, it won't be difficult for them to become big stars."

Let alone here, even over in Building 3, it would be easy for them to hook up with a rich person and have them invest in making a movie. Otherwise, do you think they would willingly stay here?

However, most of the people here are not very famous. Hey, let me tell you, in Building Number One, there are all A-list celebrities. Even I, your brother, have never been there..."

“When we go back to Pengcheng, we can’t let our daughter idolize these celebrities anymore.”

The second brother's words left Zhuang Rui speechless, and the somewhat mysterious celebrity image he had once held crumbled in his mind.

In fact, relationships between men and women in the entertainment industry are quite chaotic. Unspoken rules are everywhere in the industry. It's normal for someone outside the industry to have a sugar daddy or a powerful backer. It's just that Zhuang Rui doesn't usually come into contact with such people and doesn't know about it.

The second brother looked at Zhuang Rui and said with ill intent, "How about it, youngest brother? I'll arrange one for you. As long as you can afford the price, there are people willing to do takeout."

The two had been eating without anyone accompanying them, but now that they were full, Yue Jing was getting restless, having not been here for a long time.

"Let's forget about it. I'm not very interested in this. Second brother, if you want to play, feel free to do so. Just arrange a hotel for me later."

Zhuang Rui was actually somewhat tempted, but then he thought about how these girls spent all their time in places like this and had been with countless men. His desire was immediately extinguished. He figured his first time should be with someone of equal standing.

"You're such a boring guy. Sigh, I should have called Lao Si over..." Yue Jing glared at Zhuang Rui with dissatisfaction, stood up, and prepared to call a girl over.

"Yue Xiaoliu? What are you doing here? It's been years since I've seen you..." The second brother had just stood up when he heard someone greet him. He turned around and his face immediately lit up with a smile.

"Oh, it's Fourth Brother. Hehe, I brought a friend here to show him around. Fourth Brother, what brings you to Building Two? We don't see you here often."

Upon hearing his second brother mention him, Zhuang Rui politely stood up, looked at the newcomer, and was momentarily stunned.

The man who greeted Yue Jing looked about four or five years older than Zhuang Rui, probably in his early thirties. He was very tall, and there was a tall woman next to him, holding the man's arm.

This woman is quite famous. Zhuang Rui had seen many of her films in the 1990s, especially those two dimples on her lips, which captivated countless men. However, Zhuang Rui never expected to run into her here.

However, what stunned Zhuang Rui was not the woman, but the fact that when he looked at the fourth brother Yue Jing mentioned, he had a very familiar feeling, as if he had seen this man somewhere before. But after thinking about it carefully, it was impossible, as this was his first time in Beijing and he had never had any contact with this circle before.

"Hey? Xiao Liu, this guy looks familiar. Haven't we met somewhere before?"

When the man called Fourth Brother looked at Zhuang Rui, his expression changed, and he frowned, trying to recall if he had seen Zhuang Rui somewhere before.

"Fourth Brother, you've definitely never met this guy of mine before. His name is Zhuang Rui, and this is his first time in Beijing. Wait a minute, you two look a bit alike, Miss Xu, don't you think?"

The second brother looked at the man, then at Zhuang Rui, and exclaimed in surprise. Upon closer inspection, the two men bore a striking resemblance in their features, and given their similar ages, they truly looked like brothers when standing together.

Zhuang Rui then realized why the person seemed familiar. He looked at himself in the mirror every day, so it was natural to feel a sense of familiarity when he met someone who looked like him.

"They do look a bit alike, Fourth Brother. You don't have any brothers you don't know, do you?" The big star surnamed Xu and this man seemed to be quite familiar with each other, and he joked from the side.

"Nonsense, I don't look like my dad. But I've heard from the elders that I look a bit like my aunt. But... sigh, why am I talking to you about this? Little brother, since you're here, have some fun. Xiao Liu, put today's expenses on my tab later."

That fourth brother seemed to have a wide circle of friends. He hadn't been standing with Zhuang Rui and his group for more than a few minutes when people came over to greet him. So he didn't chat with Yue Jing for long, patted Zhuang Rui on the shoulder, and left with the big star.

After sitting down, Zhuang Rui asked his second brother, "Second brother, who is this person? Are you familiar with him?"

Aside from their somewhat similar appearances, the man also gave Zhuang Rui a very friendly feeling.

#### Chapter 262 Fourth Brother's Confusion

"We were close when we were kids; our elders all knew each other. We went to the same elementary school, he was three or four grades older than me, and he was classmates with my sister. Back then, I was young and immature, always following him around looking for fights. We saw each other less after that, but I never did as well as him.

The second brother beckoned a girl over as he spoke, and the two grown men sitting there actually attracted a lot of attention.

The girl was very well-behaved. After sitting down, she didn't say anything, poured a glass of wine for each of them, peeled a pistachio and fed it to Yue Jing. These people were all very perceptive. Although they wouldn't judge Zhuang Rui by his appearance, they still clearly distinguished between host and guest.

After taking a sip of wine, the second brother continued, "His father is currently in the Ministry of Culture, and several of his uncles are also high-ranking officials. After the reshuffle, one of them will probably be able to enter the central government. By his generation, there are many men in the family, and quite a few of them are in politics. Their influence is extraordinary. In addition, the old man is still alive and is the number one, so they have to give them some face."

Hey, those two in their family are really living long lives. I heard they're celebrating their 90th birthdays this year. There aren't many couples still alive since the founding of the People's Republic of China..."

In fact, Yue Jing's family was not much different from that of his fourth brother. However, by his generation, there were few members, and Yue Jing's grandfather passed away two years ago, greatly reducing his influence and cutting off the possibility of his elders advancing further.

Don't underestimate those old guys who came through the war years. Although they have all retired, they have a profound influence on this country. Whether in local areas or the military, they have the power they cultivated during their time in power. As long as they are alive, these people dare to go to the No. 1's office with their canes, and the other side has to send them back with a smile.

"Brother Yue, are you talking about Fourth Brother?"

The young, somewhat innocent-looking starlet looked at Yue Jing with adoration, though it was unclear whether she admired Yue Jing or the "Fourth Brother" he was referring to.

"Oh, even you've got your eye on him? Look, that guy over there looks a bit like Fourth Brother. If you don't mind, you could use him as Fourth Brother.

Yue Jing gave the little star's butt a hard twist, teasing Zhuang Rui.

"How could I dare? There's Sister Xu here. Brother Yue, you're so mean..." The little starlet hit Lao Er a few times without letting up, but then snuggled up to him.

"I hadn't noticed before, but standing next to Ouyang Laosi today, you really do look alike. If it weren't for the fact that this is your first time in Beijing, I would have really thought you two had some kind of relationship. By the way, he's the one who set up this club..."

The second brother looked Zhuang Rui up and down again, but didn't notice that Zhuang Rui's brows had inadvertently furrowed.

"Surname Ouyang?"

Although this compound surname is not particularly rare, it is not very common either. Zhuang Rui's mother's surname is Ouyang. However, the two places are thousands of miles apart, so there should be no connection. Zhuang Rui only thought of his mother's surname, and his mind wandered for a moment before he forgot about it.

"Hey kid, what are you thinking about now? Since you're here, have some fun. I'll call you a..."

Seeing that Zhuang Rui was not talking, the second brother assumed that he was bored by himself, so he reached out and called a girl over to sit next to Zhuang Rui.

Zhuang Rui felt like he'd seen the girl who sat down next to him in some dating show, but he couldn't remember her name. She probably wasn't very famous. Zhuang Rui wasn't used to this kind of situation, so he made small talk with the girl.

The girl was a bit inexperienced; seeing Zhuang Rui's clothes, she seemed to be just going through the motions. The second brother noticed this and said, "Hey, I'm talking to you. Serve Boss Zhuang well, and maybe he'll be in a good mood and invest tens of millions in making a movie for you. Then you'll be famous!"

People who can get into Building 2 may not be as rich as those in Building 3, but what they say in casual conversation can be sold for money in Building 3. The rich people are scrambling to squeeze in here, just hoping to hear some useful information from these privileged kids.

Moreover, they usually wouldn't boast in such a setting, as it would be easy to be exposed, and they couldn't bear the embarrassment. The little star sitting next to Zhuang Rui's eyes lit up immediately after hearing the second brother's words.

These celebrities come into contact with a wide range of people and know that some people don't like to flaunt their wealth and usually dress simply. The people who come and go here are all of special status, and they don't need to use designer clothes to show off their status. So it's not uncommon for people dressed like Zhuang Rui. It's just that she didn't know that Zhuang Rui had just gotten off the train and was too lazy to go shopping for clothes.

Zhuang Rui naturally knew the reason behind the sudden enthusiasm of the minor celebrity, and he became somewhat perfunctory, saying, "Is my brain not out of its head? Why would I spend tens of millions to make a movie for you guys?"

Seeing that Zhuang Rui seemed a bit distracted, the second brother, after sitting there for a while longer, took the little star and told Zhuang Rui to leave. The person next to Zhuang Rui? Naturally, stayed there with a resentful look on their face. It was their own fault for not being proper in their attitude and not seizing the opportunity.

When they arrived at the parking lot, Zhuang Rui was once again amazed. This female celebrity's car was even better than the one his second brother had borrowed. With three people and two cars, his second brother drove Zhuang Rui back to Beijing, arranged a hotel for him to stay in, and then took his leave with the young celebrity. He naturally wouldn't book a room here; after all, he was a government official and had to be mindful of his image.

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"I should have known better than to come back today."

When Ouyang Jun hummed a little tune on his way home, it was already past one o'clock in the morning. When he passed the old man's study, Ouyang Jun slowed his pace because the light in the room was still on and the door was ajar.

"Come here, I have something to tell you..." The voice coming from the study was not loud, but it was full of authority. Ouyang Jun sighed, turned around, pushed open the door and went in.

"Dad, what is it that you have to say now? It's so late, it's not good for your health to stay up."

Standing in the study, Ouyang Jun was no longer the smug and self-satisfied Fourth Brother from the club; he was now as obedient and docile as a girl.

"Alright, stop pretending. You never do anything productive. Your grandfather's 90th birthday is in December, which is also his 70th wedding anniversary with your grandmother. Try to avoid going to those places during this time, so as not to cause any bad influence."

Ouyang Zhenwu rubbed his temples and looked away from the documents on the table. Of all the younger generation in the family, only his son was disappointing. He gave up the arranged career path and insisted on going into business and running clubs. If he were like his cousins, he could have been in charge of a region for a few years.

“Dad, you can’t say that. I’m making money through legitimate business. My brothers are so honest and upright because of my financial support, which allows them to have no worries.”

Apart from his grandfather, Ouyang Jun wasn't actually afraid of his father in this family. He had been obedient before only because he didn't want to upset his father, but now he was arguing with him.

"You...you think I don't know about all those celebrities you've been involved with?"

"Dad, they all volunteered. I didn't force anyone. It was just normal social interaction. I'm not afraid of anyone investigating..."

Seeing his father's face growing increasingly grim, Ouyang Jun quickly changed the subject, saying, "I met an interesting person at the club today. He looks remarkably like me, and some people even joked that he's my brother."

“What’s so strange about looking alike? What’s that person’s surname? Stop interrupting me, kid. Don’t cause any trouble lately. The Fourth Plenary Session is in a few months. Your uncle is very likely to get promoted. If something happens to you, I won’t be able to protect you in front of the old man.”

Ouyang Zhenwu's wife died early, and he had neglected to discipline his son. He felt somewhat guilty towards him, so he usually turned a blind eye as long as his son didn't go too far.

"Hehe, I know. I've always been law-abiding. I'm going to sleep now. By the way, the guy who looks like me is surnamed Zhuang, and he looks a few years younger than me." Ouyang Jun casually brushed off his father and slipped towards the door.

"Oh, your surname is Zhuang. Go to sleep..."

Ouyang Zhenwu turned his attention back to the documents, but suddenly a thought flashed through his mind, and he jerked his head up, shouting, "You come back here! What did you say that person's last name was?"

Ouyang Jun had never seen his usually gentle and refined father in this state before, and was immediately startled. He honestly replied, "His surname is Zhuang, it should be Guangtu Zhuang, I didn't ask how it was written."

"Where is that person from?" Ouyang Zhenwu continued to ask.

"I don't know, but judging from his accent, he doesn't seem to be from Beijing. He's a friend of Yue Jia Xiao Liu, and it looks like he just arrived in Beijing."

"Could it be such a coincidence?"

Ouyang Zhenwu felt a surge of emotions. Everyone outside knew that there were four brothers, but the older generation knew that they also had a younger sister. However, for some reason, that stubborn sister had cut off all ties with the family.

"Dad, is something wrong? Do you know that person?"

When Ouyang Jun saw that his father's face looked rather unpleasant, he asked cautiously, while wondering to himself if it was really because his father had some romantic entanglements outside.

"I don't know him..."

Ouyang Zhenwu shook his head, but then said, "Perhaps we know each other, Xiaojun. Here's what you do: you arrange to meet this person, wait a bit..."

Ouyang Zhenwu glanced at his schedule and then said, "The day after tomorrow, bring him to see me at noon. Remember to be polite to him."

Ouyang Jun was confused by his father's attitude. After agreeing and returning to his room, he couldn't fall asleep no matter what he did. He dialed Yue Jing's number, but Yue Jing, who was having a great time, had naturally turned off his phone long ago.

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The next day, after Zhuang Rui got up, he called his second brother and found out that he had already gone to work, so he didn't bother him. He went to the shopping mall next to the hotel, bought some gifts, and took a taxi to the address given by Lao Gu.

Chapter 263 Board Members

"Young man, is this your first time in Beijing?"

After buying some gifts, Zhuang Rui hailed a taxi and gave the driver the address. The driver, a man in his forties, was quite talkative, chatting with Zhuang Rui in a strong Beijing accent. 68s.

"Yes, we've come to visit our elders."

"Most people wouldn't know this address. It's been almost completely demolished, but the remaining courtyard houses are worth a lot of money."

The middle-aged driver said with envy, "In the early years, housing was very tight in Beijing. Five or six families would be crammed into a courtyard house, with an average living space of only a few square meters per person. Later, when the Asian Games Village was built, Beijingers all wanted to live in apartment buildings. When the government said that the demolition compensation would be apartment buildings, everyone was overjoyed."

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However, these hutong courtyard houses are becoming increasingly rare due to demolition, which has led to increased attention to them. In recent years, as they have been preserved as cultural heritage,

their prices have skyrocketed. The price of a dozen apartment buildings may not even be as high as that of a single courtyard house.

Some savvy travel companies offer a unique hutong tour, entirely staffed by rickshaw pullers wearing yellow vests. The vests are printed with "Beijing Hutong Tour" on the front and the company name and phone number on the back. The rickshaws and their hutong tours are highly characteristic of the area, with long lines of rickshaw pullers weaving through Beijing's streets and alleys.

During the tour, at each alleyway, the rickshaw drivers would introduce what alley it was, who lived there, and which courtyard house was open to the public. This shows that courtyard houses have now become a tourist attraction in Beijing.

Old Master Gu lived outside Xuanwu Gate, not far from the hotel where Zhuang Rui was staying. Not long after, the driver stopped the car at the entrance of an alley, where it was impossible to drive any further.

After paying the fare and getting off the bus with his things, Zhuang Rui walked into the alley. On both sides of the narrow alley were high blue brick walls that looked somewhat dilapidated. At the entrance of the alley, there was a sign that read: "Not open to the public, no visits allowed."

Zhuang Rui arrived a bit early, before nine o'clock. People were constantly coming and going in the alley, and they couldn't help but look at Zhuang Rui, who was carrying things in his hands, with strange eyes. Fortunately, there was a house number in front of each house. Zhuang Rui quickened his pace and after passing through three or four houses, he finally found Old Master Gu's residence.

Zhuang Rui pressed the doorbell. A little over a minute later, the heavy door opened, and a middle-aged woman in her forties poked her head out. She glanced at the things in Zhuang Rui's hand and said, "Who are you looking for?"

"Is this Zhuang Rui? Come in quickly..."

Before Zhuang Rui could reply, the old man's hearty and powerful voice rang out in the courtyard. The middle-aged woman opened half of the door, letting Zhuang Rui in.

Upon entering the gate, Zhuang Rui's eyes lit up. This courtyard was completely different from the slightly gloomy alley outside. Sunlight filtered through the leaves of a large locust tree in the courtyard, scattering like gold onto the ground. There was also a flower bed in the courtyard, filled with lilacs and crabapple blossoms, and the fragrance of flowers wafted into Zhuang Rui's nose.

High up in the branches of the locust tree, there were three or four birdcages hanging, with several birds chirping incessantly inside.

Zhuang Rui looked around at the rooms and found that it was a small courtyard house with two rooms each in the east and west wings and three rooms in the south wing. The brick walls reached the roof, and the roof was tiled. The courtyard was paved with bricks and the passageways connected the doors of the rooms. Flower beds were interspersed on both sides of the passageways. There were steps in front of each house. The two doors were painted black and had a pair of brass door knockers on them. There were couplets pasted on both sides of the doors.

Outside each room, there are potted plants such as pomegranate trees, daffodils, oleanders, golden osmanthus, silver osmanthus, and azaleas. In the sweltering summer, this small courtyard exudes a cool and refreshing atmosphere.

The old man was sitting in a recliner under a tree, holding a book in his hand. In front of him was an octagonal table with a tea set and some snacks. A gentle breeze blew through the dense foliage above his head, and dappled sunlight fell on him, making him look like a celestial being.

"Xiao Zhang, bring a chair for Xiao Zhuang." Upon seeing that it really was Zhuang Rui, the old man stood up happily.

"No need, no need, I can do it myself..." Zhuang Rui handed the gifts he was carrying to the middle-aged woman and moved a chair next to the flower bed to the old table.

"Uncle-Master Gu, I'm sorry to disturb your peace and quiet again." Zhuang Rui didn't sit down, but instead bowed slightly to the old man.

"What are you saying? I live alone and I usually find it too quiet. Don't stand, sit down."

Old Master Gu put down his book and poured tea for Zhuang Rui.

"Who is that...?"

"Oh, Xiao Zhang is the nanny I hired. Her children are all grown up, and no one wants to stay in this courtyard house."

Actually, it's not as the old man said. His children are quite filial. It's just that the old man prefers peace and quiet and has sent his younger relatives to live elsewhere. But every weekend, his children still come back to get together.

"It's great here. I think it's much more comfortable than living in an apartment building."

Zhuang Rui was speaking from the heart. Because he lived deep in the alley, he couldn't hear any of the noise from the traffic outside. It was a quiet place with its own door and yard. Although it wasn't as big as his villa in Pengcheng, it had a unique charm.

"Alright, enough with the sweet talk. Let me take a look at that jade."

Yesterday, I heard that Zhuang Rui had unearthed another piece of imperial green jade. Old Master Gu has been eagerly waiting for it. Such top-quality jade is always hard to come by. He has been immersed in the jade circle for decades and has only seen it a handful of times.

Zhuang Rui took out a jewelry box from his handbag and handed it to Gu Lao. He had gotten the box from Wu Jia's shop.

Gu Lao opened the box, held the jade in his palm, picked up his reading glasses from the table, put them on, and examined it carefully. After five or six minutes, he put the jade back into the box.

"The color is pure and flawless, the water is as clear as a stream, without a single blemish. It is indeed a glass-type imperial green jadeite. Not bad, really not bad. Xiao Zhuang, you've got some good luck..."

The old man sighed. When he was about to praise Zhuang Rui, he couldn't find the words. His nephew's luck was extraordinary. After thinking for a long time, the old man couldn't find any words to describe his good luck.

"Hehe, senior master, that's all thanks to your excellent teaching. My knowledge of jade identification all comes from you."

Zhuang Rui is now completely oblivious to everything else. Besides, after becoming familiar with the jade gambling circle, he knows that he's not the only one with this luck; every year at the Myanmar jade auction, there are always some lucky winners.

"If you can calm down, I can teach you the art of jade carving. You'll have another skill to make a living. No... with your current wealth, you don't need to rely on this to make a living." Old Gu knew that Zhuang Rui was very quick to learn, and he was willing to teach him his jade carving skills.

"Alright, Senior Uncle, I'm going to study at Peking University next year, and I'll come and learn from you then." Zhuang Rui knew that it was always good to have more skills, so he immediately agreed.

"Tell me, what kind of object do you want to carve?" Old Master Gu hadn't carved jade for someone for a while, but now that he saw this top-quality jadeite, he was starting to get restless.

"Uncle-Master, do you think it's possible to cut out three pendants, and then save the material for two pairs of earrings and a ring face?" Zhuang Rui had promised Wu Jia's grandfather, so naturally he couldn't go back on his word.

Upon hearing this, Gu Lao picked up the jade pendant and examined it for a moment before asking, "Is this pendant for a man or a woman to wear?"

"For my mom and my niece..."

"Oh, men wear Guanyin and women wear Buddha, so three pendants are fine. It's just that the material for the earrings and the ring face... we can cut back, but it won't be very big. Are you sure?"

Following the old master's habit of carving in Beijing, this piece of jade was just the right amount to cut into three pendants, without any waste. If it were according to Zhuang Rui's request, the pendants would be smaller.

"Uncle-Master, I dare not hide this from you, this matter..."

Zhuang Rui hesitated for a moment before revealing that Grandpa Wu wanted to keep a ring face. If he didn't tell the old man, it would definitely upset him.

After hearing Zhuang Rui's words, Gu Lao was not angry. Instead, he said with some emotion, "It's Brother Wu. Alas, I heard a few years ago that his son and daughter-in-law had a car accident and his health deteriorated. I didn't expect that he couldn't even have surgery anymore. Our generation is getting older and younger."

"Okay, I'll take the job, but it won't be quick. I'm leaving tomorrow and won't be back for three to five days. It'll be about half a month before I finish this job. Oh, wait a minute, there's something else I need to tell you."

Old Gu stood up and walked into the main room. Not long after, he came out with a red-covered notebook in his hand.

"Here, this is for you. Take a look..."

Zhuang Rui took the red-covered book and realized it was a betrothal letter wrapped in red silk. But after opening it, Zhuang Rui was dumbfounded. Pointing to the words on it, he stammered, "Grandpa, you...you...you're not joking with me, are you?"

The words "Mr. Zhuang Rui is hereby appointed as a director of this association..." on the letter of appointment made Zhuang Rui feel as if he were dreaming. Looking at the red seal and signature below, it was the seal of the Jade Association and the three characters Gu Tianfeng.

"Uncle-Master Gu, I dare not accept such a title. If anyone were to say that you are abusing your power for personal gain, then it would be entirely my fault."

Zhuang Rui looked at the letter of appointment again carefully. Yes, it was for him. He quickly declined, saying that apart from winning a few pieces of jade in a gamble, he had nothing else to do with jade. He wondered why Old Master Gu would come up with such a title for him. This made Zhuang Rui feel a little apprehensive.

"Why are you so excited, kid? A director isn't the chairman, it's just a title. There are more than thirty directors in the association, and even that kid Song Jun managed to become a director. What are you afraid of?" The old man laughed when he saw Zhuang Rui's fearful expression.

"What? More than thirty board members? Brother Song too..."

Zhuang Rui was stunned. He had thought that a huge windfall had fallen from the sky and hit him, but this also put his mind at ease. He was still young and couldn't bear too heavy a burden.

"Don't take this lightly. Let me tell you, although the Jade Association is a non-governmental organization, its affiliated jade testing center is quite authoritative in jade identification."

Moreover, once you have this identity, you won't need a special invitation letter to participate in various jade bidding events in China. Even in countries that are major jade producers, this thing still has some use..."

The old man gave Zhuang Rui this identity so that it would be easier for him to enter and leave those jade gambling venues in the future. Besides, he is not young anymore, and he will probably resign from his position in the Jade Association after this year. This can be regarded as taking care of Zhuang Rui before retiring.

"Senior Uncle, thank you so much..."

Zhuang Rui finally understood what the old man meant when he heard his words. With this thing, it would indeed be much more convenient to gamble on stones in the future, and even if he went to Myanmar, he would have a legitimate reason: academic exchange.

The old man waved his hand, saying that this was nothing to him, just a simple nomination.

"By the way, do you need this item urgently? Are you going back to Pengcheng first, or are you waiting in Beijing?" The old man was going to be gone for several days, so he asked Zhuang Rui.

Zhuang Rui was also a little hesitant. Going back and forth in this sweltering heat was really uncomfortable. However, if he stayed in Beijing, he was too lazy to go out and visit those famous historical sites under the scorching sun. He was undecided for a moment.

Seeing Zhuang Rui's expression, Gu Lao said, "How about this, if you have time, come with me for a trip. You'll be back in three to five days and you'll broaden your horizons."

"Senior Uncle, where are you going this time?"

Zhuang Rui asked with some curiosity, "Running outside in this sweltering heat is unbearable even for a young man like me, let alone Grandpa Gu."

"Go to Xinjiang, Hotan..."

This name is probably familiar to any Chinese person, and Zhuang Rui is no exception. He has long yearned for the origin of mutton fat jade.

"Alright, Uncle-Master, I'll go with you. I've been wanting to see some soft jade for a long time..." Zhuang Rui readily agreed. Being able to follow the old man around meant he would see all sorts of fine things.

"Hmm, you stayed at a hotel yesterday, right? Go and tidy up, stay here tonight. Our flight is early tomorrow morning. Oh, and I need someone to book a ticket for you." Old Gu gave Zhuang Rui a few instructions and went inside to make a phone call. He had booked his ticket a few days ago; taking Zhuang Rui along was just a spur-of-the-moment decision, and he wasn't sure if there were any tickets left.

Zhuang Rui also took out his phone and called home, telling his mother that he would be going back after a few days of vacation. His mother gave him a few instructions on the phone but didn't say much else.

Just after hanging up the phone, it rang again. Zhuang Rui glanced at it; the number was unfamiliar. Without thinking much of it, he pressed the answer button.

"Hello, are you Zhuang Rui? This is Ouyang Jun..."

"Ouyang Jun?"

The voice on the phone was unfamiliar, and Zhuang Rui was certain that he did not know a man named Ouyang Jun.

Chapter 264 Sorry, I'm busy

"Ouyang Jun? Sorry, I don't know you. How did you get my phone number?"

Hearing the person on the phone call out his name, Zhuang Rui was a little surprised; his phone number was known only to a very few people.

"Hey, don't hang up yet. Weren't you with Yue Xiaoliu yesterday? We even talked..."

Ouyang Jun was a little annoyed. Yue Xiaoliu's phone had been off since yesterday until this morning. Because of something his father said, he got up early and went to Yue Xiaoliu's workplace to wait for him, and that's how he got Zhuang Rui's phone number. He didn't expect that the other party didn't remember him at all.

"Oh, you must be... Fourth Brother? I'm sorry, I didn't recognize your voice earlier. Is there something you need?"

When Zhuang Rui heard him mention Yue Jing, and that he also had the compound surname Ouyang, he remembered the fourth brother from yesterday. However, Ouyang Jun hadn't said much at the time, and the voice on the phone was a bit distorted, so it's no wonder Zhuang Rui hadn't recognized him.

"Well, it's like this, are you free the day after tomorrow at noon? Someone wants to see you, I'm just passing on a message..."

Ouyang Jun didn't directly say that it was his father who wanted to see Zhuang Rui. He was afraid that summoning a high-ranking minister would frighten Zhuang Rui.

"Who wants to see me? I don't have time the day after tomorrow, I'll be free next week..."

Zhuang Rui was a little confused. He had no connection with this Ouyang Jun; they had only met once yesterday. He couldn't guess who would send him to deliver a message. However, Zhuang Rui was indeed busy; he was going to Xinjiang with Gu Lao tomorrow.

"Hey, could you postpone that matter a bit? The person who needs to see you is very important!"

Ouyang Jun deepened his tone, his displeasure growing. Forget his own father, even high-ranking officials in local government departments needed to make appointments to see him, and even then, the decision depended on Ouyang Jun's mood. When did he become so desperate to beg for people?

"Xiao Zhuang, the tickets are booked, but there are no first-class seats left, you can only sit in economy class. Oh, you're making a phone call? You can make the call first..."

Just then, Old Master Gu came out of the house. Seeing that Zhuang Rui was on the phone, he gestured for him to continue, and then sat down on the recliner to make tea.

"Fourth Brother, I'm sorry, I've really been busy these past few days. My flight is tomorrow, and I have some other things to take care of right now. Let's talk again when I get back..."

Although Yue Jing said that his fourth brother had a powerful family background, Zhuang Rui didn't take it to heart. He was just an ordinary citizen who obeyed the law and couldn't ask these people for favors. No matter how powerful they were, it had nothing to do with him. Seeing that the old man was waiting beside him, Zhuang Rui hung up the phone after he finished speaking.

"Hey, hey, hey, I'm talking to you..."

Ouyang Jun called out several times on the phone, but all he heard was a busy signal; clearly, the other party had hung up.

"Damn it, hang up on me!!!"

Ouyang Jun was amused by Zhuang Rui's outburst. In his memory, since he learned to use a telephone, no one except his elders and relatives had ever dared to hang up on him. Today, Zhuang Rui had actually hung up on him, which left him stunned for a long time.

After a moment of stunned silence, Ouyang Jun remembered to tell his father. He dialed the number, but his secretary answered. After a while, Ouyang Zhenwu's voice came through, and Ouyang Jun quickly repeated what Zhuang Rui had just said.

There was a moment of silence on the other end of the phone before he said, "Wait until he gets back, then contact him again. Just say you want to see him. Is your father ashamed to admit it? Can't you even give your name? You've grown up and you still can't speak properly..."

Just as Zhuang Rui hung up on him, still fuming, Ouyang Jun was then scolded by his father. He was so angry he almost threw his phone away. This was all completely unwarranted trouble!

"Fourth Brother, what's making you so angry?"

As she spoke, a soft body pressed against her. Actually, Xu, the big star, was two years older than Ouyang Jun, but one called him that smoothly, and the other listened without hesitation. After all, these days, relationships between older women and younger men are popular. Even the Hong Kong superstars, such as Queen Wong and Little King Xie, have an age difference of more than ten years.

"It's nothing. The call was just hung up on. It was that guy you said looked like me yesterday." Ouyang Jun pulled the big star into his arms, pulled her onto his lap, and buried his face in her ample chest.

"Stop fooling around, it's broad daylight. By the way, why did you call that person just now? Is it really a romantic debt your old man owes?" The big star has been with Ouyang Jun for seven or eight years. If it weren't for her family's disapproval of the marriage, the two would probably have gotten married long ago, so she doesn't have many scruples when she speaks.

"Are you asking for a beating? My father hasn't remarried all these years since my mother passed away, so it can't be that. But this kid is pretty awesome. No way, I have to go find Yue Xiaoliu and ask him again."

Originally, Ouyang Jun was only a little curious about the old man wanting to see Zhuang Rui, but now he was really interested. He took out his phone to call Yue Jing, but still couldn't get through. So he simply stood up and went to wait for Yue Xiaoliu. As for whether it would affect other people's work, that was not his concern. The minister's business was also work, wasn't it?

The reason Yue Jingxiong's phone was unreachable was because he was busy calling Zhuang Rui. Ouyang Jun found Zhuang Rui's phone number but didn't say anything. The second brother was worried that Zhuang Rui might have offended someone without his knowledge, so he was calling Zhuang Rui to inquire.

"Second brother, it's really nothing. He said someone wanted to see me, but I didn't have time, so I turned it down. Oh, by the way, I have something to tell you. I'm flying to Xinjiang tomorrow and will be back in three to five days. We can talk then." The old man was still waiting beside him. He had been taking several calls in a row and was being a bit impolite. Zhuang Rui was about to hang up after he finished speaking.

"Hey, I said, call me right away if anything happens."

As soon as Yue Jing uttered those words, the phone went dead. He shook his head, turned around, and went back to his office. Little did he know that Zhuang Rui was even more efficient at hanging up on that fourth brother.

After hanging up Yue Jing's call, Zhuang Rui recalled Ouyang Jun's call. Apart from Old Master Gu and Yue Jing, he didn't know anyone in Beijing. Who could have sent Ouyang Jun to ask to see him? And judging from Ouyang Jun's tone, that person seemed to be someone of high status.

"Could it be because of Mom?"

Zhuang Rui couldn't help but make connections with the surname Ouyang. He remembered that when he was a child, his mother spoke with a Beijing accent, but later she spoke with a Pengcheng accent.

Could it be that his mother was really from Beijing and had some kind of relationship with Ouyang Jun's family?

Thinking about his resemblance to Ouyang Jun, Zhuang Rui became even more certain, and for a moment he was in a state of confusion. He didn't know whether he should agree to meet the person who invited him after returning from Xinjiang.

Zhuang Rui was afraid that his actions would hurt his mother, because in the past twenty years, his mother had never mentioned her own family. Even when Zhuang Rui and his sister asked, they were only scolded by their mother. From this point of view, if he rashly went to meet others, his mother would probably be unhappy.

However, Zhuang Rui was filled with curiosity about his mother's past. What exactly happened back then that made his mother never mention the past again? Did his mother still have any relatives alive? All these mysteries made Zhuang Rui look forward to Ouyang Jun's invitation.

The old man sitting next to him noticed that Zhuang Rui had become somewhat unsettled after answering the phone, so he said, "Xiao Zhuang, what happened? If you have something to do, you don't need to come with me. The plane tickets can be refunded."

"Uncle-Master, it's alright. We'll deal with it when I get back. You don't think I'm a burden and don't want to take me with you anymore, do you?"

Zhuang Rui shook his head, suppressing the myriad thoughts in his mind, and joked with Grandpa Gu. He also wanted to use these few days in Xinjiang to sort out his thoughts. If Ouyang Jun's family really had some kind of relationship with his mother, how should he deal with it? At least for now, Zhuang Rui still hadn't figured it out, and having a few days to buffer wouldn't be a bad thing.

"You brat, joking with your old man like that. Go back and check out of the hotel. We'll have a good drink tonight, you and I." Old Gu can tolerate anything when he finds someone agreeable; he and Zhuang Rui have definitely hit it off.

That evening, the old man ordered pickles from Liubiju and roast duck from Quanjude. He and Zhuang Rui sat under a tree and had a few drinks. Of course, he also taught Zhuang Rui some knowledge about nephrite jade appreciation. The old man promised Zhuang Rui that after returning from this trip to

Xinjiang, he would take Zhuang Rui to the Palace Museum to see the precious jade artifacts left over from the Qing Dynasty. After all, the old man is also an advisor on jade artifacts and antiques at the Palace Museum.

Sleeping in the courtyard at night, listening to the crickets chirping in the yard, Zhuang Rui felt an unparalleled sense of peace. All the restlessness he had felt during the day vanished, and he slept soundly until dawn.

After getting up and washing up in the morning, Zhuang Rui followed Gu Lao to the airport. By noon, the two had arrived at Hotan Airport in Xinjiang.

Zhuang Rui also figured out the reason for this trip to Xinjiang. It was Old Master Gu's personal matter. He had an old friend of several decades who used to be a jade miner in the Kunlun Mountains. After he made a fortune through jade mining, he no longer went up the mountain himself. Instead, he collected raw jade from other jade miners and then resold it to the mainland. Now he has become the largest supplier of Hetian jade raw materials in Xinjiang.

This old friend of mine recently acquired a piece of mountain jade. Judging from the jade inside the outer skin, it is very likely to be mutton fat jade. However, he was unsure, so he asked Mr. Gu to come and appraise it.

"Old friend, thank you so much for coming this time..."

As Zhuang Rui and Gu Lao stepped out of the airport exit, an elderly man from Xinjiang with a high nose bridge and slightly blue eyes came up to greet them and hugged Gu Lao.

Chapter 265 The Jade Miners of Kunlun Mountain

"Adila, this is a junior of mine. I brought him here to see the grandeur of the Jade King. Xiao Zhuang, you can just call him Uncle Tian..." After embracing the newcomer, Gu Lao pulled Zhuang Rui behind him and introduced him.

Zhuang Rui sized up the man. This Uncle Tian was not tall and was a bit thin, but he had a full head of black hair and bright eyes. If you didn't look closely at the wrinkles on his face, he would look like he was only in his early fifties. However, Zhuang Rui knew that he was two years older than Grandpa Gu.

After Zhuang Rui exchanged a few words with Uncle Tian with the courtesy due to a junior, the group headed out of the airport.

When they arrived at the airport, several cars were already waiting. Zhuang Rui and Grandpa Gu were in two separate cars, while he was assigned to an SUV in the back. The driver was a young man from Sichuan named Zhang Dazhi, who was two years younger than Zhuang Rui. He used to be a truck driver in Xinjiang and stayed there to drive after retiring from the army. He was very talkative and answered all of Zhuang Rui's questions.

On the way, Zhuang Rui learned that the elderly man from Xinjiang named Adila was a Uyghur, 62 years old, and that was his Uyghur identity. He also had a Han name, Tian Dajun.

In the Xinjiang jade industry, Adila is a legendary figure known to all. People in the industry respectfully call him "Jade King", which shows his influence in the Xinjiang jade industry.

In the early 1980s, after thousands of years of mining, Xinjiang jade resources were extremely depleted, and jade mines along the Kunlun Mountains went bankrupt and closed down one after another. It was said in the industry that the Hetian jade resources had been exhausted, causing panic in the jade industry.

At that time, Adila, with his years of experience mining jade in the Kunlun Mountains, took the lead in proposing the geological theory that "Hetian jade is distributed in the shape of watermelon vines". This turned the tide for the mining industry of Hetian jade, bringing it back from the brink of ruin. New mining sites emerged one after another, and the output increased year by year.

Adila now serves as the executive director of the China Jade Association as a "Chinese Hetian Gemstone Expert." This executive position carries much more weight than Zhuang Rui's directorship. He also holds positions such as vice chairman of the Xinjiang Jade Professional Committee. The company he leads has become the leading enterprise in the Xinjiang jade industry.

"Is that why you call him 'Prince Jade'?"

According to Zhang Dazhi, it was more than an hour's drive to Adila's place, and Zhuang Rui also wanted to hear more of Adila's story.

"The old man is a legendary figure; the locals all say he has fiery eyes..."

"Eagle Eyes?!"

Zhuang Rui was stunned for a moment upon hearing this, and his expression became somewhat strange. In fact, this word seemed more appropriate to describe him.

"That's right. The old man has more than a dozen mining teams under his command. Just last year, he found a mining site he liked, but after digging more than 60 meters into the mine shaft, he still couldn't find any jade. Many people were getting anxious and said it was a dead mine. The old man overruled everyone's objections and insisted on digging two meters deeper. Hey, guess what?"

Zhang Dazhi spoke with great enthusiasm about the story of the Jade King. He asked himself a question and, without waiting for Zhuang Rui's reply, continued, "In just two meters, a miracle happened. Four large pieces of jade were mined, the largest of which weighed ten tons."

And there's more! Before even seeing a glimpse of jade, the old man predicted: this mine could yield 60 tons of jade. Sure enough, after the mining was complete, it turned out to be a full 61 tons! Brother Zhuang, isn't that like having a divine eye?

"Is it really that miraculous?"

After listening to Zhang Dazhi's words, Zhuang Rui began to wonder if the old man was like him, able to see through the surface of things and understand their true nature.

"Of course, our Jade King started mining jade in the Kunlun Mountains when he was just over ten years old. Over the decades, no one in Xinjiang has ever dared to claim that they are more skilled than him."

Zhang Dazhi spoke highly of his boss, saying, "In Xinjiang, the prince is the authority when it comes to identifying jade and jade artifacts. He can tell you in one breath whether a piece of jade is genuine, of good or bad quality, of its origin, and its price."

In the Hotan region, when dealers sell jadeite, buyers from other places who are familiar with the old man will always call him to come to the market. Once the old man sets a price, it's a done deal. Sellers no longer "ask exorbitant prices," and buyers no longer "bargain on the spot."

Do you know why? First, it's the effect of authority; second, it's the level of integrity; and third, it's personal charisma.

Zhang Dazhi spoke fluently, indicating he had spoken with more than just Zhuang Rui. His face was beaming with pride as he spoke, as if driving for Prince Yu was a great honor.

"Then why did he invite Old Master Gu?" Zhuang Rui asked, puzzled. According to Zhang Dazhi, Adila's expertise in nephrite jade was definitely no less than Old Master Gu's.

"I don't know, but Gu Lao came around this time last year. He must have been invited by the prospecting team when they came up the mountain, right?" Zhang Dazhi's words were somewhat different from what Gu Lao had said. It seemed that the purpose of this visit was definitely not just to appraise a piece of jade.

"A prospecting team? Isn't it a jade mining team?"

"No, every year around this time, several teams are organized to go up the mountain to look for mineral veins. Only after the mineral veins are identified will jade mining teams be sent out. They have different roles, but there are also some jade miners who specialize in mining mountain stream jade. They need to run all over the mountain, which is very hard work."

Zhang Dazhi explained the difference between the two to Zhuang Rui. He had been in Xinjiang for many years and sometimes went up the mountain with jade miners to try their luck. You know, if you can find a good piece of jade, you'll never have to worry about food and drink for the rest of your life.

In comparison, the work of searching for veins and scattered jade miners is much more arduous. They have to endure the scorching sun and altitude sickness to search for jade in the deep mountains. Sometimes they have to stay in the mountains for several months and only come out in winter.

...

The car drove through Hotan City and into the suburbs, entering what looked like a farm. Zhuang Rui noticed a sentry post next to the gate, with two strong young men standing by the gate. What surprised Zhuang Rui most was that they were carrying guns on their backs.

"Dazhi, are those two men at the gate also from the military?"

Zhuang Rui looked at the clothes the two men were wearing. They were camouflage uniforms, but there were no shoulder insignia or rank insignia. They were just carrying guns in broad daylight, so they must be people from government departments.

"No, Brother Zhuang, those two are from the mine security team. They're registered with the police and have gun licenses..."

Zhang Dazhi explained to Zhuang Rui that the environment near the Hetian jade mine is quite complex. Not only are there locals mining jade, but there are also gold prospectors from all over the country. With so many people, it's inevitable that there will be both good and bad people, and some people will take risks and do things that don't have any capital.

Therefore, some large jade merchants will form their own mine protection teams. People of Adila's status are coveted by many with ill intentions. Moreover, Adila's trading venue is usually his residence, where valuable jade is stored. So, an armed force is arranged to guard the place. Of course, this is all reported to and approved by the local public security department.

The car drove forward for another two hundred meters and stopped in front of a three-story building. Zhuang Rui saw that there were stones of various sizes and shapes placed on both sides of the road. These stones were mostly yellowish-white, and some of them had white jade inside that could be seen from the surface. They must all be Hetian jade.

After getting off the car and entering the small building, the dining table in the living room was already being set with food and drinks. Several Uyghur women quickly set the food and then left, leaving only Grandpa Gu, Zhuang Rui, Adila, and a middle-aged man in his forties in the large room.

The meal was plentiful, including Xinjiang-style roasted meat, big plate chicken, and Yili liquor from Xinjiang. Gu Lao and Adila were quite familiar with each other, and Gu Lao would occasionally exchange

a few words with Adila in Uyghur. The middle-aged man also did not neglect Zhuang Rui, constantly urging him to drink. After a while, Zhuang Rui was already four or five points drunk.

After dinner, someone led Zhuang Rui and Grandpa Gu to a room on the second floor to rest. Zhuang Rui, still tipsy, slept for four or five hours before waking up. When he came out of the room, he saw Grandpa Gu and Adila sitting in the living room on the second floor. On the ground in front of them was a stone that weighed at least a hundred kilograms.

"Xiao Zhuang, you're up? You've been sleeping for quite a while." Old Gu heard the noise upstairs, looked up and saw Zhuang Rui, then waved to him, signaling him to come down.

"Uncle-Master Gu, I'm sorry, I overslept." Zhuang Rui came downstairs and scratched his head a little embarrassedly.

"It's alright, young people sleep a little deeper, that's normal. For us old men, we can't even sleep a little longer if we want to. Come on... young man, what do you think of this piece of material?"

Old man Adila was also somewhat curious about Zhuang Rui. He had heard from his old friend that this young man had a keen sense for jade and had made quite a fortune at the Pingzhou Jadeite Auction not long ago. His showing Zhuang Rui this piece of jade was also a way of testing him.

"Uncle Tian, I have some experience with jadeite, but I don't know much about nephrite. If you ask me, I'm just talking theory without any real knowledge..."

Although Zhuang Rui was confident that he could see the jade inside the material, he didn't really know much about the types and quality of Hetian jade. Among the nephrite jade, he had seen the mutton fat jade pendant that Gu Lao once gave to Qian Yaosi, but he hadn't been able to examine it closely at the time.

"It's alright, just say as much as you understand, what's there to be afraid of..." Old Gu said from the side. He brought Zhuang Rui here to broaden his horizons, and this piece of material on the ground was just the right place for him to have a live lesson.

Upon hearing this, Zhuang Rui didn't stand on ceremony and squatted down to examine the piece of Hetian jade.

As friends know, all jadeite rough stones have an outer skin, and the direction, quantity, and quality of the jadeite inside can be determined by the outer skin. It can be said that the outer skin is the key to jadeite gambling.

Hetian jade is naturally the representative of nephrite. Unlike jadeite, Hetian jade pebbles do not necessarily have an outer skin. The jade flesh of many beautiful Hetian jades is exposed. In the past, many jade miners could pick up high-quality Hetian jade directly from the riverbank.

Another difference is that jadeite comes from abroad, while Hetian jade has a long history in China, with a long history and unique meaning. Throughout history, people have used jade to symbolize all beautiful things.

my country has been known as the "Land of Jade" since ancient times. The ancients treasured jade, using it as precious ornaments. Ancient medical books state that "jade is the most beautiful of stones, sweet in taste, neutral in nature, and non-toxic," and that jade is the most abundant substance for nourishing vital energy in the human body. It was believed that sucking on jade, aided by saliva, enhanced its effects. Therefore, jade was not only used for jewelry, ornaments, and decorations, but also for health and wellness.

Throughout history, emperors and concubines of various dynasties have used jade for health preservation, and Emperor Huizong of Song was obsessed with jade, while Yang Guifei used jade to ward off the summer heat.

In ancient China, jade was a vital instrument for communicating with heaven and earth and for worshipping spirits and ancestors. It was a material symbol of power and status, a funerary tool for preserving the body of the deceased, and a symbol of the integrity, moral character, and noble aspirations of scholars and gentlemen.

When Grandpa Gu and Zhuang Rui were together, they talked a lot about nephrite jade. So, although Zhuang Rui didn't handle it much, theoretically speaking, he knew a great deal about nephrite jade.

Nephrite can be broadly categorized into mountain jade, riverbed jade, and pebble jade. Mountain jade refers to the original mineral deposits found in mountains, such as white jade mountain jade and bluish-white jade mountain jade. The jade kings mainly mined mountain jade.

Mountain stream jade refers to large pieces of jade that have broken off from their original ore deposits and been transported by river water to the upper and middle reaches of a river. The characteristics of stream jade are that it is close to the original ore deposit, the pieces are relatively large, and the edges and corners of the jade material are slightly rounded after being washed by river water for a long time.

Ziyu, also known as Zieryu or Ziyu, is distributed in riverbeds and terraces on both sides. The jade is either exposed on the surface or buried underground. Ziyu is characterized by its small size, often oval shape, and smooth surface. Because it has been washed and sifted by river water for thousands of years, Ziyu is generally of the best quality.

The jade pebbles in the lower reaches of the river come in various colors, including white jade pebbles, bluish-white jade pebbles, green jade pebbles, black jade pebbles, jasper pebbles, and yellow jade pebbles. But no matter what color it is, as long as it is a top-quality pebble, it can cost tens of thousands of yuan per gram in the current jade market, which is many times more expensive than gold.

The nephrite market is now just as hot as the jadeite market. Before 2002, jade merchants from Xinjiang would bring sacks of raw jade to the mainland to sell, and people could choose whatever they wanted. But now, as soon as these people show up, jade merchants with millions of yuan flock to them, and they can only buy a small box of raw jade.

Old Master Gu once told Zhuang Rui that when jade merchants from Xinjiang came to Zhonghai, they would basically stay at the Tianshan Hotel. There, you could often see several bosses from Jiangsu and Zhejiang working together, carrying boxes of cash, anxiously knocking on doors in the corridors of the Tianshan Hotel.

Xinjiang's jade merchants are known for their unity, and the fact that Gu Lao was able to cut off the jade raw materials from Xu's Jewelry and Wang Gun's family was inseparable from his good relationship with Adila. Given Adila's status in the jade industry, all the jade merchants in Xinjiang gave him some face.

...

The reason why Gu Lao and Adila showed Zhuang Rui this piece of jade is that some nephrite, like jadeite, also has an outer skin. Zhuang Rui knows that the outer skin of Hetian jade is generally divided into three types: colored skin, sugar skin, and stone skin.

Colored skin refers to the layer of jade skin distributed on the surface of Hetian jade. It comes in many colors, and the jade industry names these jade materials according to their various colors, such as black skin, deer skin, etc. The quality of the jade can be seen from the skin color. For example, black skin and deer skin are mostly high-quality white jade materials.

Jade of the same quality, if it has a skin color like that of an autumn pear, is more valuable. The thickness of the skin is different from that of jadeite; it is very thin, generally less than 1 millimeter. The shape of the skin is also very varied, some are cloud-like, some are vein-like, and some are scattered.

The formation of colored skin is due to the transformation of ferrous oxide in Hetian jade into ferric oxide under oxidizing conditions. Therefore, it is a secondary process. Experienced jade collectors go to the middle and lower reaches of the river to look for jade with colored skin, while the chance of finding colored jade upstream is very small.

The term "sugar skin" refers to a layer of yellowish-brown or dark brown jade skin on the surface of Hetian jade mountain material. Because its color resembles that of brown sugar, jade with this skin is called sugar jade. The sugar skin of sugar jade is relatively thick, ranging from a few centimeters to twenty or thirty centimeters, and it often surrounds white or green jade, forming a transitional relationship. Sugar jade is found near the fissures of the ore body.

The gambling aspect of sugar-skinned jade is greater because the quality of the jade inside is difficult to determine. It could be top-grade white jade or ordinary green jade. Some jade miners often take out sugar-skinned jade for others to gamble on, without opening it themselves.

The last type is stone skin, which mainly refers to the surrounding rock that encloses the jade in Hetian mountain material. It is mined together with the jade during mining and is attached to the surface of the jade. The boundary between the stone and the jade in this type of stone-encased jade is clear and can be easily separated. Stone skin is also the easiest type of material to identify the quality of jade.

The piece of material now in front of Zhuang Rui is a piece of sugar-skin jade from a mountain stream. Unlike the outer skin of raw jadeite, this piece is very smooth and doesn't feel rough to the touch. Zhuang Rui guessed that this was probably because it had been washed by river water before.

Zhuang Rui had absolutely no experience with Hetian jade. After looking at the piece of jade for a while, he lowered his head and his eyes immediately focused on the yellowish-brown stone. He peeled away the layers of the stone, revealing the jade inside.

The stone's outer layer wasn't very thick, only about four or five centimeters thick. In the middle of the stone, a whole piece of milky-white jade appeared in Zhuang Rui's field of vision. To Zhuang Rui's surprise, the spiritual energy that hadn't changed for a long time actually underwent a slight change when it came into contact with the jade.

When he saw the soft white light emanating from the center of the jade, a warm aura merged with the spiritual energy in Zhuang Rui's eyes. Although only a small amount of this aura entered his eyes, it still made Zhuang Rui feel extremely comfortable, as if a hot towel had been placed on his eyes. The feeling of the heat almost made Zhuang Rui groan out of comfort.

However, of this enormous piece of jade, very little could Zhuang Rui absorb with his spiritual energy—only a hair's breadth. But this still delighted Zhuang Rui, because at least he knew that the spiritual energy in his eyes could continue to increase, instead of stagnating like it was now.

After calming himself down, Zhuang Rui raised his head and said, "Uncle Gu, Uncle Tian, this piece of jade is a mountain stream material, and it is quite large. It is also covered with a sugar skin. However, it is often said that white jade pieces are mostly small, so the possibility of this piece being mutton fat jade is not very high. But the outer skin is moist and smooth, which is quite good. If I had to guess, I would guess that the inside is bluish-white jade, but the quality should be good."

Zhuang Rui's words were quite proper, explaining the origin, outer skin, and characteristics of the jade. Given his age and experience, his insightful explanations earned the two elderly people's repeated nods of approval.

"That's right, it's similar to what I was thinking. There's a high probability that it's made of bluish-white jade. Adila, such a large piece of bluish-white jade is worth more than regular mutton fat jade. Aren't you satisfied?"

After Zhuang Rui finished speaking, the old man also gave his evaluation. He shared the same opinion as Zhuang Rui: it was virtually impossible for this piece of jade to yield mutton fat jade. If top-quality jade were so easy to find, the He Shi Bi would not have been passed down through the ages.

"Hehe, Brother Gu, you know, I didn't call you here just to see this piece of material. It's so hot in Beijing in the summer, why don't you stay here for a month? There are plenty of fresh cantaloupes and grapes this season."

Adila already knew a lot about this jade. He called Old Master Gu over, partly to reunite with old friends, and partly because the team searching for the vein would be heading up the mountain the next day. He wanted Old Master Gu to preside over the ceremony. For jade miners, this required a respected senior figure in the industry to preside over it. Gu Tianfeng came here every year mainly for this purpose.

"Alright, I won't have a chance to stay here this year. I still have to help this kid carve a piece of jade when I get back. We'll talk about it another time. After the ceremony tomorrow, I'll be heading back to Beijing."

Summers in Xinjiang are cool, and Gu Tianfeng used to stay here for a while every year. However, this year he has to work on jade carving for Zhuang Rui, so he can't stay any longer.

"Uncle-Master, there's no rush with my item. Why don't you stay here for a while? Besides, I brought that piece of jade with me. You can have it carved right here..." Zhuang Rui was a little embarrassed that he had made Old Master Gu run back and forth for his little matter.

"That's right, Xiao Zhuang is right. Brother Gu, I have all kinds of tools here. You can stay here and we old brothers can chat when we have nothing to do."

Adila also offered his advice, saying that he and Gu Tianfeng had been friends for decades, but they only met once or twice a year. In addition, he had recently handed over his business to his younger generation and wanted to have an old friend to chat with and keep him company.

"Where it is carved is not a problem, but Xiao Zhuang, can you patiently wait here?"

The old man was also somewhat tempted upon hearing this, but it would take ten days to half a month to complete the carving, polishing, and other steps for these pendants, and he was afraid that Zhuang Rui would not be able to wait.

"This is simple, let Xiao Zhuang go up the mountain with the jade mining team tomorrow..." Old Master Adila suggested.

"Uncle Tian, you just said that the teams going up the mountain tomorrow are looking for mineral veins, so why are there jade miners too?"

Zhuang Rui asked, puzzled. He was also curious about the mining of nephrite jade. He had heard that most of the finest mutton fat jade was picked up from the mountains or riverbanks, and very rarely dug out of mines.

"Hehe, you have to go up the mountain in the right season to find mines and mine jade. If it gets colder, you won't be able to stay in the mountains for long. How about it, do you want to go and see for yourself? By the way, the jade you mine from the mountains will all belong to you..." Seeing that Zhuang Rui wanted to go, Adila encouraged him vigorously from the side.

"Alright, Master Uncle, you can stay here with peace of mind. I'll go up the mountain with the jade mining team to take a look..."

In fact, Zhuang Rui didn't care much about the ownership of the jade, but he wanted to see the legend of the jade miners, which had been passed down for thousands of years.

Upon hearing this, the old man's face showed a strange expression, and he asked Zhuang Rui, "Have you really decided to go? You might not be back for ten days or half a month..."

Zhuang Rui nodded and replied, "Yes, I'll go and take a look. Uncle Tian said that all the jade we find belongs to us. If I'm lucky, I might find a piece of mutton fat jade."

In Zhuang Rui's mind, this trip into the mountains was just a vacation. A lot had happened during this time, and he felt that he needed to think about things in a quiet place, as well as his future career plans. He couldn't just keep running around aimlessly every day, could he?

"Well done, young man, you have drive. I'll have someone prepare your luggage right away." Adila stood up happily and went out when he saw that Zhuang Rui had agreed.

"Luggage?" Zhuang Rui looked at Old Master Gu with confusion.

The old man looked at Zhuang Rui with a half-smile and said, "Kid, do you think jade mining is a vacation? The environment in the mountains is very complicated. In the past, every year some jade miners went into the mountains and stayed there forever. In recent years, the equipment has improved, and the danger has been reduced a lot, but it is definitely not as comfortable as you think. So, do you still want to go?"

Searching for jade mines and mining jade in the mountains is extremely difficult and dangerous, requiring a high level of physical fitness, knowledge, and wilderness survival skills from the accompanying personnel. Despite Zhuang Rui's tall and strong physique, Old Master Gu was still a little worried.

"go!"

Zhuang Rui nodded firmly. He had heard many legends about Kunlun Mountain, and now that he had the opportunity to explore the mountain, he would definitely regret it if he didn't go.

"Xiao Zhuang, you'll go into the mountains with Da Zhi tomorrow. He's been there a few times before and is very experienced. You young people will get along well with him..."

Just then, Old Master Adila pulled in the driver who had driven Zhuang Rui at noon, patted Zhang Dazhi hard on the shoulder, and said, "Young Zhuang is my honored guest, you must take good care of him."

"Uncle Tian, I'm actually two years older than Dazhi." Zhuang Rui was both amused and exasperated by Adila's words.

"The mountains are different from the outside world; you rely on experience. Xiao Zhuang, once you go into the mountains, listen to this young man's advice and don't make decisions on your own. Otherwise, you shouldn't go."

The old man put on a stern face and spoke very seriously to Zhuang Rui.

Chapter 266 The Mineral Vein (Part 1)

"I understand, Senior Uncle, don't worry..."

Zhuang Rui also became serious. He hadn't learned any wilderness survival skills; all he could rely on was his relatively strong body and the intelligence in his eyes. Zhuang Rui knew that without unified command in the wild, chaos could easily ensue.

The next day, just as dawn was breaking, around five o'clock, Zhuang Rui was woken up. After getting dressed and walking out of the small building, he found the courtyard already packed with people. Zhuang Rui estimated that there were at least several hundred people, but no one was making a fuss; it was very quiet.

In the middle of the courtyard, there was a large square table with a sheep's head on it, and a table full of fruit platters. These were offerings to the mountain god to bless the jade miners who came into the mountains with safe and sound matters.

The ceremony was presided over by an old man. It was very simple. After saying a few words, he offered wine to heaven and earth and sprinkled it on the ground. Then all the men who were about to go into the mountains took a bowl of wine and drank it down in one gulp. Zhuang Rui was also given a bowl of wine. Fortunately, it was wine. Otherwise, after drinking that bowl, half of the people present would probably have collapsed.

After the ceremony, the crowd dispersed immediately, with each group searching for their members. Some of the men's families came to see them off, and the scene became noisy.

"Brother Zhuang, come here, let me introduce you..."

As Zhuang Rui craned his neck to look for Zhang Dazhi, Zhang Dazhi waved to him from a distance of more than ten meters away, with three other people standing beside him.

"Brother Zhuang, this is Brother Tiezi, this is Wang Fei, and this big guy is called Mengzi. Don't let his size fool you, he's a year younger than me. We're all in a group of five this time, so let's all get to know each other. Brother Zhuang is a distinguished guest of Prince Yu, and he was specially assigned to our group." Zhang Dazhi introduced the group to each other.

When Zhuang Rui shook hands with the group, he sized them up. Tie Ge was a bit older, around thirty-four or thirty-five years old, while Wang Fei was younger, about the same age as Zhang Dazhi. Neither of them were very tall, but they looked quite capable.

Mengzi, on the other hand, was all muscle and over 1.9 meters tall. He had a rather honest-looking appearance and didn't get angry when Zhang Dazhi called him "Big Fool." He just kept chuckling.

Tie Ge and Wang Fei's attitude towards Zhuang Rui wasn't exactly cold, but it wasn't enthusiastic either. They were somewhat reluctant to have a newcomer like Zhuang Rui in their team, since having a newcomer would affect the progress of jade mining.

Furthermore, according to the rules of jade miners, the jade mined by a team is to be divided equally among everyone. Since Zhuang Rui has no experience in jade mining, he will also share his share. This is why Tie Ge and Wang Fei are unhappy. However, since Zhuang Rui joined the team at the Jade King's order, the two of them did not give Zhuang Rui a hard time.

"Xiao Zhuang, and you guys, come here..."

Not far away, Old Master Gu and Adila were standing there, waving to Zhuang Rui and the others, who quickly walked over.

The old man pointed to a large backpack that was over a meter tall next to him and said to Zhuang Rui, "This was specially prepared for you by your Uncle Tian. Look, this trekking pole is your Uncle Tian's beloved tool, and he's letting you use it too."

As he spoke, the old man handed Zhuang Rui a hiking stick he was holding, saying, "There's a little mechanism on the handle of this stick. Look, press your finger here, and this claw will appear underneath. It can pick up stones the size of a fist, saving you the trouble of bending down to pick them up. This claw is made of a special alloy, so it's very sturdy. Thank you, Uncle Tian."

"Hehe, no need to thank me. If you knew nothing about jade, I wouldn't have given you this item. But let's get this straight: whatever good stuff you find this time, you'll have to sell it to this old man first."

Adila waved his hand and said to Zhang Dazhi and the others, "Are you all complaining that the old man arranged a new person for you?"

"No, no, Uncle Tian, you're joking."

Tiezi and the others quickly shook their heads in denial. Even if they had a thousand complaints in their hearts, they dared not show them in front of the Jade King. In the Xinjiang jade industry, no one dared to offend the Jade King.

"Don't let Xiao Zhuang's youth fool you, he's a director of the National Jade Association. His jade appraisal skills are no less than mine. Having him with you guys is a blessing..."

Adila's words shocked the group. They had initially thought Zhuang Rui was Old Master Gu's nephew, just there to join in the fun. Now, hearing Zhuang Rui's true identity, they were utterly taken aback. They knew that even the Jade King himself was merely a director of the Jade Association.

"Ahem, Uncle Tian, you're joking. Brother Tie and the others are veteran jade miners. I should learn more from them..."

Zhuang Rui was only modest to a limited extent. Gu Lao had told him about the team's resource allocation yesterday, but given the special nature of Zhuang Rui's eyes, he was naturally full of confidence and there was really no need for him to be overly modest.

"Alright, you guys go eat. The trucks are all arranged, and we'll be leaving in twenty minutes..."

After Uncle Tian finished speaking, Zhuang Rui stepped forward and picked up the large backpack. It was quite heavy, weighing at least fifty or sixty pounds. It wasn't that Zhuang Rui couldn't carry it, but carrying this thing up the mountain, he probably wouldn't be able to go very far.

"Brother Zhuang, I'll do it..."

Mengzi stepped out from behind Zhuang Rui, took the backpack with one hand, casually tossed it behind his back, and slung it over his shoulder as if it were nothing, leaving Zhuang Rui speechless.

In a corner of the courtyard, there were several large pots filled with porridge. On the table next to the pots, there were also fried dough sticks, steamed buns, and other breakfast items. Several women were serving porridge to everyone. Behind them, there was a pile of backpacks that looked like schoolbags. Zhuang Rui could see that there was a water bottle in each backpack.

Zhuang Rui noticed that everyone received a small backpack when they got their porridge. When it was his turn, he was also given one. Holding the porridge in one hand and a fried dough stick in his mouth, Zhuang Rui opened the backpack and saw a heavy green military water bottle inside, as well as dried meat and flatbread wrapped in oilcloth. These were their supplies after they went up the mountain.

During the meal, Zhang Dazhi introduced everyone's strengths to Zhuang Rui. Tiezi was an old jade miner who had been going up the mountain with adults since he was fourteen or fifteen years old. He was very familiar with the terrain of the Kunlun Mountains and the Yulongkash River, and naturally had a lot of experience in jade mining.

Wang Fei was Zhang Dazhi's comrade-in-arms. They had gone up the mountain together several times. He was an excellent marksman and was in charge of the team's only shotgun. Mengzi was strong and did the physical work of setting up camp. As for Zhang Dazhi, he had an extremely strong ability to survive in the wild. Last year, during a trip to the mountains to mine jade, he got separated from the team and survived alone in the mountains for nearly twenty days without any food supplies.

Overall, Zhuang Rui's jade-mining team was a well-organized group, taking into account various aspects such as safety. It was probably Jade King's intention to accommodate Zhuang Rui, who was entering the mountains for the first time.

At six o'clock, a whistle blew, and the people squatting in various places to eat stood up. According to the usual rules, when it was time to leave, they had to get on the bus and leave immediately, and no one would wait for the latecomers.

"Hurry up, everyone get on the bus..."

"You little rascal, where are you going to hide? Get in the car now."

“Eniwar, are you still reluctant to part with your water tank (Uyghur for wife)? Why don’t you take it with you? You can have some fun tonight.”

A chaotic commotion filled the courtyard as teams called out to their teammates. A Uyghur youth, who had recently married, was saying goodbye to his wife, drawing jeers from a group of bachelors.

The young man was going to replace the people working at the mine, and it was estimated that he would be gone for about half a year. His wife was reluctant to part with him and stood there quietly sobbing.

There were six vehicles parked outside the courtyard, including only one minibus and the rest were all covered trucks. Zhuang Rui and the others naturally boarded the minibus. After sitting down, Zhang Dazhi happily said to Zhuang Rui, "Brother Zhuang, we're really lucky to have you here this time. Last year I was always taking trucks up the mountain..."

After hearing what Prince Yu had just said, Tiezi and Wang Fei became much more enthusiastic towards Zhuang Rui. This wasn't because the two were mercenary, but because they only had one chance to go up the mountain each year, and their entire income depended on this opportunity, so naturally they were unwilling to mentor newcomers. However, Zhuang Rui had a specialty in appraising jade, so that was a different story.

There are many jade stones on the mountain that are extremely difficult to identify, and each person has a limited weight limit. With Zhuang Rui accompanying them, they can choose to carry valuable jade stones. A master who can identify jade is of great help to them.

"Brother Zhuang, there's no turning back, that's the rule."

After another short whistle, the convoy slowly started moving. Zhuang Rui's minibus was at the very back. Hearing shouts from the crowd behind him, Zhuang Rui was about to turn around when Zhang Dazhi stopped him.

The jade miners standing on the large trucks at the front were all facing forward, creating an atmosphere reminiscent of the poignant lines, "The wind howls, the Yi River is cold, the hero departs, never to return."

Hotan is located at the foot of the Kunlun Mountains, and after driving for more than an hour, the terrain gradually rises.

Everyone has probably heard of the Kunlun Mountains from various myths and legends. Starting from the Pamir Plateau in the west, the mountain range is 2,500 kilometers long, with an average altitude of 5,500 to 6,000 meters. The highest peak is located at the border of Xinjiang and Qinghai, with an altitude of 6,860 meters.

Legend has it that the celestial ruler of Kunlun Mountain is the Queen Mother of the West, and the "Jade Pool" recorded in many ancient books is the Black Sea at the source of the Kunlun River. At an altitude of 4,300 meters, the lake is clear and beautiful, with flocks of birds and wild animals, and ever-changing weather. The Wild Buffalo Gully, which flows through the Kunlun River, contains the precious Wild Buffalo Gully rock paintings.

Not far from the Black Sea are the legendary places where Jiang Ziya cultivated the Five Elements Dao for forty years: Yuxu Peak and Yuzhu Peak, which are covered in silver all year round and shrouded in clouds and mist. Kunlun Spring, located on the north bank of the Kunlun River, is the largest non-freezing spring in the Kunlun Mountains.

The unfrozen spring creates the spectacular "June Snow" phenomenon of the Kunlun Mountains. With a large and stable water volume, it is said to be the spring water used by the Queen Mother of the West to brew nectar, and is considered high-quality mineral water. The Golmud River, originating in the middle reaches of the Kunlun Mountains, has long eroded the slate, forming a breathtaking canyon with sheer cliffs dozens of meters deep.

Because Zhuang Rui and his group were going deep into the Kunlun Mountains, they still brought thick cotton-padded clothes even in June. It should be noted that there are many snow-capped peaks in the Kunlun Mountains that are covered with snow all year round.

As the car headed into the mountains, Zhuang Rui noticed that the trees he saw along the way were all low shrubs, not the tall, broad-leaved trees typical of the south. Just now, on a hillside, he had spotted a herd of wild donkeys. As soon as Zhuang Rui picked up his camera, the roar of the car engine caused the herd to scatter.

The car drove for more than three hours on the mountain road, and in the distance, the towering peaks were covered with snow.

According to Zhang Dazhi, the altitude here is already over 3,000 meters, and most people would experience some altitude sickness. However, Zhuang Rui, who had experienced a trip to Tibet, did not feel any discomfort. He was just a little regretful that Bai Shi could not accompany him, otherwise he could have experienced the charm of the snow-capped mountains.

"Brother Zhuang, we're almost there. Do you see that mountain pass ahead? That's the transit point for entering the mountains."

Zhang Dazhi and the others had been here several times and were already used to it. Fearing that Zhuang Rui might feel stifled, they started telling him about the legends of the place.

After the car passed the Karakoram Pass, Zhuang Rui could clearly see a mountain peak appearing ahead, separated by a babbling ditch.

This is the famous "Old Man Gazing at the Mountain." Legend has it that in ancient times, an old man's son went to the Kunlun Mountains to mine jade but never returned. The old man then sat at the mountain pass and waited for his son. Day after day, year after year...

Generation after generation of jade miners followed in the footsteps of their predecessors into the mountains, only to descend wearily. The old man carefully observed each passerby, but he never saw his son. Thousands of years have passed, and he remains there, motionless, waiting and watching...

Besides the Jade Pool of the Queen Mother of the West, many more beautiful stories are told about Kunlun Mountain.

However, after getting off the bus, the Kunlun Mountains didn't feel so beautiful to Zhuang Rui.

The place where we got off the bus was a transfer station. Whether people were going into the mountains to mine jade or workers going to the mines, they all had to stop here. In this open space of more than a thousand square meters, there were plastic bags and other dirty garbage everywhere.

The so-called transit station was just a two-story building. Next to the building was a shed with four or five camels inside, which made Zhuang Rui take a few more glances.

Zhuang Rui's group wasn't the only convoy heading into the mountains. Three trucks were already parked in front of the small building at the transfer station. The noisy crowd swarmed towards the building. Zhuang Rui was confused and, in a moment of surprise, realized that of the more than one hundred people who had been standing around him, he was now all alone. Even Zhang Dazhi had disappeared.

Looking at the dense crowd, Zhuang Rui had no interest in squeezing in. After about four or five minutes, the crowd dispersed a little, and then Zhuang Rui saw Zhang Dazhi walking over carrying two enamel mugs.

"Brother Zhuang, eat up. This is the last hot meal we'll have in the mountains. There are many restrictions on starting a fire in the mountains, and most of the time we'll only be able to eat the food we brought."

Zhang Dazhi handed Zhuang Rui an enamel mug containing two steamed buns and some mutton soup. Five or six hours had passed since morning, and Zhuang Rui was very hungry, so he took the mug and started eating.

After the meal, the jade mining teams formed groups and headed into the mountains. Some teams consisted of only two people, which Zhuang Rui knew were people with extremely rich jade mining experience. They were unwilling to team up with novices, fearing that the jade they mined would be split evenly. Such groups were usually longtime friends or relatives.

"Brother Zhuang, the prince asked me to take you to the jade mine first, and then we'll go into the mountains to mine jade. What do you think?"

"Dazhi, you make the arrangements. I'll just go with you." Zhuang Rui didn't forget the instructions Old Master Gu had given him before they came.

"Let's go then..." Dazhi called to Tiezi and the others, and followed the miners into the mountains.

The transfer station is more than ten kilometers away from the mining area. Normally, when there are fewer people, they can ride camels up, but today that is obviously not possible. There are more people

than camels, and the camels are used to transport production and living materials, so the miners have to walk. Zhuang Rui looked around and saw that most of these workers were Uyghurs.

On flat ground, a distance of more than ten kilometers is nothing to anyone, but it is different on a mountain at an altitude of three or four thousand meters. Severe lack of oxygen makes people feel chest tightness and shortness of breath, especially new workers who have just come up the mountain without experience. Their headaches are like wearing a tight headband, and every step they take makes their heart pound, their breath catch in their throats, and their legs tremble.

At the front were several camels carrying supplies, with the workers following closely behind. Although they weren't used to it, they were all gritting their teeth and persevering.

Zhuang Rui felt alright, but the small backpack he was carrying was noticeably heavier than usual. Looking at Meng Zi, who was rushing ahead with his head down, Zhuang Rui couldn't help but feel a little ashamed.

The mountain stream flows gently, its tinkling sounds echoing in the clear canyon.

The valley is filled with red willows, wild wolfberries, camel thorns, and reeds. A few poplar trees, resembling soybean sprouts, stand forlornly at the foot of the mountain. Traces of jade can be found among the pebbles in the gully. Some of them have been picked up by passing jade craftsmen and placed on stones by the "road" so that jade carriers could take them away.

The history of jade mining in China can be traced back more than 7,000 years. According to Zhang Dazhi, the smooth pebbles in the ditch were not entirely the result of water erosion, but were largely caused by the friction of the feet of jade miners. The leisurely sound of camel bells has echoed in the valley for more than 200 million years, and people have become accustomed to this arduous process.

"Aren't you going to pick up the jade here?"

Zhuang Rui pointed to a piece of jade the size of a fist by the roadside and asked Zhang Dazhi, "Although the exposed jade shows that it is only of average quality, it is still jade."

Zhang Dazhi shook his head and said, "The good jade has already been picked up. The ones left on the roadside are for being hauled away by truck."

Zhuang Rui and his colleagues never imagined that, due to the soaring price of jade, more than 200,000 people would flock to the area in just the last two years. Not to mention the jade stones by the roadside, even the bottom of the valley would be dug up.

As they were talking, a tractor drove down the mountain. Although the mountain road was not very steep, it was not smooth. The tractor was like a roller coaster, with the front rising high and then falling heavily into the pit. Zhuang Rui was terrified to see this, especially since there were two people sitting in the back of the tractor.

"Guys, go up there and do your best, haha..."

As they passed Zhuang Rui and his group, the tractor driver shouted something. However, his appearance was somewhat comical. The bumpy road meant that his buttocks couldn't even touch the seat, and he was swaying like he was having a seizure, which made everyone burst into laughter.

After the tractor drove past, Zhuang Rui saw that there was a person following behind the tractor, constantly throwing jade stones from the roadside into the truck bed. On this mountain road, the tractor was not much faster than a person walking, but the person behind could keep up.

More than two hours later, they finally arrived at the mining area. Several wolfhounds barked and rushed at them, but were chased away by the people who came to greet them.

"Brother Zhuang, let's go inside the mine and take a look. We'll leave after that."

Although it was the Jade King's order, Zhang Dazhi and his companions were unwilling to waste time here. After all, more and more people were coming into the mountains in recent years, and if you were a step late, the good jade might be picked up by someone else.

Zhang Dazhi had already made arrangements with the people at the mine. Upon hearing that it was the Jade Prince who had sent people to inspect the mine, the middle-aged man named Lao Yu did not dare

to be negligent. He led Zhuang Rui and the others around a mountain path and arrived at the top of the mine.

Before Zhuang Rui stood a massive mountain wall, tens of meters high. The entire mountain had been carved out by quarry workers, and the pristine white surface faced the afternoon sun, shining like a mirror, so bright that Zhuang Rui couldn't open his eyes.

As the saying goes, jade is buried in stone and difficult for people to recognize. But the warm and lustrous jade aura will rise into the air under the warm sunlight. The magical white color creates a kind of illusion of beautiful jade emitting smoke, which makes Zhuang Rui feel dizzy and lost for a moment, as if he has become one with it.

The Book of Songs, Minor Odes, says: "Stones from other mountains can be used to polish jade." In ancient times, mining mountain stones was called "polishing jade," which also refers to mining mountain jade, that is, mining primary jade mines. Under Lao Yu's guidance, Zhuang Rui went into the mine pit that was said to be eighty-three meters deep.

The mine was only a little over 1 meter high and wide. Zhuang Rui could only follow behind Lao Yu, crawling inch by inch into the cave. Before entering the cave, Zhuang Rui imagined that the jade mine must be a continuous area, and the walls inside the cave must be made of jade, so shiny that it could reflect a person's image. However, even after crawling to the bottom of the cave, he did not see a trace of jade.

After Zhuang Rui, his mouth full of dust, crawled out of the mine and asked Lao Yu, "Master Yu, is this a jade mine? It's so narrow, even if there is jade, we can't extract it."

"Brother, we're looking for a mineral vein. We can only start mining after we've identified it. We can't start large-scale mining in the early stages, otherwise we'll destroy the vein and then it'll be too late to cry..."

After listening to Lao Yu's explanation, Zhuang Rui finally understood that jade mining is different from jadeite mining, and it is a technical job.

Before coming to the jade mine, Zhuang Rui always thought that jade mining might be like marble mining, where one could extract a large area at a time. Only now did he realize how ignorant and ridiculous his imagination had been.

First of all, unlike other minerals that are continuous, jade mines are intermittently hidden in the rock core. The veins are indeed like smoke and mist, as described in ancient poems, and are unpredictable. The occasionally exposed veins are covered by thick layers of rock. To extract a piece of jade, a large amount of hard rock covering the jade must be removed.

This means that jade miners not only have to put in extremely arduous labor, but also need a discerning eye to distinguish jade from other stones. The rock connected to the jade is called the jade root, which looks like jade but is actually stone, making it the most difficult to differentiate. If not handled properly, both jade and stone will be destroyed, and all previous efforts will be wasted. The idiom "jade and stone are burned together" originates from the story of jade mining.

"Brother Zhuang, let's go. It's getting dark soon, and if we don't leave now, we won't be able to get to Death Valley tonight."

Seeing Zhuang Rui crawl out of the mine looking covered in dust, Zhang Dazhi urged him on, saying that they had already taken a roundabout route to their destination.

The word "Death Valley" sent a chill down Zhuang Rui's spine.

"You'll know when we get there." Zhang Dazhi didn't explain further, but judging from his expression, it definitely wasn't a good place.

After saying goodbye to Lao Yu, the five-person team continued into the mountains. Without the mining team, the mountains were much quieter. The mountains here were mostly made of stone, with crisscrossing valleys and rolling hills along the way. After walking for four or five hours, the group was soaked through, having gotten wet while crossing streams.

However, Zhuang Rui's performance was quite good. At least he was able to keep up with the group for the past four or five hours and did not hold them back. This made Tiezi and the others look at him with new respect.

Reaching a stream, Zhang Dazhi stopped, looked at the sky, and said, "Let's eat something first, Brother Tiezi. We'll definitely make it through Death Valley tonight, right?"

"Yes, but we need to hurry." Tiezi's face showed a hint of tension when Death Valley was mentioned.

"Then hurry up and boil the water."

At Zhang Dazhi's command, Mengzi put down the large backpack and took out a small steel pot from it. Wang Fei quickly built a stove with stones, while Tiezi went to collect some dry branches. Only Zhuang Rui stood by, somewhat at a loss.

Actually, Zhuang Rui didn't need to do anything. In just three to five minutes, the fire was lit. Da Zhi took out some dried meat from his bag and threw it in. The group sat down around the stone stove.

"Dazhi, why did you choose to mine jade instead of looking for mineral veins?"

Zhuang Rui learned from his conversation with Lao Yu that the mineral veins on the mountain were all unclaimed. Whoever found them would own the jade that was mined. Logically speaking, finding a mineral vein would be like becoming rich overnight, much better than mining jade on the mountain.

"Brother Zhuang, let alone the fact that this jade vein has been almost completely mined out, even if we find a vein, we don't have the money to mine it. The initial investment would be at least tens of millions."

The expressions on Zhang Dazhi and the others' faces were somewhat helpless. Even if the teams searching for mineral veins could find them, they could only get a very small share. The lion's share would still go to those who invested in mining.

Chapter 267 The Mineral Vein (Part Two)

The water in the pot quickly boiled, and a rich aroma of meat wafted out. The group ate some flatbread with the broth, then washed themselves in the nearby stream before extinguishing the fire. Although tall trees were rare in the Kunlun Mountains, a fire in these bushes could easily land them in prison for several years.

After packing his things, Zhuang Rui took out his phone and checked the time. It was almost six o'clock. The signal was completely gone. Putting the phone back in his pocket, Zhuang Rui asked, "Dazhi, where are we going? We haven't run into anyone along the way."

The group consisted of over 1,000 people, including the jade miners they met at the transit station. After being dispersed into the Kunlun Mountains, they were like stones thrown into the ocean, not even causing a ripple. The group traveled for an entire afternoon without encountering a single person.

Zhang Dazhi stuffed the cleaned steel pot into Mengzi's backpack and casually replied, "Hehe, Brother Zhuang, the Kunlun Mountains are huge. Most people go to the Yulongkash River to dig for jade, but now they're using excavators to mine jade there. We wouldn't be able to get any even if we went. We might as well try our luck in the Wild Buffalo Gully..."

"Wild Buffalo Gully?"

"Yes, it's Yeniugou. The white jade, clear white jade, and green jade produced there are of fine and smooth texture, rich in variety, and large in size. They are top-quality materials, basically the same as Hetian jade. Many of them can even reach the standard of mutton fat white jade. In particular, its emerald green, smoky gray, and grayish purple varieties are extremely rare in Hetian jade..."

Tiezi chimed in, saying that it was his suggestion to go to Yeniugou this time. However, Yeniugou has a very complex terrain and an altitude of over 4,500 meters. For jade miners, it is a place full of deadly temptations and unknown dangers.

Wang Fei also said with a smile, "Two years ago, a man from Zhejiang started mining jade in Yeniu Gou and became rich overnight. He probably has a net worth of hundreds of millions now."

Wang Fei's words made Tiezi and the others' eyes light up. They didn't expect to find a mineral vein; they would be satisfied as long as they could find some high-quality jade in Yeniu Gully. The Jade King's purchase price for jade was very fair, and every year many people made hundreds of thousands of yuan after going into the mountains, and then returned to the mainland with the money to buy houses and get married. This was also Zhang Dazhi and the others' wish.

"Let's go, it's still two days' journey to Bison Gully. We must get around Death Valley today..."

The group of five resumed their journey. The evening in the Kunlun Mountains was not hot, and a cool breeze felt very comfortable on their skin, making it a good time to travel. As the last rays of the setting sun bathed the entire mountain in a red glow, the group arrived at the foot of a valley.

"This...this is Death Valley?"

No one needed to tell him; just by looking at what he saw, Zhuang Rui knew that he had arrived at the Valley of Death they had mentioned.

With the last rays of the sunset on the horizon, Zhuang Rui could clearly see that in the valley, more than ten meters from the entrance, dense wild grass grew everywhere, and scattered among the grass were wolf pelts, bear skeletons, hunters' steel guns, and desolate graves.

A skull without a skeleton, with empty eye sockets, seems to be telling its tragic story. The occasional cries of eagles in the sky further enhance the eerie and terrifying atmosphere of death.

"Yes, this place is also known as the 'Gates of Hell' of the Kunlun Mountains. Over the centuries, countless corpses have been buried here..."

Zhang Dazhi's voice was somewhat low, and a hint of fear flashed in his eyes as he looked at the piles of white bones in the valley.

"Brother Zhuang, let's go. This place has lush pastures, but the shepherds living in the Kunlun Mountains would rather let their cattle and sheep starve to death on the Gobi Desert than dare to enter this ancient and silent valley..."

As Wang Fei spoke, he tightened his grip on the gun, as if a demon might emerge from the deep, dark valley to devour them. Just then, the last rays of the setting sun completely disappeared, and Wang Fei's voice echoed through the valley, hollow and deep, sending a chill down their spines. 69\$ħµχ.çđm

"No scientific research teams are conducting scientific investigations here?"

Zhuang Rui glanced at the valley entrance, which resembled a monster's gaping maw, and followed Wang Fei's footsteps, climbing up a small path beside the valley entrance.

It was completely dark by then. Tiezi, who was most familiar with the road in the group, walked at the front, wearing a miner's lamp on his head and holding a scimitar that looked like a sickle. He cut through the dry grass and low branches blocking the way.

"There was one scientific expedition, but we never fully figured out the reason..."

After leaving the Valley of Death, Zhang Dazhi became more talkative and told Zhuang Rui about the things that had happened in the valley over the years.

In the 1980s, a herd of horses from a ranch wandered into Death Valley while greedily eating the lush grass. For the herders, these horses were their lifeline. One herder risked entering the valley to search for the horses, but after several days, the herd of horses reappeared instead of the herder.

The herdsman's body was later found on a small hill. His clothes were torn, he was barefoot, his eyes were wide open in anger, his mouth was agape, and he was still clutching his hunting rifle, looking as if he had died with his eyes wide open in disbelief. What was puzzling was that no wounds or signs of attack were found on his body.

Shortly after this tragedy, a geological team working nearby was also struck by Death Valley. It was also that month, and while it was unbearably hot outside, a blizzard suddenly struck the vicinity of Death Valley. A thunderous roar accompanied the sudden onslaught of the blizzard, and the cook fainted on the spot.

According to the cook's recollection, when he heard the thunder, he immediately felt numb all over, his vision went black, and then he lost consciousness. The next day, when the team members went out to work, they were surprised to find that the original yellow soil had turned into black soil, like ashes, and all the plants and animals had been "killed".

At the time, the geological team quickly organized an investigation of the valley. The investigation revealed that the magnetic anomaly in the area was extremely pronounced and widespread; the deeper into the valley, the higher the magnetic anomaly value. Under the influence of electromagnetic effects, the interaction between the electrical charges in the clouds and the magnetic field of the valley caused

electrical discharges, making this area prone to lightning strikes. Lightning often targets running animals. This hypothesis provides the best explanation for the series of events that occurred.

However, the geological team has no clear conclusion as to what caused the extremely high magnetic field value here. After these events, the local herders no longer dare to approach the Valley of Death. Fortunately, there were no Uyghurs in this group today, otherwise they would never have dared to detour around the edge of the Valley of Death.

After listening to Zhang Dazhi's account, Zhuang Rui subconsciously looked back at the valley entrance that was no longer visible, and cold sweat broke out on his back. He guessed that it was because this place was rarely visited by people; otherwise, it would probably be as famous as places like Bermuda.

Under the cover of night, the group crossed two mountain ranges before stopping. It was a good 30 or 40 miles from the Valley of Death, and it was also a large canyon. Tiezi was very familiar with the place. Using his miner's lamp, he found a very hidden cave near the rock wall.

"Brother Tiezi, you have a great memory. It seems like we walked through here two years ago, and you still remember."

Zhang Dazhi picked up a stone from the ground and threw it forcefully into the cave. He was afraid that some animals might be hiding inside. You see, wolves and brown bears are very common in the Kunlun Mountains, and there are reports of herders being attacked every year.

After waiting for a while and hearing no sound from inside the cave, the group went in. The cave wasn't deep, only about ten meters deep, and it was covered in dust. The group was exhausted from their journey and didn't care about the dirt, so they sat down in the slightly damp spot.

"Brother Zhuang, we'll be camping in the mountains, and someone needs to keep watch at night. You'll be first in line. Wake me up at midnight. Mengzi will be third, and Wang Fei fourth. Brother Tiezi has a tougher job, so you won't be on watch tonight.

After Mengzi sat down, he opened his backpack and took out five folded sleeping bags, handing them to everyone. Zhang Dazhi then began assigning everyone's night watch time.

Arranging Zhuang Rui to go first was actually a way of taking care of him. He could sleep soundly until dawn after guarding the city until midnight, which was much better than getting up in the middle of the night for two or three hours before going back to sleep. As for Tiezi, who was responsible for clearing the way, he was physically exhausted, which is why Zhang Dazhi didn't arrange for him to go first.

No one objected to Zhang Dazhi's arrangement. Wang Fei gave Zhuang Rui a brief explanation of how to use the shotgun before crawling into his sleeping bag. He wanted to get some rest so he would be more energetic tomorrow.

Fortunately, apart from a few wolf howls in the distance, nothing happened that night, and we got through it peacefully.

The next day, as soon as it was light, everyone set off. The temperature difference between day and night in the Kunlun Mountains is quite large. Traveling in the cool morning is the most comfortable, while you can rest a little longer when it gets hot at noon.

On the morning of the third day, around 10 a.m., the group of five finally arrived at Yeniu Gully, where they were at an altitude of 4,500 meters. Although everyone's face showed excitement, Zhang Dazhi still found a place for them to rest for half a day before going to the bottom of the gully to look for jade in the afternoon.

"boom!"

Just as the group sat down, an explosion suddenly came from afar. Zhuang Rui felt the ground beneath him shake and quickly stood up to look in the direction of the explosion.

"Brother Zhuang, stop looking. That's a jade mine run by people from Zhejiang. They've been mining there for over a year."

Zhang Dazhi was already used to this situation. In the Kunlun Mountains, wherever there were jade mines, you could hear explosions almost all day long.

However, envy was evident on their faces. For them, as long as they could discover a jade vein, they could make a fortune just by selling the information, even without the money to mine it.

However, these mineral veins are usually hidden deep underground, and without detection tools, it is almost impossible for them to discover them.

...

Wild Buffalo Gully is located deep in the Kunlun Mountains. It was named after the large herds of wild buffalo that once lived there. Of course, that was decades ago; now, it is difficult to find any trace of wild buffalo. Although it is called a gully, it is actually more than 20 kilometers deep and has lush grass, making it very suitable for animals to live in.

On both sides of Yeniu Gully are snow-capped mountains with snow that never melts all year round. However, every summer, the melted snow from the mountainside carries rocks into Yeniu Gully. Over millions of years, this has created a riverbed that is not very wide, but is filled with rocks on both sides.

Tiezi and his group's destination was this river. Because the altitude here is over 4,000 meters, and it is difficult to transport large machinery in, plus it is difficult for people with poor physical condition to mine jade here, this river has not been dammed from the upper reaches and extensively dug like the Yulongkash River. It has basically retained its natural state.

However, quite a few people had already set their sights on this place. Not long after Zhuang Rui and his group arrived at Yeniu Gully, a small team of three met them. Although they were not familiar with each other, they still greeted each other.

Since the jade stones along the river were all washed down from the mountains, there were relatively more high-quality jade stones at the foot of the river where it entered the mountain. Zhuang Rui and his group arrived first, so they consciously walked downstream.

While everyone was resting, Tiezi told Zhuang Rui about his jade mining techniques over the years. However, after categorizing them, Zhuang Rui discovered that jade mining and gambling on stones had something in common: the success of mining good jade largely depended on luck.

At the beginning of this year, a big boss from Wenzhou hired dozens of excavators and bulldozers and a large number of people to carry out large-scale mining on a seven- or eight-kilometer section of the Yulongkash River that had been dammed.

Using modern machinery to search for jade is a major development in recent years. Bulldozers push the soil and rocks in the riverbed to one side, and migrant workers waiting nearby rush over to use shovels to search for jade in the soil.

However, after more than a month and spending tens of millions of yuan, although a lot of jade was mined, it was all ordinary jade material, which could not offset his huge expenses. Helpless, the merchant had to end the jade mining operation, ending in a loss.

The Wenzhou businessman was unwilling to give up. After finishing his work, he went back to the mining site and saw a local Uyghur worker stand up after finishing his cigarette. He casually kicked aside a stone and picked up a fist-sized piece of jade from underneath. After appraisal, it was identified as top-grade mutton fat jade, worth tens of millions of yuan. This made the Wenzhou businessman so angry that he almost vomited blood and left Xinjiang overnight.

This principle is similar to spending millions to gamble on a piece of jade from a piece of garbage. Having money alone is not enough; you also need luck. Clearly, that Wenzhou businessman was not very lucky.

After resting for more than three hours, Zhuang Rui and the others also began mining jade. Mengzi took out four flat, folded baskets from his backpack. These baskets were woven with very strong silk threads, and the folds were made of alloy steel strips. They had shoulder straps sewn on the back so that they could be carried on one's back and the jade they had mined could be thrown inside.

Each of them carried a basket on their back and walked towards the riverbed, which was somewhat dazzling under the sunlight. Zhang Dazhi and the others all had hopeful expressions on their faces. For them, a good piece of jade could potentially change their lives.

The so-called jade mining involves finding jade among the tens of millions of stones of all sizes along the riverbanks. It's no exaggeration to say that it's like sifting sand from a vast ocean. In ancient China, jade mining involved setting up large nets along the riverbanks to sift through the stones, but sometimes, even after a whole day, not a single piece of jade could be found.

After being washed by snowmelt for thousands of years, the stones of all sizes on both sides of the river have become very smooth. The group simply took off their shoes and walked barefoot on the warm pebbles that were slightly hot from the sun. The sound of the gurgling water in their ears had a unique charm.

Although this place is located deep in the mountains, tens of thousands of jade miners have come here over the centuries. Finding jade from the riverbank is not an easy task. After walking four or five hundred meters along the river, the group found nothing.

Zhuang Rui originally wanted to try to distinguish the stones on the riverbank himself, but after only three to five minutes, the densely packed pebbles covering both sides of the river made him dizzy and lightheaded.

On the surface, it is impossible to tell the difference between these stones. They are almost identical in size, shape and color. It is difficult to distinguish them without bending down to examine them carefully. You may have just looked at one stone, but when you turn around to look again, you will not be able to find the stone you were looking at.

Looking up at Tiezi and the others, Zhuang Rui noticed that they were all squatting on the ground, moving forward step by step. Even Mengzi, who was so tall, was doing the same. Zhuang Rui tried squatting on the ground like them for a while, but in less than ten minutes, the soreness in his waist and legs made him unable to bear it, so he had to stand up.

Zhuang Rui now stands on the riverbank holding the hiking stick given to him by Uncle Tian, which looks somewhat out of place.

"Dazhi, do you think the Jade Prince might be lying to us? This guy is standing there so openly mining jade, how can we tell the difference?" Tiezi and Zhang Dazhi were not far apart, talking in hushed tones. It wasn't that he didn't believe Tian Bo's words, but Zhuang Rui's behavior was really unreliable.

"Don't talk nonsense. When has the Jade Prince ever misjudged anything? Brother Zhuang may not be familiar with jade mining, but he can identify jade. This will save us from bringing back some junk."

Dazhi picked up Zhuang Rui and Grandpa Gu from the airport. Knowing how much Prince Yu valued them, he naturally thought highly of Zhuang Rui as well. In addition, with Prince Yu's instructions, he took extra care of Zhuang Rui along the way.

Zhuang Rui was thirty or forty meters away from them, so naturally he couldn't hear Da Zhi and the others' conversation. He was currently using the spiritual energy in his eyes, like using a plow to sift through the soil, little by little.

Because the daytime light was very bright, and nearly half of these stones were in water, they reflected dazzling light everywhere. Zhuang Rui encountered a problem when using his spiritual energy for the first time. Several times he saw the color inside the stones, but after picking them up with his hiking stick, he found that it was just the reflection of the sun.

"I've got it! I found a piece of jade, Brother Tiezi, come quick and take a look..."

Just as Zhuang Rui was having a headache, Mengzi shouted from behind him. Zhuang Rui turned around and saw that the kid had plunged into the river, his clothes completely soaked, and he was holding onto a rock and climbing up the riverbed.

June is the time when the ice on the snow-capped mountains gradually melts. Although the river is not very wide, the current is particularly rapid. Even though Mengzi was holding onto a large rock, his body was still swept downstream for seven or eight meters, just a short distance from Zhuang Rui.

Seeing that Mengzi was still clutching the rock tightly in his arms and couldn't free his hands to climb ashore, Zhuang Rui quickly said, "Mengzi, how did you fall into the water? Throw the rock away and climb up quickly."

Mengzi didn't reply. He struggled to stand up in the water, threw the stone into the river with both hands, and it landed right next to Zhuang Rui's feet. Then he reached out and grabbed the trekking pole that Zhuang Rui had extended, and climbed back to the shore.

Zhuang Rui pulled and tugged Mengzi up. Although it was June, the temperature difference between day and night was huge due to the high altitude. At night, the temperature would drop to around ten degrees Celsius. Although Mengzi was very strong, he might still get sick.

"Mengzi, take off your clothes and put them on the ground. Go and change into some dry clothes..."

Zhang Dazhi, Tiezi, and Wang Fei also ran over when they heard the noise. Seeing Mengzi's soaking wet appearance, Zhang Dazhi frowned. If this big guy was sick, no one could carry him.

"It's alright, Brother Tie, come and take a look, this stone contains jade, right?"

Mengzi grinned foolishly, not taking it seriously at all, and pulled Tiezi to the rock he had thrown up.

"Mengzi, go change your clothes first, I'll take my time looking..." Tiezi glared at Mengzi. He was an old jade miner and knew that getting sick in the mountains without medical care and medicine would be very troublesome.

"Okay, I'll go change it right away."

Mengzi quickly stripped off his clothes and threw them onto the rocks by the river. Then, naked, he ran to where he had left his backpack, took out his clothes, put them on, and impatiently ran back.

This stone is flat, about the size of a washbasin, and about 20 to 30 centimeters thick. The whole stone is pale yellow, with a slightly whitish tint. It is a piece of mountain stream wrapped in sugar.

Tiezi tried to hug it and estimated it to weigh forty or fifty pounds. It was quite impressive that Mengzi was able to throw it ashore. On one side of the rock, a palm-sized piece of milky white jade was exposed. It could be determined that this was a piece of jade, and of fairly high quality.

"Brother Tiezi, how is it?" Mengzi, who usually seemed a bit dull, was now flushed with excitement.

"As for this piece of material, let Mr. Zhuang take a look first. I'm afraid I won't be able to give a good opinion."

When Tiezi saw the jade, he had already guessed the answer pretty accurately. He was very happy, since the harvest was for everyone. However, he still wanted to test Zhuang Rui to see if he was truly skilled or just a figurehead.

Zhuang Rui asked casually, "Mengzi, how did you find this piece of material?"

The jade was right at Zhuang Rui's feet. He didn't refuse and squatted down to examine it. Judging from the exposed jade, it was a piece of white jade, and of high quality. Even this palm-sized piece of jade could sell for forty or fifty thousand yuan.

Chapter 268 The Mineral Vein (Part 3)

After hearing Zhuang Rui's words, Mengzi scratched his head somewhat embarrassedly and said, "I saw a fish in the river just now, so I thought I'd get a basket to scoop it up. But I lost my footing and fell in. When I fell, my eyes just happened to see this rock, so I pulled it out..."

Mengzi's words left everyone speechless, exchanging bewildered glances. They had searched for ages without finding a single piece of jade, no bigger than a thumb, while Mengzi, after falling into the river, had miraculously retrieved a piece of jade. His luck made everyone somewhat ashamed.

"Brother Zhuang, you still haven't said whether this is jade or not."

After Mengzi finished answering, he pressed Zhuang Rui for answers. He was an honest man with only brute strength and knew nothing about identifying jade. If he hadn't just happened to see the exposed jade, he probably wouldn't have known it was a piece of jade.

Mengzi was honest and straightforward. He followed Tiezi and the others into the mountains, knowing that he could only help carry some things and wouldn't be of much use. So when he found this piece of jade, he was extremely excited, feeling that he could finally make a contribution to the team.

"It's jade. Look at the color of this jade; it's pure white, the texture is clean and delicate, and it has a lustrous sheen. It can be considered a high-quality variety of Hetian jade. This palm-sized piece is worth at least forty or fifty thousand yuan..."

Zhuang Rui pointed to the exposed jade and explained it to Mengzi. He wasn't using his spiritual energy to see inside, but rather making his judgment based on the jade's external appearance.

"Ah! Really? That's great, Dazhi, Tiezi, we made money..."

Upon hearing Zhuang Rui's words, Mengzi jumped up like a child. In previous years, when he wanted to go into the mountains, there were always people who thought he was stubborn and were unwilling to take him along. So this was his first time going into the mountains, and finding such a piece of rough jade proved Mengzi's worth.

"Mr. Zhuang is right. This piece of jade is of good quality. Although the jade material is unlikely to penetrate very deep, just based on this one piece, our trip to the mountains was worthwhile..."

Tiezi smiled. An experienced person could tell the quality of a piece of jade at a glance. His judgment was similar to Zhuang Rui's. However, for pieces with a sugary skin, the jade meat is usually in the middle. Since the jade meat is on the surface of this piece, the material is probably not very big. It is estimated to be about the size of what we see here.

"It's not that the trip to the mountains was worthwhile, but rather that everyone made a small fortune. Based on my experience, the jade could penetrate at least another fifteen centimeters, and the jade surface would be twice the size of this piece."

As soon as Tiezi finished speaking, Zhuang Rui added that his so-called experience was the spiritual energy he had used in his eyes when Tiezi was speaking.

Through the spiritual energy, Zhuang Rui saw that the exposed jade extended four or five centimeters to the left and right, and penetrated more than ten centimeters downwards, making it a large piece of jade. However, this piece of jade did not have the effect of nourishing the spiritual energy in his eyes like that piece of mutton fat jade.

Based on the current market price of nephrite jade, this piece of white jade should be worth around one million. If one million is divided into five parts, it seems to be only a small fortune for Zhuang Rui.

"Brother Zhuang, how much money are you talking about, 'small fortune'?"

Mengzi scratched his head. He didn't really understand what Zhuang Rui was saying about the jade's characteristics, but he did know what the word "get rich" meant.

"Brother Zhuang, you...you...are you telling the truth?"

Tiezi interrupted Mengzi's question. He had been addressing Zhuang Rui as "Mr." but now he called him "brother." His dark face even glowed red, showing how excited he was.

Tiezi was not like Mengzi, that muddle-headed fellow. He had been in Xinjiang for almost twenty years and had been mining jade in the mountains for more than ten years. He was very knowledgeable about the price of jade materials. He knew that if Zhuang Rui was right, then this piece of jade could sell for an astronomical price.

What Zhuang Rui called "making a small fortune" was an astronomical sum in the eyes of Tiezi and the others. This was determined by their economic foundation. No wonder Tiezi was so excited. Even Zhang Dazhi and Wang Fei couldn't help but be overjoyed. Only Mengzi looked at Zhuang Rui with a dazed expression, waiting for his explanation.

"It should be right, Mengzi, bring that grinder over here."

Zhuang Rui nodded affirmatively. Before entering the mountains, he had specifically asked Grandpa Gu to find him a miniature polishing machine with a compressed battery. Zhang Dazhi and the others had some objections to him bringing this thing, but now it came in handy.

"Brother Zhuang, are you sure?"

Seeing that the grinding wheel on the polishing machine had started turning, Tiezi grabbed Zhuang Rui's arm. This time it wasn't that he didn't trust Zhuang Rui, but that this piece of jade was far too precious for them.

It's important to know that nephrite is much more fragile than jadeite. If you're not careful, you might damage the jade inside. As mentioned before, there's a story about jade and stone burning together. Tiezi and the others were afraid that Zhuang Rui would ruin this piece of material.

Jade miners place great importance on the integrity of jade materials. In ancient times, after finding a relatively large piece of jade in the mountains, in order to prevent the jade from being damaged, a

donkey had to be slaughtered, the jade wrapped in donkey skin, and tied with multiple ropes before being transported to the capital.

Because fresh donkey hide was used to wrap the jade, the bloodstains would seep into the cracks of the jade. Officials in the capital responsible for purchasing jade would consider any jade with bloodstains to be intact.

However, after this, many jade collectors often wrapped jade in the skin of slaughtered dogs or donkeys. Some even buried it in the ground for years to allow the blood to better penetrate it, which is the origin of the fake blood jade.

"Don't worry, it's definitely true. If the jade inside is damaged, I'll compensate everyone for whatever this piece of jade is worth."

Zhuang Rui smiled confidently. What a joke! He had cut open jadeite worth hundreds of millions of yuan, let alone such a small piece of jade. In his heart, Zhuang Rui really didn't take it seriously.

Tiezi felt a little embarrassed by Zhuang Rui's words, so he quickly let go of his hand and said somewhat awkwardly, "Alright, Brother Zhuang, go ahead. Don't worry about compensation, I trust you..."

The gears on the miniature polishing machine were too small to cut the jade in half, so Zhuang Rui polished away the sugary coating along the part where the jade was exposed. The area of white jade exposed on both sides was exactly as Zhuang Rui had described. Zhang Dazhi, Tiezi, and the others all showed joy on their faces.

After rubbing it horizontally, Zhuang Rui used a polishing machine to cut it deeper bit by bit. The piece of jade was not very big. After more than half an hour, a piece of white jade weighing more than ten kilograms appeared in front of everyone.

This piece of jade is square in shape, with roughly the same width at the top and bottom. The entire piece of jade has a refined inner luster, and even under sunlight, it still gives people a feeling of thick texture and warmth. If it weren't for the slight bluish tinge in color, it could almost be called a top-grade white jade.

"Brother Zhuang, I'm totally convinced..."

Seeing that Zhuang Rui had taken out the jade material so completely, and that the size, weight, and color of the jade material were exactly as Zhuang Rui had described, Tie Zi gave Zhuang Rui a thumbs up.

Although this jade can be unraveled even if it's taken back, carrying a piece of jade weighing ten or so pounds is completely different from carrying a piece of rough jade weighing forty or fifty pounds. This piece of jade can be carried by one person, but if it can't be unraveled, then two people will need to carry it.

"Mengzi, stop looking for jade. Put this piece of material in your backpack and just watch it here."

Zhang Dazhi's voice trembled slightly with excitement. This piece of jade, if taken back and sold, would bring each person at least 200,000 yuan, something they had never imagined before.

"Um!"

Mengzi nodded heavily, took out a blanket, wrapped the jade material tightly several times, put it in his backpack, and hugged it tightly to his chest, unwilling to let go for even a moment.

Zhang Dazhi and the others stood up, ready to go look for Yu again, but Tiezi suddenly said to Zhuang Rui, "Brother Zhuang, don't go looking for Yu either, sit here and chat with Mengzi."

Zhang Dazhi and Wang Fei nodded in agreement. Zhuang Rui's role had already been proven, and his previous performance showed that he was indeed not very good at jade mining, which was why Tiezi suggested that Zhuang Rui take a break.

"Alright, if you see any stones you're unsure about, just call me."

Zhuang Rui thought for a moment and nodded in agreement. The reflection of the river was too strong during the day, so he couldn't use his spiritual energy to identify whether there was jade in the stones. It would be better to rest for a while and search slowly at night.

With the incident of Mengzi collecting jade, Tiezi and the others felt much more relaxed. This piece of jade could bring about a huge change in their future lives, so they no longer had the anxiety they had before coming. They happily sifted through the jade stones by the river, and Wang Fei even sang a few lines of Xinjiang folk songs from time to time.

However, the three of them were clearly not as lucky as Mengzi. After working for three or four hours, the baskets on their backs were still empty. Only Tiezi had a piece of green jade the size of a fist in his hand. The jade was of very ordinary quality and was worth at most a thousand or eight hundred yuan.

Zhang Dazhi and Wang Fei both had experience mining jade several times, so they were mentally prepared for this situation. With the jade that Mengzi had mined, they didn't show any signs of frustration. Wang Fei even showed off his shooting skills, shooting a wild goat. After skinning and cleaning it, they lit a campfire and enjoyed a delicious roasted whole goat.

Spending the night in this canyon, the campfire will never go out. After dinner, it will be completely dark. It is already the end of June. Although the night is beautiful, the crescent moon in the sky is like a thin hook, and the visibility in the canyon is not very high.

"Dazhi, what's going on here?"

Zhuang Rui picked up his basket and hiking stick, preparing to go to the riverbank, only to find that Zhang Dazhi and the others were also fully armed, looking like they were going to mine jade.

Seeing Zhuang Rui's strange expression, Zhang Dazhi said with a smile, "Brother Zhuang, jade stones have a faint glow when illuminated by moonlight at night. We're just trying our luck..."

In Xinjiang, many people go to mine jade before dawn or after dusk, a custom that has been passed down for thousands of years. As for whether anyone has managed to mine jade at night, that is unknown.

The group spread out over a hundred meters apart, none of them turning on their flashlights. By the moonlight, they stepped on the warm pebbles along the riverbank, their eyes fixed on the ground. However, they didn't know how many times this method had been used before. They walked for three or four kilometers without finding a single piece of jade.

Zhuang Rui was walking at the front. He spread the spiritual energy in his eyes, covering the area within his sight. Although he found a few pieces of jade that were shimmering with light, the quality of these pieces was too poor, and Zhuang Rui had no interest in picking them up.

"Brother Zhuang, let's call it a day and head back."

Jade mining is a very tedious task, and for Zhuang Rui, having a cheat device but no cheat materials makes it even more boring. After hearing Zhang Dazhi's shout, Zhuang Rui, on the way back, simply let his spiritual energy sink underground and look into the depths.

"Huh?"

Zhuang Rui's unintentional action immediately delighted him, because he discovered that a large rock on the ground was shimmering with seven-colored light, and the spiritual energy emanating from it indicated that the quality of the jade stone should be quite good.

Zhuang Rui was quite knowledgeable about jade, but he had never heard of seven-colored jade before. He walked over to the large rock, estimated its size, and felt he could move it. Without calling Zhang Dazhi and the others, he pushed the rock away with all his might.

The stone that appeared in front of Zhuang Rui was about the size of a football. Even without using his spiritual energy, it could be seen to glow faintly in the night. Zhuang Rui picked it up and found that there was a thin layer of colored skin on the outside of the stone. What Zhuang Rui found strange the most was that the colors of this skin were very mixed, just like the ones he had seen before, with all kinds of colors.

Zhang Dazhi was calling to Zhuang Rui again. Without looking closely, Zhuang Rui put the jade into the basket and continued walking forward. This time, having learned from experience, he would look several meters deeper into the ground when using his spiritual energy. Sure enough, he found several more pieces of jade that were not buried very deep, and their quality was quite good.

When Zhuang Rui returned to the campfire, there were thirteen more jade stones in the basket behind him, two of which were the size of footballs, and the basket was already full.

"Brother Zhuang, did you find all of this?"

When Zhuang Rui dumped a basket of jade on the ground, Tie Zi and the others were stunned. They had been busy for most of the day but hadn't been able to find a single piece of jade. They never expected that Zhuang Rui would find so much jade so quietly.

"Yes, I first found this jade under a rock, and then I specifically dug through rocks to look for more, and that's how I found so many. Take a look, everyone, the quality of this jade is quite good..."

Actually, there are far more than just these dozen or so jade stones underground. Some are buried too deep for Zhuang Rui to retrieve, and others are of poor quality, which Zhuang Rui is too lazy to pick up. These dozen or so stones are all of good quality. They are naturally not as good as Mengzi's stone, but together they are worth about 500,000 to 600,000 yuan.

"Oh dear, we're so stupid. Why didn't we think of digging through some rocks to look for it?" After hearing Zhuang Rui's words, Tiezi slapped himself on the head.

As a veteran jade miner, Tiezi knows that riverbeds like this at mountain passes have been eroded by mountains and rivers for thousands of years, with countless stones washed down from the mountains piled up underneath. The same is true for the riverbanks; the jade on the surface may have been picked up by others, but there might still be some good things left underneath.

"Dazhi, Wang Fei, let's go back..."

Having figured this out, Tiezi jumped up from the ground, grabbed the basket, and ran towards the riverbank, not wanting to waste a single moment. Zhang Dazhi and Wang Fei exchanged a glance, then stood up and followed behind Tiezi towards the riverbank.

Actually, all three of them felt a little embarrassed. There were five of them going into the mountains this time. Mengzi was a given; if they hadn't been carrying too many supplies, they definitely wouldn't have brought him along. Zhuang Rui was a jade appraisal expert but didn't know how to mine jade. However, these two laymen who were completely unfamiliar with jade mining had already mined jade worth nearly two million.

This made Tiezi, Zhang Dazhi, and others, who considered themselves veteran jade miners, feel somewhat ashamed. As a result, the three of them were the ones who got paid for doing no work.

Zhuang Rui saw through their thoughts but didn't say much. He wasn't too concerned about the hundred thousand or so. His purpose in going into the mountains was to experience the joy of jade mining, and he felt that everything he had seen and heard along the way was well worth it.

With nothing else to do, Zhuang Rui picked up the seven-colored jade stone that he hadn't examined closely earlier and began to observe it carefully. The outer skin of this jade was very thin, only a few millimeters thick, and the inside was all jade flesh.

The quality of the jade pieces was quite good, and the spiritual energy they contained was only slightly inferior to the mutton-fat white jade that Zhuang Rui had seen. However, the colors of these jade pieces varied, and they were intertwined, making it difficult to separate them.

However, this was the first piece of jade that Zhuang Rui had picked up himself. He wanted to keep it for himself and show it to Grandpa Gu so he could see what kind of ornament he could carve out. But since they had all gone to collect jade, Zhuang Rui had to wait for them to come back and discuss it before making a decision, since they had agreed beforehand that all the jade they collected would be divided equally.

Zhuang Rui glanced at Mengzi, who was fast asleep beside the campfire, but he was wide awake. Feeling a bit cold sitting on the ground, Zhuang Rui simply stood up and walked towards the entrance of the river.

The river, formed from the melting snow on the mountain, becomes extremely rapid as it rushes down the mountain, carving a trench seven or eight meters wide on both sides of the riverbed as if it had been cleaved by a sharp axe. As the stream flows down, it splashes up droplets of water mist like pearls.

Zhuang Rui stood at the mouth of the river, trying to find a few more pieces of jade with his spiritual energy, but to no avail.

Zhuang Rui was stunned when he glanced at the rock wall that resembled a gate guarding the mountain. He saw that, five or six meters deep in the rock wall, several huge jade stones were encased within rocks that looked like layers of magma.

"Jade Vein???"

A word came to Zhuang Rui's mind.

Chapter 269 Jade Vein

"Jade Vein?"

Zhuang Rui could hardly believe his eyes. He took a few quick steps forward, almost pressing his face against the rock wall, and focused all his spiritual energy into his eyes to look at it. Instantly, a large amount of spiritual energy surged into the rock wall.

The rock wall was peeled away layer by layer by spiritual energy, and the scene within ten meters in depth was fully revealed to Zhuang Rui. The jade stones encased in the magma-formed tremolite granite were clearly visible to Zhuang Rui.

At a depth of just ten meters, there are five jade stones as large as millstones, each weighing more than a ton. Moreover, by observing the tremolite rock, Zhuang Rui can determine that the rock extends inward, which means that this is indeed a jade vein.

The existence of jade veins in the Kunlun Mountains has been proven thousands of years ago. In the Kunlun Mountains near Hotan, there are hundreds of jade mines of varying sizes, and these mines are all located within jade veins.

However, even the Jade King wouldn't dare to definitively say the pattern of jade vein distribution. He could only make a rough judgment based on on-site surveys and the jade found in the surrounding area.

The jade veins in the Kunlun Mountains are completely unpredictable. Some extend hundreds of meters deep into the rocks, while others are just above ground and can be found by digging down three to five meters. This has led to the creation of many wealthy jade miners. For example, the mining site in Yeniu Gully was discovered by a man from Zhejiang by chance in a shallow rock face halfway up the mountain.

The rock wall that Zhuang Rui is seeing now is also where the jade vein is located, and it is in a better position and much easier to mine. Jade veins located on mountains are very difficult to mine because it is very troublesome to bring machinery up the mountain. Every year, many jade miners lose their lives in the mine.

Zhuang Rui could only see within ten meters of the rock face, but within that ten meters, there were already five or six tons of jade. Judging from this, this jade vein must be a large mine; a conservative estimate would be over a hundred tons.

Judging from the quality of the jade, it is slightly inferior to white jade, and it is also the mainstay of the nephrite jewelry market. In recent years, carved ornaments made of greenish-white jade have become very popular, and many people have bought them to collect at home.

It's important to know that the price of nephrite is also rising steadily. Although it's not as outrageous as jadeite, its total sales volume is huge, and it definitely occupies the leading position in the jade market. A hundred tons of jade mine means billions of dollars, and this temptation is hard for Zhuang Rui to resist.

"what to do?"

Zhuang Rui felt somewhat apprehensive. The initial excitement of discovering the jade vein had gradually faded, and he was starting to feel at a loss. He was absolutely unwilling to give up this jade vein. With the wave of jade mining in Kunlun rising higher and higher, this jade vein would be discovered by someone else sooner or later. If he didn't mine it, it would just benefit someone else for nothing.

However, given Zhuang Rui's current situation, it would be very difficult for him to mine this jade mine independently.

In terms of funding, it's not a problem. The key issue is that he has no connections in Xinjiang. Once the news of this jade mine leaks out, many forces will likely get involved, and what Zhuang Rui might get in return is disaster, not money.

"Prince Jade!"

The name came to Zhuang Rui's mind. In fact, Zhuang Rui had thought of him a long time ago. However, it was not easy to make a decision on a matter involving billions of dollars. Even with Zhuang Rui's relatively calm personality, he hesitated for a long time before finally deciding to cooperate with Prince Yu.

Zhuang Rui was wise enough to know the saying, "You can make money but not live to enjoy it." If he were to mine independently, he probably wouldn't be able to handle all the major and minor forces in Xinjiang. But by cooperating with the Jade King, these things would be no problem. The Jade King himself was the largest force in the Xinjiang jade industry.

Zhuang Rui squatted down by the riverbank, splashed his face with the cool stream water, shook his head vigorously, glanced longingly at the rock wall, and turned back towards the campfire. Now, he needed to consider how to cooperate with the Jade Prince and find an excuse to claim he had discovered the jade vein.

The cooperation method is easy to discuss. Since Zhuang Rui has already decided to share half of the profits, I suppose the Jade King will reciprocate. At that time, everyone will contribute half of the funds and the profits from the mined jade will also be split equally. However, it will be difficult to find an excuse. You can't just say that you can see through the rock wall and discover the jade vein, can you?

"Brother Zhuang, where did you go? We were just about to look for you..."

A voice interrupted Zhuang Rui's thoughts. Looking up, Zhuang Rui realized that Zhang Dazhi and the others who had gone to Caiyu had already returned. Looking at the time on his watch, Zhuang Rui was startled. He had unknowingly been there for almost two hours.

"It's nothing, I just couldn't sleep, so I went upstream a bit. How was your haul?"

Zhuang Rui changed the subject. He certainly wouldn't tell these people about the jade vein. With their abilities, they couldn't guarantee that the jade vein would belong to them. Instead, they would leak the information. Besides, they were all going into the mountains to mine jade, not to search for other minerals. It was understandable that Zhuang Rui wouldn't tell them.

"Hey, Brother Zhuang, your idea really works. We also found some jade. Although the quality isn't great, we can still sell it for some money."

Upon hearing Zhuang Rui's words, Zhang Dazhi and the others became excited. They knocked over the baskets in front of them and poured out the jade inside. The three of them collected more than twenty pieces of jade of various sizes, some of which were still raw jade, revealing a warm luster under the glow of the campfire.

Zhuang Rui looked through them and couldn't help but smile bitterly. Of these twenty-odd pieces of jade, at least a dozen were ones he had previously looked down on and hadn't picked up. He never expected that they would still be picked up by the group and that they would have to go through the trouble of carrying them out of the mountain.

Zhuang Rui didn't even consider that although these dozen or so pieces of jade were of average quality, they could still sell for tens of thousands of yuan, which was equivalent to a year's income for Zhang Dazhi and the others.

"Wow, Brother Tiezi, you guys found so much jade again? I can't believe it, I'm going to go jade hunting again tomorrow..."

Zhang Dazhi's voice startled Mengzi, who was fast asleep. Rubbing his sleepy eyes, Mengzi's eyes widened when he saw the pile of jade on the ground. Little did he know that the value of this pile of jade was less than that of a small piece of jade he had picked up from the river.

"Mengzi, you just need to keep an eye on these jades tomorrow. This mission is very important. If they get lost or stolen, we'll have come all this way for nothing."

Zhang Dazhi half-jokingly told Mengzi that the value of these jade pieces was already over a million, and he really wouldn't feel at ease without a tall and strong guy like Mengzi guarding them.

"Don't worry, Brother Zhang, with me, Mengzi, here, no one can take our jade away." After hearing Zhang Dazhi's words, Mengzi pounded his chest loudly.

"Brother Zhuang, are you sleepy? If not, let's categorize the jade..."

Looking at the colorful jade stones, even Mengzi lost his sleepiness and gathered around the pile of jade stones.

"By the way, Brother Tiezi, look at this piece of jade, why are the colors so flashy?"

Zhuang Rui remembered the piece of jade that was of good quality but had a strange color. He squatted down, picked it out, and handed it to Tiezi.

"The color of this jade is quite nice, so the quality shouldn't be too bad. However, the color is a bit too mixed, making it difficult to coordinate during carving. If it can be well-coordinated, it will be a masterpiece; otherwise, it will be wasted..."

Tiezi, as expected of someone who has been playing with jade for over a decade, could immediately tell the quality of this piece of jade. People who play with jade in Xinjiang value mutton fat white jade the most, followed by white jade, and then top-quality black jade or high-quality monochrome jade. They don't really care about Zhuang Rui's jade with multiple colors.

"Is that so? Brother Tiezi, Dazhi, Wang Fei, how about this? I really like this piece of jade. I'll take it back and have someone carve it. But we agreed that we'd share the jade we find equally. I'll keep this piece, and you can divide the rest among yourselves. My share is considered everyone's."

Zhuang Rui pondered for a moment before saying the above words. In his heart, he still felt that he had taken advantage of the others. After all, the outer skin of this jade had not been removed, and Tie Zi did not know that the jade inside was of a higher quality than the white jade that Meng Zi had picked up.

Many people believe that mutton fat white jade is the best type of nephrite, but this is not the case. Some top-quality black jade and jasper are priced similarly to mutton fat white jade. The rarest and finest yellow jade, due to the homonym of "yellow jade" and "emperor" in Chinese, can be dozens of times more valuable than mutton fat white jade.

However, even if Tiezi and his friends knew that the jade was of good quality, they wouldn't care much. Their deeply ingrained belief was that white jade was the best, and that mixed-color jade was difficult to sell.

"No, Brother Zhuang, you can keep that jade, but you still have to give the gift money!"

"That's right, Dazhi is right. Brother Zhuang, since you like this jade, you can keep it. It doesn't need to be counted in the jade we jointly mined. However, you still have to take your share. Otherwise, we won't be able to explain to the Jade King when we go back, and we'll be criticized behind our backs."

Wang Fei and Mengzi nodded in agreement with Tiezi and Zhang Dazhi's words. Based on the jade stones on the ground, Mengzi was definitely number one in terms of contribution, as his jade stone alone was worth over a million. Next was Zhuang Rui, whose ten or so pieces of jade were worth about 500,000 to 600,000.

As for the jade that Tiezi and his group mined, its value was only tens of thousands of yuan. If they didn't give Zhuang Rui a share of the money just because he took a piece of jade that was insignificant, they would definitely be looked down upon by others when they got back, and probably no one would want to partner with them to mine jade again.

#### Chapter 270 Cooperation

"We'll talk about that later. Everyone, let's rest first. What I mean is, let's go to the river again tomorrow. If we don't find much, then we'll leave the mountains..."

Zhuang Rui had originally come into the mountains to observe jade mining, and now that he had achieved his goal and even discovered a jade vein, there was really no need for him to stay in the mountains any longer.

"Should we look for it some more and go back a few days later? The food we brought can last for another half month."

Zhang Dazhi hesitated. He had such a great harvest on his first day. He wondered if he could find some more high-quality jade. He had just discussed with Wang Fei that after selling the jade, they would go back to Sichuan together. Perhaps this was their last time mining jade.

Upon hearing Zhang Dazhi's words, Tiezi shook his head and said, "I agree with Brother Zhuang. Jade mining depends on chance. I've been into the mountains more than ten times and have only earned seventy or eighty thousand yuan. It's not that you can find jade just by staying in the mountains for a long time."

Tiezi was an old jade miner, and his words carried weight. Zhang Dazhi and Wang Fei thought about it and nodded in agreement. After all, the harvest this time was enough for them to go back to their hometown, build a big house, and get married.

Before dawn the next day, Tiezi, Zhang Dazhi, and the others got up and went to the river in the dark to look for jade. Zhuang Rui and Mengzi guarded the jade they found, gathered some dry branches, filled a container with river water, boiled it, and then soaked dried meat and flatbread in it to make breakfast.

Zhuang Rui wasn't very interested in jade mining. After breakfast, he wandered to the entrance of the river and frowned as he looked at the stream flowing down from the towering snow-capped mountains and the trenches that looked as if they had been carved by the hand of nature.

The jade vein has been discovered, but a proper explanation is needed. It's hidden within the mountain, not exposed in the open. The Jade King won't believe Zhuang Rui's empty words. (69SHUX.COM)

What is that?

Looking at the rushing stream in front of him, Zhuang Rui was suddenly attracted by a rock next to the mountain wall. It was a piece of granodiorite, the same as the rock that encased the jade in the rock wall.

However, there was no jade inside this rock formation. It is possible that jade miners had been there before, as the rock formation clearly showed signs of being excavated. After digging more than a meter deep, it is estimated that those people, after not finding any jade, assumed that this rock formation was washed down from the mountain and did not go in to explore the rock wall next to it.

It's important to understand that, apart from explosives, bringing equipment for opening up the mountain to this place is extremely difficult. This rock face has been eroded by mountain torrents over thousands of years, and the stream has forcibly split it in two. From the cross-section, you can see that it doesn't look like it contains jade, so no one dares to risk using explosives to blast open this mountain pass and river channel.

The formation of nephrite is caused by the contact between granodiorite and dolomite, resulting in a series of contact metamorphic rocks. The dolomite is transformed into dolomitic marble, and nephrite is

formed after late-stage hydrothermal fluids from the magma undergo metasomatism along the structural fissures of the dolomitic marble.

In other words, jade veins are often found where granodiorite or dolomite is present. The reason why the granodiorite next to that rock wall was excavated was for this reason. After seeing the excavation marks, the people who came to mine jade later paid less attention to this place.

“Go back and say that you judged that there was once magma flowing underground, forming a jade vein, based on that granite piece.”

Zhuang Rui found a reason for his discovery of the jade vein, although it was somewhat far-fetched. However, once the rock wall was dug open, he believed that others would only think that he had excellent eyesight and would not have any other thoughts.

Taking out his camera, Zhuang Rui photographed the terrain on both sides of the river and the quarried granite. These photos would be his proof to convince the Jade King when he returned. Even if the Jade King still didn't believe him, Zhuang Rui planned to fund the mining himself. After the jade was found, he would then discuss a partnership with the Jade King. However, in that case, Zhuang Rui's share wouldn't be 50/50.

Tiezi and the others assumed Zhuang Rui was a city dweller who came to the mountains for novelty, and they didn't pay much attention to his taking pictures everywhere. The day passed quickly, but their harvest was not very good. They only found three or five pieces of very poor-quality green jade, which even an old jade miner like Tiezi didn't think much of.

The group discussed it that night and decided to go down the mountain the next morning.

When we left the mountain, we took a different route that didn't require going around Death Valley, but it took half a day longer. By the time we got back to the transit station, it was already three days later.

The transfer station has two minibuses, which are used to transport jade miners from the mountains back to Hotan. However, just like private minibuses that pick up passengers in the city, they will not drive until they are full.

Zhuang Rui and the others grew impatient, so they simply negotiated a price with the car owner and hired a car to return to Hotan. Tiezi and the others had no objections, after all, they were carrying jade worth millions of yuan, and they could only feel at ease if they returned to their own territory as soon as possible.

After a bumpy five or six-hour journey, Zhuang Rui finally returned to Prince Yu's manor, a full week after he went into the mountains.

...

Adila looked at Zhuang Rui, who was unshaven, with messy hair and worn-out jeans, and asked with a serious expression, "Zhuang, this is no joke. Are you sure?"

Just as Adila and Gu Tianfeng were enjoying some wine that had just been made last year, Zhuang Rui rushed up to them and told them that he had discovered a jade vein.

Adila didn't take Zhuang Rui's words seriously. After all, Adila had traveled to almost every place in Kunlun where jade was found, and he didn't believe that Zhuang Rui could find a jade vein on his first trip into the mountains.

"Xiao Zhuang, this is no small matter. What makes you say it's a jade vein?"

Seeing Zhuang Rui's current disheveled appearance, Gu Lao handed him a glass of red wine.

"Senior Uncle, would I speak recklessly if I weren't sure? Look..."

Zhuang Rui took out his digital camera and pointed out the rock face he had photographed to the two of them.

"Hehe, you mean this place, Xiao Zhuang? That's not the jade vein, and that rock was washed down from the mountain..."

Upon seeing the photo, Adila's expression relaxed considerably, and he laughed dismissively. He had been to Yeniugou countless times and could immediately identify the location of the scenery in the photo. Indeed, a lot of jade had been found in that riverbed, but it was all mountain stream water and pebble material that had flowed down from the mountain, and there shouldn't be any jade veins there.

"Uncle Tian, I'm talking about here..." Zhuang Rui pointed to the rock wall in the camera.

"I suspect that the jade vein is located deep inside this rock wall, because the rocks at the river outlet are somewhat like dolomite, which means that before the crustal movement, this was where underground magma flowed, and there is a high possibility that a jade vein exists here."

Zhuang Rui's words made Adila's expression turn serious again. Although he had specifically investigated that river channel, he hadn't paid much attention to the river mouth. This was because the most conspicuous places are the easiest to overlook.

"That's possible. Jade veins have already appeared on Mount Maka, not far from here, and they're being mined right now. It makes sense that jade veins would form here, but..."

Adila frowned as she looked at the photos on the camera.

"Uncle Tian, what's wrong? We can drive in from the rock wall first and see the structure of the rock inside."

"Xiao Zhuang, it's summer now, which is the season for flash floods. Right now it's just a stream, but after a while, I'm afraid half of that canyon will become a riverbed, making it very difficult to excavate unless we dam the river at the foot of the mountain and blast open another outlet."

Adila was very familiar with the terrain there and knew the seasonal climate changes in the Kunlun Mountains like the back of his hand. Summers were rainy, and a single downpour could cause flash floods, making mining impossible.

Zhuang Rui thought Adila was afraid of spending money and effort and still not finding the jade vein, so he said, "Uncle Tian, let's blast open a river outlet. I'll pay for it."

Adila laughed when she saw Zhuang Rui's expression and said, "You're quite confident, kid. The preparations have cost a lot of money. Just the expenses for manpower and equipment alone amount to several million. Aren't you afraid of wasting your money?"

"He's a wealthy man, a few million is nothing to him. Brother Adila, do you think it's a good idea?" Old Master Gu laughed as well. He didn't have much experience in jade mining and dared not make any rash conclusions.

"It's hard to say, but we'll know once we dig out a tunnel about 20 or 30 meters long and look at the rock layers inside."

After answering the old man's question, Adila turned to Zhuang Rui and said, "Little guy, how about this? I won't take advantage of you. I'll provide the equipment, and you can provide the labor costs. Let's dig a tunnel here first and see. If there really is a jade vein, I'll handle the diversion and rerouting. We'll each contribute half of the investment, and each have a 50% share. What do you think?"

Zhuang Rui thought for a moment and said, "Okay, let's do it the way Uncle Tian said. But I won't be in charge of the sales after the jade is mined. Consider my shares as venture capital. Uncle Tian, you can just give me dividends every year."

Adila laughed loudly upon hearing this. If there was a jade vein, he was really afraid that Zhuang Rui, this young man, would interfere in the process. So he said, "Alright, let's do it this way. You go and rest. We'll go into the mountains first thing tomorrow morning."

Adila has been able to dominate the Xinjiang jade industry for decades, and he is a man of action. Once he made a decision, he immediately stood up and went to gather people to make preparations.