

Golden 40

Chapter Forty: Appraising Treasures (Part Five)

P.S.: Monday's the rankings day! Whether I'll be number one on the newcomer list or remain a perennial runner-up depends on you guys. Add to your favorites and recommend, and I'll give you whatever you want! If you're willing to see me, weighing over 200 pounds, rolling around on the floor begging for votes, I wouldn't mind doing that...

Zhuang Rui's attention was now focused on contemplating the spiritual energy in his eyes, so the rest of the process proceeded rather uneventfully. Song Jun and Boss Wang each picked an item to appraise, and judging from their expressions, they were quite confident in their appraisal skills. Manager Lü simply picked out an antique jade thumb ring in front of Boss Wang and commented on it briefly. However, all three tacitly avoided Zhuang Rui's Wang Shizhen manuscript

Therefore, today's treasure appraisal event will only involve Zhuang Rui's manuscript.

Manager Lü and the others exchanged glances. Song Jun first asked the waiter to remove the tea from the square table, and then said to Zhuang Rui, "Xiao Zhuang, open your manuscript. The three of us will look at it together. You know, Wang Shizhen's manuscripts are very rare. If your manuscript is genuine, it can fill a huge gap in the world of collecting. We will all benefit from it."

Zhuang Rui understood what Song Jun meant. In the world of collecting, reputation is crucial, and where does it come from? Naturally, it comes from having stumbled upon genuine, high-quality items at a bargain price, or having authenticated rare and unique pieces. For example, the renowned collector Ma Weidu once spent 5,000 RMB to buy a Qing Dynasty Qianlong period enamel snuff bottle in 1992. Not long after, he took it to Hong Kong for auction, where it sold for 60,000 HKD. Although the selling price wasn't very high, Mr. Ma Weidu's discerning eye made him famous in the domestic collecting world at the time.

Mr. Qi Gong, a renowned calligrapher and a leading figure in the world of collecting, is famous at home and abroad for his professional connoisseurship. He has personally appraised countless antiques. This is also the purpose of Song Jun and his group. Although the manuscript was acquired by Zhuang Rui, it would be a good story if they could authenticate it and spread the word.

Song Jun somehow found three pairs of white gloves and distributed them to the other two men, who put them on their hands to prevent their sweat from damaging the manuscript. Zhuang Rui, watching

from the side, broke out in a cold sweat. Although he was careful with the manuscript, he always handled it directly. Liu Chuan, on the other hand, had handled the manuscript so much on the day he bought it that he almost completely tore it apart. Zhuang Rui still felt a little scared when he thought about it now.

If the actions of the three men as they flipped through the manuscript could be described as cautious, then their expressions during the appraisal were as if they were walking on thin ice. The cover alone, which had the words "Xiangzu Notes" written on it, was examined by the three men over and over for more than ten minutes. Various types of magnifying glasses, as large as mirrors and as small as fingernails, were laid out on the table, which broadened the horizons of the few laymen next to them.

At first, the faces of Manager Lü and his companions showed only caution. However, once the pages were turned, their faces revealed deep sorrow and anguish. Zhuang Rui guessed that the damaged parts had clearly affected them. Following the change in their expressions, Zhuang Rui deduced that the manuscript was likely in the handwriting of Wang Shizhen.

An hour passed quickly. During this time, apart from Xu Wei, who looked somewhat displeased, the others were all focused on the authentication process of Manager Lü and the others. The three experts had been authenticating the manuscript for more than an hour, and its authenticity seemed to be on the verge of being revealed. At this point, even the slow-witted Liu Chuan realized that his friend seemed to have stumbled upon another great bargain.

During this process, Qin Xuanbing's gaze frequently fell on Zhuang Rui. She noticed that Zhuang Rui's expression remained unchanged, lacking the excitement she had expected. It was as if the manuscript examined by Manager Lü and the others was not his. The calm and composed demeanor he displayed was something Qin Xuanbing had only ever seen in her weathered grandfather.

Qin Xuanbing had no idea that Zhuang Rui had already guessed the answer before the mystery was revealed, so naturally he wouldn't show his joy.

The temperature in the private room was around 26 or 27 degrees Celsius, which is the most comfortable temperature for the human body. Manager Lü and his companions had sweat on their foreheads, but they dared not wipe it with their hands, for fear of getting the sweat onto the manuscript.

About ten minutes later, Grandpa Lü closed the manuscript, but the others' eyes remained fixed on it, unwilling to let it out of their sight.

The people nearby knew that the authentication work was finally completed. As for the authenticity of the manuscript, it seemed there was no need to ask any further questions; their expressions told them everything.

"Uncle Lü, is this tattered book really written by that Wang guy? How much is it worth?"

Seeing that no one was speaking, Liu Chuan felt a strong urge to break the silence in the room, so he carefully did so.

"A tattered book? Kid, you couldn't be worth a single page of this manuscript even if you sold yourself. Do you know this is a national treasure? Alas, it's a pity that the first half of the manuscript is so poorly preserved that many characters are illegible. Otherwise, the manuscript would be worth even more."

Upon hearing Liu Chuan's words, Manager Lü nearly lost his temper. He was full of complaints about Zhuang Rui, as if it was all Zhuang Rui's fault for not preserving the manuscript properly.

Just now, through their examination of the manuscript's font style, the age of the paper used, and the patina, they were able to basically confirm that the manuscript was an authentic work by Wang Shizhen from the early Qing Dynasty. Furthermore, the seals on the last ten or so pages of poems in the manuscript, including the bell-shaped seals, were all personal seals used by Wang Shizhen, further confirming that this manuscript was a genuine work by Wang Shizhen.

Originally, they wanted to find out Wang Shizhen's original intention in writing the manuscript by reading its contents. However, the handwriting on the first page of the manuscript had been damaged by insects and was severely eroded by sweat and water stains, making it completely illegible. This caused Manager Lü and the others great distress.

"Even national treasures have a price. What's the use of something you can't eat or wear?" Liu Chuan grumbled to himself, still unconvinced. He had absolutely no interest in national treasures. If he had lived before the liberation, he might have been one of the tomb robbers from the Eastern Tombs.

"Mr. Lü, it's almost one o'clock. Let's finish appraising and commenting on those items from earlier."

Seeing that the room was now filled with a halo of light surrounding Zhuang Rui, Xu Wei felt a pang of jealousy and couldn't help but speak up. In his opinion, Zhuang Rui's confident appraisal of the wooden Buddha statue and snuff bottle was most likely wrong, and it would be good to use this opportunity to strike a blow at him.

Song Jun seemed to see through Xu Wei's intentions, and with a strange smile on his face, he said, "There's no rush. I also want to ask Xiao Zhuang if he's willing to transfer this manuscript."

Zhuang Rui was stunned for a moment upon hearing this. To be honest, the biggest benefit of this manuscript to him was that it upgraded the spiritual energy in his eyes. As for the value of the manuscript itself, he did not care at the time, so he was prepared to lose money when he bought it.

However, after hearing what Manager Lü said, Zhuang Rui felt a little more hopeful. After all, he didn't come from a wealthy family, and his sister's family was even struggling financially. Zhuang Rui couldn't live as freely as Song Jun and others, collecting what he liked, selling his manuscripts, and earning more money to improve his mother's and sister's lives. That was his current goal.