

Golden 42

Chapter 42 Three Million Eight Hundred Thousand

For a moment, everyone's eyes were focused on Manager Lü. The others were also eager to know the market value of Wang Shizhen's "Fragrance Ancestor's Notebook," which the three of them had been calling a national treasure.

Qin Xuanbing and Lei Lei were driven by curiosity, while Xu Wei was naturally filled with jealousy, wishing he could burn the tattered book to the ground. Liu Chuan, on the other hand, hoped the book would be as expensive as possible, and he was happy to see his brother making money. As for Zhuang Rui, he was a little nervous. Although he had just said some nice things, no one would turn down money, and no one would think he had too much money, especially since Zhuang Rui was just a white-collar worker.

Manager Lü pondered for a while, then gently picked up the manuscript and looked through it. After a long while, he finally spoke: "This 'Xiangzu Notebook' by Wang Shizhen has a clear provenance and distinct inscriptions. It can be confirmed as an authentic work. Last year, at an auction in Hong Kong, a seven-page manuscript of Wang Shizhen's 'Preface to the Caigentang Poetry Collection' was sold for HK\$1.18 million."

"How much? One million one hundred and eighty thousand? It's wood. Is Hong Kong dollars more expensive or RMB? I've never used that stuff before..."

Before Old Master Lü could finish speaking, Liu Chuan interrupted him. He had worked hard for several years and had only saved a few hundred thousand yuan. If he hadn't heard it with his own ears, he would never have believed that the tattered book in front of him could be worth millions.

"You shut up, kid, go stand over there..."

Old Master Lü glared at Liu Chuan, annoyed, and continued, "Xiao Zhuang's manuscript differs slightly from previous editions of Wang Shizhen's *Xiangzu Notes*. I believe it will play a significant role in the study of Wang Shizhen's life and the social conditions of his time. Its value is undoubtedly greater than the manuscript of Wang Shizhen's *Preface to the Caigentang Poetry Collection* that was auctioned in Hong Kong."

Furthermore, the manuscript includes nine sheets containing twenty-one poems written by Wang Shizhen himself. More importantly, each poem bears Wang Shizhen's seal, making it extremely valuable. As a result, these poems could be auctioned off separately for a considerable price.

The market price of Wang Shizhen's manuscripts in China is slightly lower than in the international market. If you two insist on asking me to appraise it, I think it would be more appropriate to set the price between three million and three million eight hundred thousand.

Of course, if this manuscript were sent to an auction house and entered the auction process, the price might be over four million. However, after deducting some advertising costs and the auction house's commission, it wouldn't be much different from the price I mentioned. The old man is quite confident about this.

"Three million eight hundred thousand!!!"

Upon hearing this number from Grandpa Lü, Zhuang Rui's mind went blank. He didn't hear a word Grandpa Lü said afterward. You see, after graduating from university, Zhuang Rui worked diligently for almost two years and only earned a little over 3,000 yuan a month, which is about 30,000 yuan a year. What does 3.8 million yuan mean? It would take Zhuang Rui 120 years of hard work without eating or drinking.

Ever since he snagged this manuscript at Liu Chuan's shop, Zhuang Rui had maintained a good attitude. Initially, his bottom line was that he didn't mind losing some money, since the spiritual energy in his eyes had been replenished, which he considered a benefit. Later, after returning home and researching Wang Shizhen's life, Zhuang Rui's thinking changed. He figured that if the manuscript was indeed Wang Shizhen's handwriting, he shouldn't lose money, and might even make a small profit.

When Grandpa Lü mentioned the price of Wang Shizhen's manuscript at the Hong Kong auction, Zhuang Rui was also taken aback. However, he felt that his manuscript was quite damaged, and he would be satisfied if it could sell for three to five hundred thousand. In addition, with the 150,000 he got from selling Liu Hulu in Sanhe yesterday, he was not particularly excited. But when he suddenly heard Grandpa Lü's offer, Zhuang Rui was completely shocked and felt a little dazed.

"How about three million eight hundred thousand then? It's an auspicious number, Brother Zhuang. Let's draw up a transfer agreement, and I'll write you a check right away. What do you think?"

Song Jun's loud voice rang out. Most of his collection consisted of calligraphy and paintings, and he was very familiar with the market prices of such antiques. The price that Old Master Lü offered might be a bit low at an auction house, but that would have to cover some considerable advertising expenses and taxes. In a private transfer, 3.8 million was a reasonable price for both the buyer and seller, saving them a considerable amount of money.

Some might say, "Isn't this tax evasion?" But this kind of behavior is common in many industries, especially in the world of collecting. It's quite normal for collectors to exchange money with each other because people's awareness of taxation isn't high enough to justify reporting money from private transactions as taxes.

"Xiao Zhuang, Xiao Zhuang, what's wrong? You're not satisfied with the price?"

Seeing that Zhuang Rui remained silent and did not answer his question, Song Jun called out twice in a questioning tone.

Zhuang Rui was jolted awake by Song Jun's words and mumbled in a daze, "Satisfied, satisfied. I just didn't expect this manuscript to be so valuable. I'm wondering if I should keep it for myself."

"No, you can agree to let me have it now, brother. If you're not satisfied with the price, we can discuss it further..."

Upon hearing this, Song Jun became somewhat anxious. Was this a sure thing going to fall through?

"Hehe, no way, Brother Song. I was just thinking to myself. A person without integrity cannot stand. I never go back on my promises."

Zhuang Rui did have that idea in his mind, but it was just a thought. Compared to the future appreciation of the manuscript, Zhuang Rui felt more at ease keeping the 3.8 million in his pocket. As for raising the price, he didn't consider it at all. When he worked at the pawnshop, he had a lot of contact with auction houses and knew that even if the manuscript was auctioned for 5 million, after deducting the auction house's 15% commission and taxes and other miscellaneous expenses, he might not even get 3.8 million.

"You little brat, don't scare me like that, I have a heart condition."

Upon hearing this, Song Jun breathed a sigh of relief. While joking with Zhuang Rui, he waved over a waitress and asked her to call over a man who looked like a manager. He briefly explained the amount for the transfer of the manuscript and some points to note, and then asked the man to process the transfer agreement.

Within ten minutes, the manager returned to the private room with two printed transfer agreements in his hand. He handed them to Song Jun, who glanced at them briefly and then passed them to Zhuang Rui.

Three to five million was nothing to Song Jun. The reason he drafted such a transfer agreement was simply due to his business habits. This way, he could avoid some trouble in the future. If he hadn't brought it up, Zhuang Rui would never have thought of signing such a document.

Zhuang Rui dared not be as casual as Song Jun. He took the agreement and read it carefully. In fact, the agreement was very simple. It was just a piece of paper. After the items to be transferred and the amount were handwritten, both parties signed it, and that was it. Moreover, with antiques, if an agreement was signed, it meant that the items had been appraised by the buyer. The seller did not need to provide any appraisal certificate. Once the purchase was finalized, the buyer was not allowed to seek recourse later.

Some people go to antique shops to buy antiques, and if they buy antiques with certificates of authenticity, they might find out they've been cheated after taking them home. In such cases, they could ruin the reputation of the antique shop. Therefore, the so-called Kangxi toothpicks or Qianlong toilets sold in antique shops will not be accompanied by certificates of authenticity. This is why most of the items displayed in antique shops are fakes, and the real transactions are conducted privately.