

## Golden 471

### Chapter 471 Bidding Opening (Part 1)

"Brother Hu, please don't make fun of me. I just got lucky. I have no experience in mining..."

Zhuang Rui smiled. He knew his own situation; the jade mine in Xinjiang was discovered purely by luck.

To be honest, this really depends on luck. Otherwise, the mineral vein in Yeniugou is not buried very deep, but for thousands of years, no one would have thought that there was a mineral vein hidden at the mouth of the river.

"Hehe, you don't need to be modest. The Jade King of China speaks highly of you. Maybe if you take a look at my new mine, you can actually find some problems..."

Although Hu Rong is a jade tycoon in Myanmar, he is also a jewelry designer who has a lot of experience with nephrite and is very familiar with Mr. Adila from Xinjiang. A few days ago, after hearing Zhuang Rui say that he had a jade vein in Xinjiang, Hu Rong inquired about Zhuang Rui from Mr. Adila. Hu Rong did not expect that Zhuang Rui, who was about to become related to him, not only had a strong background in the mainland, but also had extraordinary talent.

"Oh? Brother Hu, what's going on with your new mine?"

Zhuang Rui was a little curious. The Myanmar Ministry of Mines now has very strict restrictions on the application and mining of jade mines. You could say that if you can get the application approved, it's like owning a gold mine. But judging from Hu Rong's appearance, he didn't seem very satisfied with his new mine.

"Don't even mention it. I've already spent nearly 10 million euros on initial exploration, but after mining, the rough stones we've found aren't good, and the yield is very low. It's highly likely to be a dead vein..."

The abandoned mine that Hu Rong was referring to was a vein where jadeite had already begun to form, but due to crustal movement, the environment in which the jadeite was formed changed. The jadeite that was about to form jadeite underwent a transformation. Such a vein might contain a very small

number of jadeite pieces that have completed the transformation, but most of the pieces are just rocks, at most with some color on them.

This kind of jade can't really be called jadeite; it's more of a type of Burmese jade. Its price is worlds apart from that of jadeite. If Hu Rong's new mine is indeed a waste mine, then the loss will be huge.

"Hehe, let's re-examine it. Maybe we didn't choose the right location. Don't worry, Brother Hu..."

Zhuang Rui didn't really know much about this, so he could only comfort Hu Rong by saying that he wasn't very interested in jade mines. The only reason he agreed to go to the Myitkyina region was for that treasure map.

Although the open and sealed bids for this Myanmar jade auction have all ended, the even more nerve-racking and breathless sealed bid opening officially begins today. Compared to the bidding process, the moment of the bid opening is a greater test of one's heart strength.

In previous years, at the Myanmar jade auctions, some people have fainted and died while selecting rough jade under the scorching sun, while others have suffered cerebral hemorrhages due to excessive excitement during the bidding process and could not be saved. These real-life examples show that without a strong heart, it is best to be careful when gambling on jade.

The bidding process was over, but everyone still got up early in the morning and rushed to the Myanmar Jade Exchange Center. At this time, the original rough jade area had been completely sealed off, with guards stationed every three steps and sentries every five steps. Even the staff of the jade exchange center had to be checked by the soldiers several times before they could enter.

The original open bidding site has now been transformed into a sealed bidding site. The hall has been renovated overnight. All the partitions that separated the hall have been removed. Although the chairs are still there, the bidding devices on them have been taken away. The ten auction rooms have been transformed into a spacious auditorium that can accommodate about two thousand people.

However, the ten huge electronic screens are still preserved on the four walls. Merchants participating in this Myanmar jade auction do not need to crowd to the front to see whether their bids for rough stones have been successful. At nine o'clock in the morning, the numbers of the lots to be drawn that day, as well as the winning bids and the winning bidders' numbers, will be displayed on the big screens.

"Xiao Rui, how are you? Are you nervous?"

It was just past eight o'clock, and the bidding site was already packed with people. Although the bidding was over, the results were not yet in, and no one could truly relax. Their mood was like that of students waiting for their final exam results after the college entrance examination.

"It's alright, Uncle Qin. The bids I submitted all had poor external performance, so there won't be many competitors..."

Zhuang Rui smiled, feeling a little smug. If anyone had to say who had the biggest win at this Myanmar jade auction, it would definitely be him. Including the money Qin Haoran spent on the two pieces of red jade, Zhuang Rui had invested nearly 400 million RMB in total. It seemed like a lot, but if he stockpiled those raw materials for a few years before selling them, Zhuang Rui was confident that he could increase their value to around 3 billion RMB.

Many friends may not understand why you would sell your own jewelry store if you already own one. In fact, for a company like Zhuang Rui's Beijing Qin Ruilin, the annual sales of jadeite jewelry are only around 30 million yuan, accounting for 30% of the total jewelry sales. The amount of jadeite raw materials used is not large.

Moreover, the sale of jade jewelry has a cycle. It's not like you can carve the raw material into jewelry, put it in the store, and sell it immediately. Especially for top-quality jade, the price is sky-high and not something that ordinary people can afford. But once it is sold, the profit is quite considerable. It's a bit like the principle that an antique shop may not make any business for three years, but when it does, it can live off the profits for three years.

Furthermore, objects carved from top-quality jadeite must maintain their uniqueness, as rarity increases value, and only then can they fetch astronomical prices. Otherwise, if a dozen or so pieces were produced at once, they would only sell for a pittance. Therefore, Zhuang Rui did not intend to cut all of this batch of jadeite into ornaments.

Those twenty pieces of raw jade, if you take any one of them and cut it open, would be enough for Qin Ruilin to use for a year and a half. If it were glass-type jade, the finished products would only need to be displayed and sold in three to five pieces at most each year. This would not only ensure Qin Ruilin's reputation for high-end jewelry, but also maximize the price of the jewelry.

The reason Zhuang Rui bought so many pieces of jadeite in one go was that he wanted to invest in and hoard jadeite. Note that these are jadeite pieces, not raw stones. Unlike those raw stone dealers, even if Zhuang Rui sells them later, he will extract the jadeite inside and sell it, not sell it at the price of a raw stone.

"It's time, it's starting, it's about to begin..."

Just as Zhuang Rui and his group were chatting, it was already nine o'clock in the morning. Those who had been sitting in chairs with their eyes closed and resting all stood up and rushed towards the various display screens. Their faces showed a variety of expressions of tension and excitement. After all, before the bidding was opened, no one dared to say that they could win the bid with certainty. Of course, Zhuang was an exception.

"The 2005 Yangon Jade Auction sealed bid opening is about to begin. Please note that if you are the successful bidder, please bring your identification documents to the window to sign the 'Winning Bid Contract.' Please take note..."

With one minute left before the bid opening, the hall echoed with announcements from the organizing committee staff about the successful bidders, but few people paid any attention to them; their eyes were fixed on the large screens.

Suddenly, the large screen lit up, and a string of numbers appeared on it: "Lot No. 3469, winning bid: 390,000 euros, winning bid number: xxxxxx". This string of red numbers was extremely eye-catching on the black background of the large screen. After about five seconds, it scrolled up one page, and then another set of winning bid numbers appeared below.

"Why isn't it lot number one?"

Zhuang Rui was stunned for a moment. He originally thought that the sealed bids would start from bid number 1 and proceed in order, but who knew that the first bid to appear was actually 3469, and there was no pattern to the bidding.

"Hehe, that's how the Myanmar jade auction works. The staff inputs the final bids into the computer, and the computer randomly assigns them, not according to the order of the bid numbers. However, only

about 20,000 bids can be drawn each day. In other words, if the bid number of the rough stone you like is within 20,000, you'll have to stay here all day. It might be drawn at any time..."

Qin Haoran had participated in many Myanmar jade auctions and was very familiar with the bidding process. Seeing Zhuang Rui's astonished expression, he explained it to him.

With 20,000 bids issued every day, the workload is enormous. All the staff of the Myanmar organizing committee are working through the night to issue bids. Even now, thousands of staff members of the organizing committee are still busy in the raw material area. However, after so many years of holding the auction, they are all very experienced. Although busy, they are not chaotic, and the bidding process is carried out in an orderly manner.

"So you're going to have to stay here all day?"

Zhuang Rui was somewhat frustrated. Although the auditorium was quite large, it was crowded with thousands of people, some smoking and others laughing, making the smell rather unpleasant. However, the yellow jade he had bid on was also within the range of 20,000. Although he already knew he would win the bid, he still felt uneasy until he saw it with his own eyes.

"No need. If you feel bored, you can go out for a walk, or go back to the hotel..."

After hearing Qin Haoran's words, Zhuang Rui realized that before the sealed bid was opened, it was not allowed to check whether he had won the bid. However, after the daily bid was opened, he could take his admission pass and passport to the window to check whether his bid for the raw materials had been won. It didn't matter whether he waited here or not.

However, after more than 10 days of tension, I believe no one would want to give up the chance to know the bid price as soon as possible. Even if the air quality were just a little poor now, or even if the bidding site were next to a cesspool, I doubt anyone would want to leave.

Chapter 472 Bidding Opening (Part Two)

"I won! I won! Haha, I won the very first one..."

Suddenly, a near-mad voice rang out in the hall, carrying a hysterical quality. Even in this vast space of several thousand square meters, it was clearly audible, not much quieter than the sound from a loudspeaker.

That guy was not only shouting, but also running. He was originally at the very front, but now he broke through the crowd and was sprinting towards the entrance where the "winning bid contract" was processed.

"Has this guy gone mad?"

Zhuang Rui watched him gesticulate wildly, and he really resembled Fan Jin, the character from the novel who passed the imperial examination. However, Fan Jin was a real scholar who passed the examination, while you, even if you won the bid for this rough stone, whether you can extract jade is another matter. Why are you so excited?

This man was not only overly excited, but also a bit slow to react. It wasn't until thirty or forty pieces of raw material had already been offered that he realized he had won the bid. It was a bit like hearing a joke at night and then laughing out loud the next morning.

"You've been holding back for over ten days. If you were in my shoes, you'd be happy to win the bid too. Don't make sarcastic remarks..."

Fatty Ma gave Zhuang Rui a dissatisfied look, expressing the sentiments of everyone present. Zhuang Rui thought about it and realized it made sense. After more than ten days of wits and courage in analyzing the raw materials and setting prices, everyone was almost driven crazy, so it was normal to be excited right now.

Furthermore, regardless of whether jadeite can be found in the rough stone, you can only have the stone cut after winning the bid. If you don't win the bid, you don't even have that opportunity.

Surprisingly, after this incident, the atmosphere in the room eased up. Everyone here is a person of status in China, so they adjusted their mindset quickly and started chatting and laughing while observing the bidding process.

The numbers on the large screen flashed rapidly, with a bid being drawn approximately every three seconds. However, the screen could only hold about twenty lines at a time, so if you weren't careful, the previously drawn bids would be overwritten. Therefore, everyone in the bidding area was completely focused on the screen, afraid of missing their bid.

In fact, there are more than a dozen touch screen query machines placed in various corners of the hall. By entering the number of the raw material, you can find out whether the raw material has been auctioned, the winning bid amount, and the winning bid number. However, there are too few of these machines, and there are not enough people to use them. Most people still stand up and look at the big screen.

Although there are inquiry machines and you can check at the window after the bidding is opened, everyone wants to know whether they have won the bid as soon as possible. Even Zhuang Rui, who was confident, was unwilling to leave. Before signing the "Winning Bid Contract", the raw materials could not be said to belong to him.

However, the winning bid numbers were being refreshed too quickly. After watching for a while, Zhuang Rui felt a little dizzy. Although he studied finance, he hadn't been able to memorize all twenty-odd bid numbers. After a while, Zhuang Rui relaxed a bit and stopped staring at the big screen all the time.

Cheers erupted intermittently at the scene, followed by people emerging from the crowd to process their contracts at the window. Bystanders looked at them with envy, and those who knew them offered their congratulations, as if they had already won big.

Compared to Zhuang Rui's somewhat nonchalant attitude, Peng Fei held a notebook in his hand, his eyes fixed on the big screen, his gaze constantly shifting between the notebook and the screen. When he saw a number and the numbers following it, Peng Fei suddenly grabbed Zhuang Rui's shoulder and shouted, "Brother Zhuang, we won! We won too..."

"You won the bid? What number?"

Zhuang Rui became excited upon hearing this. He knew that the number of that piece of yellow jadeite was within 20,000. Although there were two other pieces, Zhuang Rui was clearly focusing more on the yellow jadeite.

"185,000 euros? I've never bid at that price before..."

Zhuang Rui looked at the number Peng Fei pointed to and couldn't help but feel puzzled. The rough stones he had bid were mostly priced at over 300,000 euros, and it seemed that none of them were this cheap.

"Brother Zhuang, you wrote it in your notebook, the number and price are correct, it can't be you, right?"

Hearing Zhuang Rui say this, Peng Fei took out his notebook, compared the numbers again, nodded firmly, and said, "That's right, it's this one, but I don't think I submitted this bid, I don't remember..."

"185,000, damn, it really was me who bet..."

Zhuang Rui slapped his forehead, his expression somewhat dejected. The people around him looked at him strangely. "Keep pretending. Everyone else who wins the bid is happy, but you're just putting on an act, like you've lost out."

Zhuang Rui suddenly remembered this rough stone. He first saw it in the area where the sealed and open bids were combined when he was looking at the sealed bids. The starting price for that bid was 30,000 euros, and Zhuang Rui initially bid 31,000 euros.

Later, when he happened to pass by there, he saw that the highest number on the betting slips had become 180,000. Feeling indignant, he filled in a bet of 185,000 and threw it in.

Zhuang Rui was truly feeling cheated. He knew that this piece wasn't included in the twenty rough stones he had invested in. Although it was also icy jadeite, its value was only between three and four million RMB, which was incomparable to his other stones.

"Damn it, it's located so far back, but it opens so early..."

Zhuang Rui was slightly annoyed. This piece of material was placed at the very end. However, Zhuang Rui also knew that the sealed-bid rough material area was different from the open-bid area. Many of the materials were arranged with their numbers mixed up.

What if we don't have enough money?

Zhuang Rui looked up at Qin Haoran. Could he possibly borrow from his father-in-law? You see, if all 20 rough stones he had chosen were to be auctioned off, he would only have a maximum of 40,000 euros left, which wouldn't be enough to pay for the stones.

At the Myanmar jade auction, apart from the fact that you can take away the rough stone after paying on the spot, or have it cut on the spot, all other entrusted shipping can only be done after the auction ends. If Zhuang Rui evades bidding on this rough stone, then he will not be able to take away the other rough stones he entrusted for shipping.

Of course, Zhuang Rui could also pay for the remaining raw materials and ship them out of the country, but then his status in Myanmar would change from VIP to being blacklisted by the authorities.

"What's wrong, Xiao Rui? Did you two collude on the same issue?"

Seeing Zhuang Rui's expression, Qin Haoran asked from the side, "What he meant by 'bidding against each other' refers to rough stones that are uncertain to be bid on, which are optional. But such stones are generally not very expensive. Is there any need for this expression?"

"It's alright, Uncle Qin..."

Zhuang Rui verbally agreed, but unlike others, he didn't go through the process of obtaining the "Winning Bid Contract." After all, there was a three-month deadline. He could return to China and then raise the 180,000 euros to transfer to the Myanmar organizing committee's account, which would be just as easy.

The bidding for the Myanmar sealed bid started at 9:00 AM and lasted until 6:00 PM. Around noon, Zhuang Rui had not won any of the other three bids besides the one he had won. However, Song Jun and Qin Haoran each won three bids.

"Let's go eat. We can check it on there when we get back after we eat..."

Qin Haoran won three pieces of jadeite. Although Zhuang Rui wrote them down for him, he was still very happy. Just like the principle mentioned before, you can only get jadeite if you have rough stones. Without rough stones, you don't even have the chance to cut the stones.

"Hey, Lao Qian, want to go eat? What's the point of eating? There are people cutting stones at the entrance. Let's hurry up and take a look; maybe we can buy a good piece..."

"Really? Come on, let's go take a look..."

As Zhuang Rui and the others walked out of the auction hall, they overheard this conversation and couldn't help but feel a little strange. They looked at Qin Haoran and asked, "Uncle Qin, aren't people supposed to take the raw stones they win back home to cut them open? Why are you in such a hurry?"

"Hehe, those people aren't jewelry merchants or raw material merchants. They came here to cut stones..." Qin Haoran laughed upon hearing this and explained to Zhuang Rui.

People who come to Myanmar to gamble on jade can basically be divided into three categories. The first category is people from various jewelry companies who come to purchase jade raw materials. In addition to people from China and Southeast Asia, there are also buyers from Europe and all over the world. Although jade is not very popular abroad, it is still a type of gemstone and has a specific consumer group.

The second type of people are mostly from China. They don't cut the stones themselves, but bring the rough stones they bought in Myanmar back to China. They either hoard them or select some to participate in domestic jade auctions. To put it nicely, they are rough stone merchants; to put it another way, they are middlemen.

Most of these people are from Chaoshan, but many people in mainland China are also imitating the Chaoshan people's method of pooling funds to gamble on stones and joining the stone gambling army. Some financial groups are also interested in investing in raw stones, and funds are gradually tilting towards this circle.

Besides these two types of people, there is another type of person who comes to participate in the Myanmar jade auction purely for gambling on jade. Their goal is to win big with a small investment and sell the high-value jade on the spot. This type of person is of mixed quality. There are billionaires like Fatty Ma who are looking for thrills, and there are also those who have already gambled away their fortunes and are now trying to recoup their losses by incurring huge debts.

The most notable characteristic of these people is that after winning the bid, they basically have the stones cut on-site in Myanmar. If the gamble pays off, they sell them on the spot. After all, jewelry merchants from all over the world gather here, so they are not afraid of not getting a good price.

If the gamble goes wrong, it's anyone's guess whether those who borrowed money to gamble on stones will hang themselves, slit their throats, or take sleeping pills and jump off buildings.

#### Chapter 473 Bidding Opening (Part 3)

The saying circulating in China, "one cut to heaven, one cut to hell," refers to the cutting of stones at the Myanmar jade auction. Every year, the opening of the Myanmar jade auction is a grand event for gambling on stones. It can be said that the real gambling on stones has only just begun.

At this jade auction, although the jewelry companies were also eyeing the rough stones, they also had spare money to buy ready-cut jade. This way, they could avoid the risks of gambling on rough stones and obtain the raw materials needed by their companies. The attitude of these jewelry companies made those who wanted to get rich overnight even more frantically invest in gambling on rough stones.

Besides Qin Haoran obtaining Zhuang Rui's bids and essentially betting everything on the sealed bid, many jewelry companies had people watching the stone-cutting area. The organizing committee also had people there to handle the customs clearance procedures for the ready-cut rough stones, of course, only for the rough stones auctioned at the public auction.

"Xiao Rui, after lunch, I'm also going to cut a piece of jade. Do you want to come and watch?" Qin Haoran's words surprised Zhuang Rui. Why would he need to cut a piece of jade out of the blue? He should just cut one himself.

Qin Haoran was actually unsure of himself. Although he had won quite a few bids for rough stones, including three in just one morning, it was hard to say whether any of them would yield jadeite. Qin

Haoran wanted to cut one open to see if it turned out well. If it didn't perform well, he would still prefer to follow the usual practice and purchase some mid-range jadeite cut on-site. Although it would be much more expensive than the rough stones, it would still be better than the company having no material to carve jewelry.

"etc....."

Zhuang Rui suddenly had a flash of inspiration and stopped in his tracks. That's right, he didn't have enough money. He might as well cut open that rough jade stone, which was worth about 300,000 euros, and sell it on the spot. Anyway, he didn't need that little bit of icy jade. Selling it to tide him over wouldn't be a big deal.

"What's wrong?"

Seeing that they had stopped, Qin Haoran asked curiously.

"It's alright, I'm not hungry, Uncle Qin. You all go ahead and eat. I'll retrieve the stone I won the bid for and have it cut later..."

Zhuang Rui genuinely had no appetite. The auction hall had been a chaotic mess that morning, so he simply waved to Qin Haoran and the others, then turned and headed straight for the auction window he'd just passed.

"This child, he's already asking for stone removal after only one piece..."

Qin Haoran shook his head and went to the organizing committee's canteen for lunch with Fang Yi and the others.

The organizing committee opened twenty windows to process the winning bidders' procedures, but they were still quite busy. After deducting the unsuccessful bids, there were still several thousand rough stones won that morning. Although people like Qin Haoran were not in a hurry to process the winning bids, there were still long queues in front of each window.

The people here were clearly much more relaxed than those anxiously waiting in the lobby, with many acquaintances chatting together.

"Mr. Zhuang, you won the bid too?"

As soon as Zhuang Rui walked over, someone greeted him. Upon closer inspection, it was Fatty Han from Han's Jewelry. He had probably just arrived as well, his chubby face covered in sweat after coming out of the air-conditioned room.

Zhuang Rui's heart skipped a beat, and he said, "I just got a worthless piece. I'll cut it out and take a look. I'm a bit short on cash. If it turns out to be green, I'll sell it..."

At the Myanmar jade auction, Zhuang Rui's financial difficulties were not unique. Apart from a few people with ulterior motives, almost everyone had put all their funds into bidding for the sealed bids. So Zhuang Rui wasn't afraid of others knowing and openly stated it. His purpose was to attract more people to compete for his rough stone when it was cut later.

"Oh? Mr. Zhuang wants to have the stone cut and sold? Don't you also own a jewelry store?"

Han Haowei's eyes lit up when he heard Zhuang Rui's words. Apart from the rough stone that Xu Zhendong bought, Fatty Han had never seen Zhuang Rui fail at cutting stones.

Han Haowei still had some doubts. Selling cut stones for money was something only professional stone gamblers did; people who owned jewelry stores wouldn't be willing to sell jadeite, since their purpose in coming here was to obtain raw jadeite.

Zhuang Rui gave a wry smile and said, "There's nothing I can do. I've run into some trouble lately and I'm short on cash. I'll have to make do for now. I still have a piece of red jadeite, don't I..."

When Han Haowei heard Zhuang Rui's words, he felt relieved. Although everyone's business is quite large, with hundreds of millions or even millions of yuan in cash flow, sometimes when they are short of money, they may not even be able to come up with tens of thousands of yuan. When Han Fatty's company was at its most difficult, he had to mortgage his car, house and company to the bank to get a loan to pay his employees' salaries.

Zhuang Rui had already won a bet on a piece of red jadeite and firmly rejected their offer, presumably keeping it for himself. Now that he has won a bet on a rough stone, it is only natural for him to cut open one or two pieces to recoup his funds.

"Alright, then I wish Boss Zhuang a great profit from cutting stones. We'll all go and support him later..."

The people around Han Haowei all knew that Zhuang Rui had a particularly keen eye for rough stones and might just unearth some good material, so they all chimed in with agreement.

Because the bidding process requires signing a "Bidding Contract," and if the organizing committee is needed to assist with free shipping, a detailed address must be provided and shipping procedures must be completed.

So even though there were only four or five hundred people queuing at those twenty-odd windows, Zhuang Rui still waited for more than an hour before it was his turn. Behind him, a long queue formed, and many people had just finished their procedures, only to find out they had been selected again and had come back to queue up a second time.

"Hehe, Xiao Rui, is it done yet?"

Zhuang Rui paid the full amount for this procedure and requested on-site stone cutting, so he needed the organizing committee to issue a receipt. Just as he received the receipt, Qin Haoran and the others had already finished eating and returned.

"Uncle Qin, perfect timing, you can come and complete the formalities..."

Zhuang Rui didn't care about cutting in line. He was still sitting in the chair by the window and simply gave up his seat. Although the others were unhappy, they didn't say anything because of their status. They were all in the same circle in China, and there was no need to offend people over such a small matter.

"Let's go watch Boss Zhuang get his stones cut..."

Han Pangzi immediately regretted his shout, because he saw that more than a dozen people had suddenly emerged from the queue. He realized he had been too loud-mouthed and had essentially invited his competitors to steal his business.

Han Pangzi and his group went directly to the stone-cutting area to wait, where there were quite a few people cutting stones. Zhuang Rui, on the other hand, took the delivery slip to the raw stone area to collect the rough stones.

After handing the delivery slip to a staff member in the raw stone area, about seven or eight minutes later, a bulldozer drove out from the gate that had been temporarily surrounded by soldiers. On the bulldozer was the piece of raw stone that Zhuang Rui had won the bid for.

"Oh well, we still have to wait in line..."

After arriving at the stone-cutting area, Zhuang Rui took the rough stone weighing more than 30 kilograms off the bulldozer. Although the organizing committee had provided five stone-cutting machines here, not only were all five machines occupied, but there was also a circle of rough stones on the ground, all waiting to be cut.

"Damn it, is this a stone or a jadeite rough? There's nothing inside. This is such a rip-off!"

A middle-aged man with messy hair turned ashen-faced after cutting open a piece of raw jade and started cursing loudly. It was clear that this fellow's trip to Myanmar was far from pleasant.

"Three hundred and eighty thousand euros, nearly four million yuan, gone in one cut, tsk tsk..."

Fatty Han arrived early and knew what had happened. He explained it to Zhuang Rui: apparently, that guy wanted to get rich overnight and gambled on a piece of jade that he thought would definitely appreciate in value. But unexpectedly, he lost four million RMB in one go.

Upon hearing this, Zhuang Rui shook his head. With a net worth of four million, one could be considered a wealthy person in China. They could definitely own a car and a house and live a very comfortable life. Why bother joining in this fun?

Zhuang Rui was unaware that jade gambling is even more addictive than gambling, especially for those who have profited from it. They become addicted, like drug addicts, and eventually lose all the money they earned from jade gambling, even resorting to borrowing money from all over the place until they are bankrupt.

Regardless of the type of gambling or what you're betting on, the saying "nine out of ten gamblers lose" applies to the vast majority of gamblers. Of course, people like Zhuang Rui who use cheating devices are an exception.

"I wonder if I'll have enough money to buy a plane ticket back home..."

"Old Zhang, don't be so harsh. Everyone loses money gambling sometimes..."

"Yeah, Lao Zhang, it's your turn. Go up and cut the stone, hurry up, can't you see how many people are waiting..."

Since ancient times, it has always been a case of the victor taking all and the loser being condemned. After the middle-aged man left with slightly unsteady steps, the crowd only discussed it briefly before resuming their work on the stone.

The man named Lao Zhang was quite lucky. He cut into it and found green. Although it was only a low-to-mid-grade jadeite of the oily green variety, it was still bid up by the crowd and eventually bought by a domestic jewelry company for 1.9 million RMB. Lao Zhang only spent 28,000 euros to buy it.

This is the allure of jade gambling. As Marx once said, if capital has a 50% profit, it will take risks; if it has a 100% profit, it will dare to trample on all human laws; if it has a 300% profit, it will dare to commit any crime, even at the risk of being hanged.

This rough stone, after just one cut, generated a profit of 700%, which is enough to drive anyone crazy.

"Xiao Rui, isn't it your turn yet?"

More than half an hour later, Qin Haoran and the others followed a bulldozer to the stone-cutting area. The piece of material he was going to test was not big, weighing only a little over ten kilograms, about the size of a bowling ball.

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"It's my turn now, Uncle Qin. Why don't you go first? This piece of material is small; a quick wipe will do..."

Zhuang Rui had already been turned over, and he was holding the rough stone, about to place it on the stone-cutting machine, when he saw Qin Haoran and the others arrive. He stopped, and seeing that even a rough stone the size of a bowling ball was being moved by a forklift, he couldn't help but laugh.

"Gentlemen, I'll finish this piece later. Let Mr. Qin clean the rough stone first; it won't take much time. If it's not ready, I can put mine later. Does anyone have any objections?"

Zhuang Rui put the rough stone he was holding on the ground, turned around and said to the people behind him, "You have to queue up to cut stones. There are already seven or eight rough stones behind me."

"It's alright, it's alright, Mr. Qin, please polish the stone first..."

"It's alright, it won't take much time..."

"Boss Zhuang, your material can't be postponed. Everyone's waiting for you to cut the stone..."

Upon hearing Zhuang Rui's words, the crowd cheered him on. Although the others who were about to have their stones cut were resentful, they knew that their influence in the jade gambling circle was far inferior to that of the young man in front of them, so they all nodded in agreement.

When Zhuang Rui was in Pingzhou, he was a complete novice when it came to gambling on jade. The questions he asked were so funny that they made people laugh. However, after half a year, no one dared to underestimate him anymore. After winning that piece of red jadeite rough, Zhuang Rui's reputation in the jade gambling circle was now comparable to that of a superstar in the entertainment industry.

Upon hearing this, Qin Haoran bowed to those around him to express his gratitude, and then placed his piece of material on the stone-cutting machine.

This is a piece of black jadeite rough, a genuine old mine stone from the Hpakant mine. The entire piece has a black outer skin, resembling coal; you can feel your hands getting covered in black just by holding it. It's somewhat similar to jadeite from the Ma Meng mine, except that Ma Meng's black jadeite has some gray on the outer skin, while this piece is completely black, without a single impurity.

Hpakant is one of the oldest jade mines in Myanmar. However, after hundreds of years of mining, the old mine has been completely depleted and production has ceased. This piece of jade is likely from the mine owners' remaining stock, which was put up for this jade auction.

This black jadeite from the Hpakant mine has no rimming; it's a completely gambled piece. At a normal price, this piece should be worth around 800,000 RMB. Because the rough stone isn't very large, even if it yields icy jadeite, it would only amount to three to five kilograms, so the gamble isn't too big.

However, Qin Haoran spent 320,000 euros to buy it, which is equivalent to more than 3 million RMB. In Qin Haoran's mind, he was somewhat dismissive of it. However, among the numbers that Zhuang Rui wrote down for him, this was the first one, so he spent a lot of money to buy it.

"I also looked at this piece of jade from the Pak Kong mine, I didn't expect him to buy it..."

"Yes, it's from an old mine; I wonder how many years it's been kept by someone..."

"Qin's Jewelry is really going big this time. I just saw that the starting bid for this material is over 300,000 euros. I wonder if they can make a profit..."

After seeing Qin Haoran's piece of jade, the onlookers started discussing it. They all had sharp eyes and could tell the origin of the rough stone at a glance.

In Myanmar, jadeite from different mines and pits has its own characteristics and varies in quality. Therefore, identifying the mine where the rough stone was made is very helpful in judging the quality of the jadeite.

There is a famous saying in the jade industry: "If you don't know the mine, don't gamble on jade." Therefore, when purchasing jadeite rough, you must understand the origin and characteristics of the jade material. Otherwise, you will not be able to do the gambling on jade. The people in front of you are all experts. For them, identifying the origin of the jade from its outer skin is as simple as eating.

"Xiao Rui, how do I wipe it?"

Although Qin Haoran was a seasoned jade gambler, he couldn't help but ask Zhuang Rui a question after arranging the rough stones. This showed that in his mind, Zhuang Rui's skill in jade gambling far surpassed his own.

"Uncle Qin, this is old mine jade from the Pak Kong mine. Just pick any side and polish it. I like this piece..."

The old mine rough stones from the Hpakant mine are known for their thin skin, fine jade crystals, good texture, high transparency, and rich color. Mid-range jadeite is most commonly found in these stones. However, high-green glass-type jadeite is also occasionally found. Zhuang Rui's words mean that this piece of material should also be like that, with very full jade inside.

"Okay, let's do it your way..."

Qin Haoran took off his suit jacket and handed it to Fang Yi, revealing a white shirt underneath.

Instead of using the stone cutter, he picked up a grinder, turned it on, and began grinding one side of the rough stone with the grinding wheel. As the grinding wheel rubbed against the stone, making a "crackling" sound, the black outer layer peeled off and fell to the ground, leaving a layer of black powder on Qin Haoran's hand holding the grinder.

"It's turning green, it's turning green..."

"Really, it's turned green..."

In the stone-cutting area, the onlookers were even more nervous than the stone cutters. Just as Qin Haoran hadn't finished using a grinding wheel, a touch of green appeared on the surface of the raw stone, which had only been polished to a thickness of less than two centimeters. It was like the green grass sprouting between the black mountains and white waters as winter in the north was about to pass, exuding the breath of spring. It appeared quietly.

Qin Haoran quickly stopped what he was doing, turned off the polishing machine, and used the water that Zhuang Rui had just brought to wash the polishing surface. About two fingers wide of jade appeared before his eyes. The water flowed over the jade, and under the sunlight, it was crystal clear, green and vibrant, shimmering with a charming brilliance.

"Glassy...glass-type?"

Qin Haoran's eyes were practically glued to the polishing surface, completely ignoring the fact that his white shirt was covered in black dust. His voice was trembling slightly, which was understandable, as Qin Haoran had cut many rough stones before, but this was the first time he had ever cut a piece of glass-type jade.

"A huge surge! A really huge surge..."

"Qin's Jewelry made a killing at this public auction..."

"Perhaps it was Boss Zhuang who chose the material; it truly shines like a divine light..."

"Yes, let's see how Mr. Zhuang's own materials are later. Maybe another jade king will emerge..."

The crowd of onlookers became noisy. Dozens of rough stones were cut in the stone-cutting area that morning. Some were profitable, and some were not. However, this was the first time that glass-type jadeite had been seen. Including the stones that had been cut in the past ten days or so, this was the first time that glass-type jadeite had been cut.

The Jade King that some people mention is a living legend. His surname is Tang, and his given name is Tang Zenan. He is from Yunnan and his family has been in the jade business for generations. During the Qing Dynasty, most of the jade that was offered to the imperial palace came from his family.

Born into a family of jadeite enthusiasts, Tang Zenan was immersed in the atmosphere around him from birth. After decades of experience in the jadeite industry, he has become extremely knowledgeable about jadeite. He can estimate the price of any piece of raw jadeite that has not yet been cut, and he is almost certain of the answer.

Tang Zenan, now in his sixties, remains active in the jade gambling circle and is known as the "Jade King." He also runs two companies specializing in raw jade. If the Jade King is the prince of Hetian jade, then Tang Zenan is the emperor of the jade industry. The two are equally well-known in the domestic jade circle.

However, Tang Zenan was unable to attend this jade auction due to other commitments, which many people found regrettable. The Jade King is known for his generosity; he would gladly go whenever someone asked him to look at rough stones, and his opinions often became the final decision. This is probably one of the reasons why he is respectfully called the "Jade King."

"Xiao Rui, you won the bet!"

Qin Haoran looked at Zhuang Rui excitedly. The jadeite, which was only two fingers wide, was worth more than 1 million euros. Moreover, judging from the polished surface, there should be a lot of jade inside. Even if it was only three to five kilograms of glass-type material, it would still be worth several million euros. Qin Haoran had made a great deal by gambling for more than 300,000 euros.

Zhuang Rui smiled; he had expected this outcome. He immediately said, "Uncle Qin, congratulations! Shall we wipe it again?"

"Boss Qin, keep wiping, let us see..."

"Yes, it's the first time they've produced a glass-like jadeite specimen. It's an eye-opener for us..."

Those watching knew that Qin Haoran would never sell this piece of jade, but being able to see a piece of high-quality, glassy green jade would be something to brag about in the future.

"No, no, this piece of material needs careful consideration, so I, Qin, will not embarrass myself by offering my work..."

Qin Haoran bowed to the surroundings with a beaming smile. He was too excited to continue cutting the stone. Cutting stone is a very delicate task. If his hand trembles even slightly during the process, it may damage the jade inside and greatly reduce its value.

"Xiao Rui, come here..."

Qin Haoran happily took the rough stone off the stone-cutting machine and said to Zhuang Rui, his eyes filled with excitement. You know, this was only the first rough stone Zhuang Rui gave him. If the remaining dozens of stones performed like this... good heavens, Qin Haoran couldn't even imagine it.

Qin Haoran had no doubt about Zhuang Rui's judgment anymore. Even if Zhuang Rui told Qin Haoran now that there was jade in the paving bricks, Qin Haoran would probably pry them open and cut them open to see.

"Boss Zhuang, it's your turn. But let's make this clear first, when it comes to jade, you must consider me, Old Han, first..."

Han Haowei is now genuinely envious of Qin Haoran. He knows about the relationship between Zhuang Rui and Qin Haoran, and he wishes his little girl, who just started elementary school, could grow up immediately. He would be willing to be Zhuang Rui's mistress. Having such a son-in-law is like having a mountain of gold.

"Definitely, definitely..."

Zhuang Rui smiled and lifted the raw stone from under the stone cutter onto the top, securing it before turning on the power switch.

Chapter 475 Ice Seed

"Even if I'm considering you first, you still need the other person's consent, right?"

Zhuang Rui looked at the group of jewelry merchants around him, their eyes practically green with envy as they stared at him, somewhat like the pack of wolves he'd encountered on the grasslands. That piece of glass-type jadeite had certainly spurred them on. They knew that even a small piece of that raw material, polished into a cabochon, could fetch millions.

These days, other commodities are all about distribution channels, with big retailers like Walmart and Carrefour being incredibly selective. But in the jewelry industry, raw materials are paramount. Whether it's jade, gemstones, diamonds, or agate, any resource that is not renewable in the short term is highly sought after by consumers.

The meaning of jewelry is very broad. It can range from top-quality jewelry worth millions or tens of millions of yuan to small items that can be bought for three or five yuan. Nowadays, almost every man and woman wears one around their neck. Every year, the profits generated by jewelry sold in China alone reach hundreds of billions of yuan. This has created a situation where there are too many fish and not enough water, which is one of the reasons why various counterfeit jade and jewelry are flooding the market.

Don't be fooled by the high prices of these raw stones, often reaching tens or hundreds of thousands of euros. If you find a good piece, you can earn back the money once it's carved into jewelry. Take, for example, the glass-type jade that Qin Haoran just polished. Although it's only high green and doesn't yet reach the quality of top-grade imperial green, even a piece the size of a bowling ball, if carved well, will be worth no less than 100 million RMB.

"Xiao Rui, should you polish this stone first or cut it directly?"

Qin Haoran was still excited and seemed to want to help Zhuang Rui make a cut.

"Slice it directly..."

Zhuang Rui's piece of jade wasn't very large, only about 30 kilograms. It was just a small stone, slightly larger than a football, but oval in shape with a raised area in the middle, somewhat resembling the forehead of the God of Longevity. Its appearance was quite ugly; if it weren't for the black spots on the outer shell, no one would think it was a piece of jadeite rough.

Because the rough stone was of such poor quality, Zhuang Rui completely forgot about it after submitting his bid of 185,000 euros. If Peng Fei hadn't written it down in his notebook and discovered it, the first case of bid evasion at this jade auction might have occurred.

"Alright, let's get to work..."

Zhuang Rui casually drew a line on the rough stone with chalk, then threw the chalk on the ground, dusted off his hands, and turned to grip the handle of the stone cutter.

When the huge gears on the stone-cutting machine, with a diameter of over sixty centimeters, started spinning, everyone in the room held their breath. You see, stone cutting is the most exciting thing; one cut can mean life or death, and the moment of life or death can be decided in just a few short minutes.

"Click...click click..."

After the alloy gear made slight contact with the protruding part of the raw stone, it perfectly demonstrated what it means to cut through tofu with a knife. The huge cutting force generated by its rapid rotation easily caused the gear pieces to sink into the raw stone.

Zhuang Rui's hands were now pressed on the handle of the stone cutter, and he steadily applied downward force. In just over a minute, the oval-shaped rough stone had been split in the middle, just like a gourd being split in two.

"It's turned green?"

"It seems so, but I didn't see it clearly..."

"Hurry, hurry and get some water to wash it..."

After the gourd-shaped rough stones were split in half, they could no longer be secured to the cutting machine and fell to the ground. However, since it wasn't a concrete floor, there was no fear of any jade inside being damaged. Some sharp-eyed people in the crowd had already spotted a hint of green in the middle of the stones that had fallen through the air. 0899.

Before Zhuang Rui could pick up the rough stones, four or five people rushed over and hurriedly placed the two rough stones, cut side up, on the shelf next to him. Someone then brought water and poured it directly onto the cut surfaces.

What was originally visible was just a piece of green the size of a baby's palm. However, after the powder on the cut surface was washed away with water, everyone could clearly see that the area of the jade on the two halves of the rough stone had grown from the size of a child's palm to the size of an adult's hand. The water droplets that had not yet been wiped away fell on the green jade and, when exposed to sunlight, looked like dew on green leaves in the morning, crystal clear.

"The betting is going up, it's going up big..."

"Firecrackers, where are the firecrackers?"

"Damn it, I remember submitting a bid for this piece of material, how come I didn't win?"

"Come on, anyone can offer hindsight advice. Let's ask Boss Zhuang what price he's offering."

As the jade in the stone appeared, the crowd became noisy. Although many people were too far away to see clearly the quality of the jade, judging from its beautiful green color, it must not be bad. For a rough stone with such an unattractive outer appearance, it must have been a great gamble, without a doubt.

"Hey Mr. Han, what are you doing? Can't you loosen your grip a bit?"

A jewelry merchant's voice drew everyone's attention. Upon seeing what was happening, they burst into laughter. It turned out that the big boss, Han Haowei, was quite uncouth, holding half of the wool fabric and using the hem of his expensive suit to cover it up.

"Why should I let go? I told Brother Zhuang I want this piece of material..." Han Haowei's behavior at this moment was nothing like that of a big jewelry company boss; he was more like a child who had grabbed a lollipop and wouldn't let go.

Mr. Han's belly was already quite large, and with half a piece of wool stuffed inside, the shape resembled that of a pregnant woman about to give birth, but with an abnormally shaped fetus, which made onlookers unable to help but laugh.

The man next to him, somewhat unwilling to give up, continued, "Boss Han, we didn't say you couldn't buy it. Let us see what kind of material this is first, okay?"

"No way! There's still half a piece of material over there. Go take a look. I promise I won't interfere. What do you think of this piece of material of mine?"

Fatty Han is just being shameless, but he's not afraid. After all, he comes from a humble background and used these tricks a lot when he first started out.

Of course, in Han Pangzi's own words, this behavior is a matter of being able to bend and stretch, and having no shame. If you have money, you can slap me twice. Back in the day, our ancestors had to crawl between someone's legs. This is what it means for a real man to endure the humiliation of crawling between someone's legs. But I'm not a scoundrel, this is something that has to be paid for.

Unable to do anything about Fatty Han, the others shook their heads and could only look at the other half of the fabric. An elderly gentleman with gray hair was surrounded by people in the middle of the crowd, holding a magnifying glass and carefully examining it.

"The color is very pure, not scattered, and evenly distributed; it's a high-grade green jadeite. However, the clarity is slightly lacking, not as good as the glassy jadeite from before. Alas, what a pity. If you combined the clarity of that piece with the bright green of this one, it would be the finest imperial green jadeite..."

As the old man looked at the jade, he shook his head in frustration, seemingly regretting that Zhuang Rui hadn't been able to decipher the imperial green material. The people next to him rolled their eyes, wondering what the connection was.

There are many stones with high green color, but if they lack texture and translucency, they are just stones and cannot be called jadeite. For a high-quality piece of jadeite, texture, translucency, and color are all indispensable, with translucency being the most important.

Those in the industry generally classify the "water" (transparency) of jadeite into three levels, which is called one to three points of water. However, some jadeite often only has half a point of water. Simple grading is not enough. Some auction houses divide the water into ten levels: glass type is 9 to 10 points of water, ice type is 7 to 8 points of water, oil type is 6 to 7 points of water, fine bean type is 5 to 6 points of water, coarse bean type is 3 to 4 points of water, and dry white type is 1 to 2 points of water.

Based on the above grading of jadeite's translucency, you can see that even colorless glass-type jadeite is tens of millions of times more expensive than high-green dry white jadeite; there is simply no comparison between the two.

"Old Qi, could you tell me what level this water level can reach?"

The vibrant green color was obvious to everyone, so there was no need to say more. However, this kind of water required careful observation and discernment. Some impatient people immediately asked about it, as it was related to how much money they would have to pay to acquire it.

Zhuang Rui recognized the old man. He had heard that the old man was a clerk at a pawnshop in Macau. He had been invited by a jewelry store owner to look at the rough stones. Zhuang Rui had run into him several times in the rough stone area these past few days.

Upon hearing this, Old Qi shook his head and said, "Hmm, the water in this piece is crystal clear, like frozen river water, perfectly natural. It's only slightly inferior to glass-type jade, so it should be considered high-grade ice-type jade. And judging from the cut, I estimate that about seven or eight pounds can be extracted from one half. It's just a pity that if the texture and water content were to reach glass-type, then..."

At this point, no one cared about what Old Man Qi was going to say next. There aren't that many "what ifs" in this world. This half piece of high-quality icy jadeite, weighing seven or eight pounds, was enough to drive everyone crazy.

It's important to know that given how rare glass-type jadeite is on the market, icy jadeite is considered top-grade jadeite jewelry, let alone high-grade icy jadeite. Jewelry carved from this kind of jadeite is undoubtedly authentic (Grade A) and can be sold as glass-type without much scrutiny. Many jewelry stores do this.

A piece of jade weighing seven or eight kilograms can yield at least five or six bracelets. Even if each bracelet costs seven or eight hundred thousand RMB, and with the remaining jade material carved into other items, the total value would probably be over eight million RMB. Moreover, with this amount of material, their jewelry store would definitely be upgraded to a higher level.

"Mr. Zhuang, I'll offer four million RMB for this piece of jade. What do you think?"

After everyone made their own estimates, someone started to make an offer.

Chapter 476 Completely Convinced

"Four million? Mr. Zhuang, I'll offer four and a half million RMB, what do you think?"

"Four million eight hundred thousand, I'll take this material..."

"Five and a half million, Mr. Zhuang, that's quite a price..."

Someone made the first offer, immediately causing a surge of adrenaline and cortisol to rush through the veins of the jewelry shop owners watching the stone being cut. Their faces turned red, and they eagerly raised their prices. If someone who didn't know better saw this, they might think it was a scene from the 1980s, a frenzy of buying cabbages during winter.

Just as everyone was raising the price, Qin Haoran pulled Zhuang Rui aside and whispered to him, "Xiao Rui, we can't sell this piece of material. This quality raw material, after processing, will be much more profitable to sell at Qin Ruilin's shop in Beijing than to sell it as a raw stone now..."

In general, jewelry stores sell jadeite ornaments in three grades: high, medium, and low. The best-selling ones are those priced between three to five hundred and thirty to fifty thousand yuan. However, the most profitable ones are the top-grade jadeite ornaments.

Qin Haoran's idea was to let Zhuang Rui keep it, have someone carve it, and put it in the shop to sell. This would not only enrich the variety of jewelry and attract customers, but also maximize profits.

"Uncle Qin, I know all that you're saying, but I'm a little short on cash right now. I'm thinking of selling this piece of jade to buy other rough stones that I've acquired at the auction..."

Zhuang Rui smiled bitterly upon hearing this. He understood this principle all too well, but the current situation was that even a hero is helpless without a penny. If Zhuang Rui were to keep this piece, he would not only be penniless for the next two months, but he would also probably have to borrow money from an outside account to offset the cost of the raw materials he had acquired at the auction.

"Hey kid, why didn't you tell Uncle Qin you didn't have enough money? Uncle Qin... Uncle Qin... By the way, how much money do you need?"

Just as Qin Haoran was about to secure the entire bid, he remembered that almost all the funds he brought had been invested in the raw stones. Furthermore, even if he won all the bids, he might not have enough money, and the head office would have to raise funds, which wouldn't be much help to Zhuang Rui.

Actually, Qin Haoran had misunderstood. He thought Zhuang Rui would be short at least a few million euros. If he had known it was only a few hundred thousand euros, he could have squeezed it out. After all, Qin's Jewelry has assets worth billions, so a few million RMB wouldn't be a problem.

"Uncle Qin, the money difference isn't that much, but this piece of jade wasn't something I was initially optimistic about, so I wanted to sell it to tide me over. We also have several other rough stones, enough for that shop in Beijing..."

Zhuang Rui's words made Qin Haoran's eyes widen. This high-grade, full-green jade was something Zhuang Rui hadn't even noticed? What kind of rough jade does he value? Could it all be the glass-type jade he just cut open?

"What quality of jadeite are the rest of your materials?"

Qin Haoran felt his brain was a bit overwhelmed. With just this one piece of high-grade icy jadeite, Qin Ruilin's shop in Beijing wouldn't have to worry about the raw materials for high-end jadeite jewelry for a year. He didn't expect that this was just the worst piece that Zhuang Rui thought it was. Qin Haoran couldn't help but feel full of expectations for the remaining bids, which were all carefully selected by Zhuang Rui.

The discovery of both glass-type and high-ice-type jadeite in succession clearly stimulated Qin Haoran's brain, causing his judgment to deviate slightly. In fact, of the twenty rough stones that Zhuang Rui was focusing on, only five or six were glass-type jadeite, and apart from yellow jadeite, there were no other top-grade jadeite like imperial green. Even blue and purple jadeite did not reach that level.

However, the remaining non-glassy jadeite material was far more abundant than this icy jadeite piece. Each piece could yield at least tens of kilograms, and there were two or three pieces of slightly inferior material, such as golden thread jadeite and hibiscus jadeite, which are the best-selling mid-range jadeite jewelry on the market and are also the most scarce in Beijing Qin Ruilin's shop. That's why Zhuang Rui decided to sell this rough stone.

"Ahem, Uncle Qin, how would I know about that? I can only roughly estimate whether there is jade inside based on some specific characteristics of the rough stone. As for the quality and quantity, that all depends on luck..."

Zhuang Rui coughed a few times upon hearing this, realizing he had spoken too confidently. However, he shamelessly admitted that he had a knack for appraising stones, and he figured that Qin Haoran, with his composure, wouldn't press the matter.

In fact, Zhuang Rui doesn't need to worry too much now. He's not the only one in the world who's absolutely certain of success when it comes to gambling on jade. Take, for example, that "Jade King" who's been playing with jade since the Anti-Japanese War. He's been in the business for decades, and whether he's gambling entirely or partially on raw materials, he's basically never lost money.

Even if Zhuang Rui wins every time he bets, he still has the reputation of being the "King of Jade" before him. At most, people will only think that another legendary figure has emerged in the jade industry. As for being able to see through the raw stones and know what's inside, that's too fantastical. It's something every raw jade merchant hopes to have, but of course, it can only be experienced in a dream.

After experiencing two stone-cutting trials, Qin Haoran had no doubt about Zhuang Rui's ability to appraise rough stones. Hearing Zhuang Rui's words, although he was surprised and suspicious, he did not doubt him. He nodded and said, "Since you have your eye on other stones, selling this one is fine. Just take Uncle Qin's words as a reference..."

"Boss Zhuang, Brother Zhuang, we had an agreement beforehand. This piece of jade is for sale. We men are men, and we have to keep our word..."

Zhuang Rui and Qin Haoran walked over and whispered to each other, which startled Fatty Han, who was holding the half-piece of woolen fabric. He knew that the two were about to become father-in-law and son-in-law. If Qin Haoran tried to steal it again, he would have lost everything, and all his good clothes would have been for nothing.

"Hehe, Mr. Han, I didn't say I wouldn't sell it. Don't worry, this piece of material is for sale..."

Zhuang Rui smiled and said, "Holding on so tightly won't help. Do you think I'll refuse to sell just because someone offers a higher price? We don't seem to have that kind of relationship yet."

"Boss Zhuang, I'll take this half of the rough stone. Seven million eight hundred thousand. If anyone offers a higher price, I, Old Zhang, will walk away..."

At this moment, the winner of the half-piece of raw stone was also decided. Zhuang Rui recognized the man who called himself Old Zhang. It was quite a coincidence that he was the same Boss Zhang who had competed with him for the yellow jade and made the bid at the last moment.

"Boss Zhuang, I couldn't beat you at that red jadeite, but you have to sell me this piece..."

Fearing that Zhuang Rui wouldn't sell, Mr. Zhang mentioned the yellow jadeite rough stone whose outer skin resembled red jadeite. He had just come from the bidding site when he discovered that the winning bid for that stone was 30,000 yuan higher than his own bid. This made him very regretful. He had come to the stone-cutting area to try his luck, but he never expected to find such a good piece of jadeite. He immediately joined the scramble for it.

"Red jade? The bidding has started? What was the opening bid?"

Zhuang Rui was stunned for a moment upon hearing this. He had actually forgotten about that matter while he was cutting the stone. Now he was actually a little nervous. You see, although the spiritual energy in his eyes could see through the bidding box, there were just too many bidding slips inside. If there was a missing slip with a higher bid than his, Zhuang Rui would have nowhere to cry.

Seeing Zhuang Rui's blank expression, which didn't seem like he was faking it, Mr. Zhang said, "You don't know? The winning bid for that rough stone was 3.18 million euros, only 30,000 yuan more than mine. Mr. Zhuang, you didn't bid?"

"I got it!"

Zhuang Rui was overjoyed. He didn't bother to hide it, since everyone's bid number could be traced after the bidding was completed. He nodded and said, "Hehe, sorry, Mr. Zhang, if no one else bids 3.18 million euros, then I've won..."

"Sigh, Mr. Zhuang, you...you...not only have a keen eye, but your ability to judge the price of raw jade is also superb, truly superb..."

Upon hearing this, Mr. Zhang sighed deeply and gave Zhuang Rui a thumbs-up in resignation. He had bid 3.15 million euros at the last minute, and because of his obstruction, Zhuang Rui had no chance to change his bid. In other words, Zhuang Rui had already bid 3.18 million euros. This left Mr. Zhang speechless, and he was completely convinced of his defeat.

Mr. Zhang's skin wasn't much thinner than Fatty Han's. He had completely forgotten about blocking Zhuang Rui's last chance to bid in the rough stone area, and said with a beaming smile, "Mr. Zhuang, I'll let you have that piece of red jade, but you have to sell me this piece..."

"Has no further bids been made yet?"

Zhuang Rui looked around, but no one answered him. The price of 7.8 million RMB was indeed not low. If he was not careful when carving this piece of material, he might not even be able to make back his investment. No one would compete with Boss Zhang at this price.

"Alright, Mr. Zhang, this half of the material is yours. But since we're in Myanmar now, you'll have to pay in Euros..."

Zhuang Rui was selling raw jade, not giving it away, so he wasn't embarrassed at all and directly asked for the money. He was getting engaged soon and would definitely need to spend a lot of money. If he hadn't been forced into this situation, he wouldn't have even been willing to buy this piece of jade.

"Okay, okay, Euros are fine too, it'll save you the trouble back home. I'll issue you a bank draft..."

Mr. Zhang laughed upon hearing this. His plan was different from others. He intended to hoard this piece of jade for two years, at which point it would probably be worth more than seven or eight million RMB. It must be said that Mr. Zhang was indeed insightful. Three years later, he sold the rough jade and made a profit of nearly 10 million RMB.

"Hey...hey, Mr. Han, what's the meaning of you holding this rough stone without making a price?"

As the smoke cleared, some unwilling jewelry merchants set their sights on Fatty Han, thinking, "Just because you're holding this rough stone doesn't mean it's yours."

Chapter 477 Zhuang Rui's Ambition

"Hey, who said I wasn't going to buy it? I'll offer 8 million RMB, Brother Zhuang, this raw jade is mine now..."

Fatty Han had no intention of taking the rough stone out of his clothes; he immediately offered 8 million RMB. However, he wasn't stupid. He had already examined this half-piece of jade. Judging from the cut surface, if he could extract a two-finger-thick layer of jade, he would be guaranteed a profit.

"8 million RMB?"

"Old Han is really willing to invest..."

"Yes, but Boss Zhuang is still the most impressive. He made over 10 million from just one piece of material..."

After hearing what Fatty Han said, everyone started discussing it. Judging from Fatty Han's previous performance and his current bid, no one dared to compete with him for this piece of jade anymore.

After all, there were many more rough stones to be cut, and stubbornly holding onto this one piece and raising the price would only result in them losing out in the end.

Zhuang Rui breathed a sigh of relief when the two Euro checks were in his pocket. With over 10 million, he wouldn't have to live so frugally anymore. And if he could just hold on for a few months, once Qin Ruilin's shop in Beijing displayed the jade jewelry he had won in this gamble, Zhuang Rui believed that the funds would be recovered quickly.

"Kid, you've struck it rich, haven't you? Come back and watch your brother cut the stone..."

Song Jun came over and patted Zhuang Rui on the shoulder. Even with his wealth, he couldn't help but look envious. He knew the auction price of Zhuang Rui's rough jade: 185,000 euros, which was immediately resold for 15.8 million RMB, nearly 10 times the profit. Even robbing a bank or trafficking drugs wouldn't bring in money that quickly.

"Alright, Brother Song, I still have a few pieces of material left. I'll go back and check if I've won the bid. You can cut them first, I'll be back in a bit..."

Zhuang Rui had no interest in watching Song Jun and the others cut the stone. Ever since he heard Boss Zhang announce that the final bid for that piece of yellow jadeite was 3.18 million euros, his mind had been wandering to the auction hall.

"Hey, hey, don't run away! I'm telling you, I'm waiting for you to cover for me..."

Song Jun shouted something at Zhuang Rui's back, but Zhuang Rui had already squeezed into the crowd and could no longer be seen.

Although many jewelers have gone to the stone-cutting area to prepare to buy raw materials, the number of people in the auction hall has not decreased at all. Most of the people who come to participate in the Myanmar jade auction come in groups of several people, and now they are also divided into groups of people. Some go to select and buy the cut jade materials, while others wait here for the bidding to begin.

Zhuang Rui waited in line for more than half an hour at a query machine before it was finally his turn. After entering the number of the yellow jadeite, a row of numbers appeared: Raw stone number: 12586, winning bid price: 3.18 million euros, winning bidder number: 8367xxxx.

"That's right, it's myself!"

Zhuang Rui clenched his fist tightly. Although this piece of jade might not be the most profitable, it was unique. At least Zhuang Rui had never seen or heard of a piece of yellow jade that was better than this. As for the legendary yellow jade roast chicken, although Zhuang Rui had not seen it, he felt in his heart that the piece of jade in that case was not as good as his own.

"I wonder if Master Gu will come out of seclusion again after seeing this piece of material?"

Zhuang Rui looked at the words on the screen and grinned foolishly. He had given a piece of multicolored nephrite to Grandpa Gu, asking him to carve it into a national treasure-level jade fruit plate. He wondered if Grandpa Gu would change his mind about retiring from the business if he saw this piece of yellow jade again.

"Hey, boss, have you finished your search?"

Zhuang Rui stared at the screen of the query machine for a long time, grinning foolishly. Impatient people behind him started urging him on.

"Just a moment, just a moment, it'll be ready soon..."

Today's draw yielded three rough stones based on his bid. Zhuang Rui quickly entered the numbers for two more stones, and sure enough, they appeared! He won both stones as expected.

One of these two pieces of jadeite is an icy type with floating flowers, and it is very large, weighing about 300 kilograms. Zhuang Rui spent 1.98 million euros to buy it. The jade inside can be cut into about 80 kilograms. Bangles made from this type of floating flower jadeite are very popular in the market. Zhuang Rui roughly estimated that this one piece of jadeite alone could bring him a profit of more than 200 million yuan.

The other piece of material was a colorless glass-type jadeite. This piece was not large, weighing only seven or eight kilograms. However, the outer shell of the rough stone was very thin, so three or four kilograms of material could be extracted. Ten years ago, no one cared about this kind of jadeite, but in the last four or five years, the price has soared and it has been sought after by many people. It is only slightly inferior to colored glass-type jadeite, and a grade higher than icy jadeite.

Of course, Zhuang Rui only has one jewelry store, so the return of this money may take a long time. However, Zhuang Rui has already made up his mind that he will selectively extract jadeite from several rough stones, and launch several jewelry pieces for each quality of jadeite. He aims to make Qin Ruilin in Beijing a must-visit place for those who want to buy top-quality jadeite, and establish a brand for high-end jadeite jewelry in the industry.

Zhuang Rui had this idea when he took over Qin Ruilin's shop, but at that time he was troubled by the lack of high-quality jadeite materials. Now that he has this batch of raw stones, the plan can be carried out. Zhuang Rui is not just daydreaming; he already has the ability and conditions to dominate the high-end jadeite market in Beijing.

In terms of consumer groups, the target consumers of high-end jade jewelry are obviously not ordinary people with salaries. A brooch or earring can be worth millions, which is not something that ordinary people can afford.

Zhuang Rui's target is those celebrities in the entertainment industry. With Ouyang Jun's cultural entertainment company and Xu Qing, his new sister-in-law, he should be able to promote them in that circle without encountering any resistance.

Another consumer group to consider is Ouyang Jun. The wealthy members of his club have great potential to be tapped. These days, it's no longer fashionable to wear a thick gold chain around your neck. People would see that as being a nouveau riche, and the only word to describe it would be: vulgar.

Nowadays, wealthy people are all about taste. They wear a piece of ancient jade around their waist, a jade thumb ring used by Emperor Qianlong for hunting on their thumb, and a pure natural imperial green jade cabochon from Myanmar on their index finger. That's what it means to be rich and have good taste. It's like when cell phones first came out in the early 1990s. People either held them in their hands or hung them on their waists, afraid that others wouldn't see them.

Of course, whether the ancient jade was soaked with chicken blood, or whether the imperial green cabochon was made of plexiglass, is another matter.

Zhuang Rui's goal was to make these wealthy tycoons and fashion-conscious celebrities feel embarrassed to admit that their jewelry was not from Qin Ruilin in Beijing when they met and asked about it.

After checking the bidding results, Zhuang Rui was in a great mood. He walked to the entrance of the auction hall, looked at the still lingering dark clouds in the sky, and felt his heart brighten. He then went to the window to queue up to complete the bidding procedures.

Of these three pieces of jade, Zhuang Rui had the Myanmar organizing committee transport two of them to his villa in Pengcheng, each insured for 100 million yuan in loss compensation. As for the other piece of yellow jade, Zhuang Rui had it transported to his residence in a courtyard house in Beijing. He planned to buy a stone-cutting machine there after returning to Beijing, since the place was big enough to put in the backyard.

Zhuang Rui didn't intend to leave this piece of yellow jade to Luo Jiang. If it were cut out in Pengcheng and Luo Jiang saw it, he would definitely feel resentful. So Zhuang Rui planned to have it cut out directly in Beijing. As for what to carve, he would show it to Master Gu first.

After completing the bidding procedures, Zhuang Rui returned to the stone-cutting site. It was Song Jun's turn to cut the stone, and as expected, the price soared. The stone sold for over 30 million RMB on the spot, making Song Jun beam with joy. He and Fatty Ma came to Myanmar not entirely for the money, but to enjoy the thrill of seeing the stone's price rise.

What troubled Zhuang Rui was that both Fatty Ma and Song Jun were quite "grateful," and they both said that Zhuang Rui had helped them choose the rough stones. This made Zhuang Rui, who had just arrived at the stone-cutting area, the target of everyone's attention. He was surrounded by many jewelry merchants who asked Zhuang Rui to take a look at the rough stones they had purchased.

Although Zhuang Rui was impatient, he dared not offend the crowd. The "Jade King" was already in his seventies or eighties, and he still enthusiastically helped people look at rough jade at every Myanmar jade auction. If Zhuang Rui refused, who knows what these people would say when they got back, and it would immediately ruin Zhuang Rui's reputation in the jewelry industry.

To be honest, the Myanmar jadeite auction is incomparable to the Pingzhou auction. In just over ten days, it was simply not enough for Zhuang Rui to look at all the rough stones. Just like the stones that

these people have won the bids for now, there are quite a few high-quality jadeite pieces, and there are a few pieces that Zhuang Rui really wants.

When helping others examine rough stones, Zhuang Rui can only assess about 30% of the information in a single sentence. He usually points out if there's jadeite inside, but he might slightly misjudge the weight and quality of the jade.

While Zhuang Rui was examining the rough stones, some of the stones he had pointed out were already being cut on the other side. The results after cutting were almost identical to what Zhuang Rui had described, which made everyone admire Zhuang Rui's eye even more. Gambling on stones also requires talent; it's not that the older you are, the more accurate your judgment will be. Otherwise, there would be no need to gamble; you could just let a bunch of old men compare their ages.

In the following days, besides handling his own winning bid procedures, Zhuang Rui helped others inspect raw stones, which earned him the respect of many people. He was even given many titles such as industry leader, stone gambling master, and jade expert. If Zhuang Rui were not so young, he would probably be called the "Jade King".

Chapter 478 The King of Bidders

"Xiao Rui, have you completed the shipping procedures for the rough stones? Actually, you can come to Myanmar to see the jade mines next time..." Sitting in the lobby of the Myanmar National Jade Exchange Center, Qin Haoran asked Zhuang Rui beside him.

Today is the last day of the Myanmar jade auction, which has lasted for nineteen days. After the ceremony this morning, Zhuang Rui will immediately travel to Mandalay and then head to the Hpakant region of Myitkyina.

Qin Haoran didn't know why Zhuang Rui was so interested in jade mines. In fact, jade mines weren't anything special. Qin Haoran had also been curious and gone to see one before, but after that one visit, he never wanted to go a second time.

According to Qin Haoran's plan, holding Zhuang Rui and his daughter's engagement ceremony before the end of the year would be quite tight in terms of time. By the time Zhuang Rui returned to China from the Hpakant region, it would probably be the end of the month, and their children would also be returning to China at the end of the month, meaning the two young people wouldn't be able to take care of anything.

Qin Haoran was talking about this with his wife yesterday, but Fang Yi didn't care much. She planned to fly to Beijing immediately after returning to Hong Kong to talk to her future mother-in-law about how to hold the engagement ceremony. In Fang Yi's mind, this kind of thing was naturally for both sets of parents to worry about, and the children only needed to be present on the day.

"Everything's taken care of, Uncle Qin. Don't worry, I'll just go take a look and then head back to Beijing. It won't take long."

Zhuang Rui had originally planned to leave yesterday, but Qin Haoran stopped him, saying that there were still three sealed bids to be opened today, and the Myanmar organizing committee would also hold a ceremony, so Zhuang Rui might even win some awards.

However, many people were not very interested in the ceremony. Fatty Ma and Song Jun had already returned home yesterday. Of the jewelry merchants who originally came from all over the world, apart from those who bid on the three sealed bids, only eight or nine hundred remained today. Sitting in the hall, it didn't feel crowded at all.

Zhuang Rui wasn't particularly interested in the so-called last three rough stones. These three were semi-rough stones with cut surfaces, placed at the very front of the sealed-bid area, and were also the three stones with the most frenzied bidding. In Zhuang Rui's opinion, anyone throwing money at them was a fool; even if they won the bid, they weren't guaranteed to make a profit, and might even lose some money.

Judging from the appearance of the cut surfaces, all three rough stones are impeccable. The cut surfaces show green color and there are no cracks. Moreover, the jadeite in two of them has reached the glass type in terms of texture and water content. The appearance inside is even more promising. If the color is more accurate, it may be imperial green material.

Zhuang Rui knew in his heart that none of the three pieces of jade yielded imperial green jade. Otherwise, he would have gone bankrupt to try and get involved. What good is a pretty cut surface? Any one of the 20 pieces of rough jade that Zhuang Rui had won would have a much better cost performance than those three. Making a fortune quietly is the way to go.

"Friends and guests, today is the last day of this year's jade auction, and the winner of the top lot will soon be revealed..."

After a group of officials in military uniforms were seated on the stage in the hall, the host stepped forward and announced that the last three sealed bids would be opened for bidding.

By this time, the auditorium had already removed the other nine large screens, leaving only the one behind the stage. As soon as the host finished speaking, the large screen began to change, displaying three numbers side by side. The numbers were so large that even people sitting at the back of the auditorium could clearly see them.

Behind those three numbers were countless changing numbers. At that moment, a person sitting in the center of the stage spoke a sentence in Burmese into the microphone in front of him, and the numbers on the big screen immediately stopped, causing a commotion in the auditorium.

"Damn it, they've all gone mad! They've all gone mad!!!"

"Yes, who has the audacity to gamble so much money?"

"Just wait and see, but this is just too outrageous..."

As the numbers on the screen settled, the auditorium exploded as if bombs had been dropped, a deafening roar erupting from the crowd, as if to rip the sky off the hall.

"Lot No. 3, winning bid price: 12 million euros, winning bid number..."

"Lot No. 8, winning bid price: 23.88 million euros, winning bid number..."

"Lot No. 6, winning bid price: 16.88 million euros, winning bid number..."

Three figures exceeding 100 million RMB appeared on the big screen. Looking at these numbers, the raw material merchants present were not excited, but began to panic. With the price of raw stones rising so high, whether the price of jade jewelry could be increased by that much was still unknown.

At last year's Myanmar jade auction, the top bid was only 30 to 40 million, but in less than a year, the price of the top bid has increased almost tenfold. This Myanmar jade auction is like a signal to the global jewelry industry that the market positioning of jade jewelry needs to be reshuffled.

In the international jewelry world, diamonds are the most popular and sought-after. For over a century, they have been the most expensive and irreplaceable luxury jewelry in every country. For example, the royal palaces of the British Queen are decorated with diamonds, making them the most valuable jewelry in the world.

However, the emergence of this €20 million jadeite lot signifies a challenge to the status of diamonds, especially since there are certain groups of people abroad who favor jadeite. It is likely that the jewelry industry in not only China but also other countries will be greatly affected in the future.

"Who took these photos? All three lots were won by the same person..."

"Is it Qin's Jewelry? Qin's is really making a splash this time..."

"I guess it's Zheng's Jewelry; they haven't made much of a move..."

The person who won the bid for these three rough stones was quite extraordinary, arousing speculation among those present, who looked around to see who could make such a big move.

Because the winning bid numbers show that all three rough stones were won by the same person, meaning that person spent more than 400 million RMB on these three rough stones alone. This figure is almost more than the total assets of some medium-sized jewelry companies.

"Ah? It's someone from Zheng's Jewelry..."

"That's right, that's a director of Zheng's Jewelry..."

"No wonder, only a company like this could afford to make such a large-scale investment..."

"As expected of a leading jewelry company in Southeast Asia, they certainly have the ambition..."

With the announcement of the top bidder, the winners were revealed. Zhuang Rui overheard the discussions around him and learned that all three rough stones had been won by Zheng Hua's family jewelry company, with a single bid exceeding 400 million RMB, demonstrating the Zheng family's immense financial strength.

In fact, the people at Zheng's Jewelry were also feeling frustrated at this moment. Every time there is a jade auction in Myanmar, it is also a time for various companies to show off their strength. The more raw materials a company wins, the stronger its raw material reserves and capabilities are. Many well-known jewelry companies are also eager to show off their strength.

However, Zheng's Jewelry had some bad luck at this public auction. Of the dozens of rough stones they won in the open bidding, only five or six were profitable, far less than Qin's Jewelry, which won several stones in a row in the open bidding.

Even some smaller companies won better rough stones than them, which greatly displeased Zheng's Jewelry, the leader in the Asian jewelry industry. So before the sealed bid ended, they bid exorbitant prices on these rough stones in an attempt to save face.

However, this face was given by others. Zheng's Jewelry's grand gesture did indeed intimidate many people, but their behavior aroused dissatisfaction among more small jewelry companies. In the following period, some small jewelry companies joined together and caused a lot of trouble for Zheng's Jewelry, while Qin's Jewelry quietly developed. Of course, these are all stories for later.

With the final three rough stones settled, the Myanmar jade auction came to a successful conclusion. The person speaking on the stage was Myanmar's Minister of Mines, whose lengthy speech made the people in the hall drowsy. They would have preferred some Burmese-style songs and dances to attract attention instead of talking.

After the minister's speech, the awards ceremony began. Surprisingly, the largest transaction award at this Myanmar jade auction did not go to Zheng's Jewelry, but to Qin's Jewelry with a total transaction amount of 98.78 million. Zheng's Jewelry only regained face in the subsequent highest single-item price award.

Somewhat unexpectedly, the organizing committee, perhaps mindful of the prestige Zhuang Rui brought to this year's auction with his red jadeite rough stone, awarded him an Outstanding Stone Cutting Award. Zhuang Rui truly deserved the award, as all the rough stones he cut at this auction, including the two he helped Fatty Ma cut in the following days, were profitable gambles, with not a single one going wrong.

"Xiao Rui, don't underestimate this thing. With it, you'll be the most honored guest in Myanmar, and you won't need to go through any additional procedures when you go to the mining area..."

After receiving the certificate on stage, Zhuang Rui was both amused and exasperated. He hadn't received any award certificates since graduating from middle school, but unexpectedly, he was awarded one in a foreign country.

However, hearing Qin Haoran's words brought Zhuang Rui some comfort. Although Hu Rong had already helped him obtain the permit to enter the mining area, if that batch of gold really existed, perhaps this folded piece of paper could be used in the future.

After the conference ended at noon, Zhuang Rui and Peng Fei returned to the hotel to pack their things, and together with Qin Haoran and others, headed directly to the airport, although Qin Haoran was flying to Hong Kong.

Zhuang Rui and Peng Fei, on the other hand, were to fly to Mandalay, Myanmar's second-largest city, where Hu Rong was already waiting and would drive them to the jade mining area.

#### Chapter 479 Mandalay

As Zhuang Rui prepared to leave Yangon, he felt a pang of reluctance. His nearly 20 days in Yangon had been filled with surprises and excitement: the dramatic ups and downs of open betting, the unpredictable twists and turns of closed betting, the ecstatic joy of winning, and the dejected despair of losing—a microcosm of society in this Buddhist kingdom.

When Zhuang Rui arrived at the airport, he took a taxi, the same taxi he had taken when he first arrived in Myanmar. The fare was \$5, but when he got out of the car, Zhuang Rui gave him a \$50 tip. In the past two weeks, this driver had taken him and Peng Fei all over the streets and alleys of Yangon, allowing Zhuang Rui to fully appreciate the exotic scenery.

The driver clearly rarely encountered such a generous customer as Zhuang Rui. After helping Zhuang Rui take his luggage out of the car, he waved goodbye outside until Zhuang Rui and the others entered the waiting hall. It was unclear whether he was truly reluctant to see Zhuang Rui and the others leave, or reluctant to part with the seemingly inexhaustible amount of US dollars in Peng Fei's pocket.

After saying goodbye to Qin Haoran and the others, Zhuang Rui and Peng Fei boarded a flight to Mandalay. Once on board, they discovered that the flight had also originated from China, with only a stopover in Yangon. The flight attendants, crew, and the vast majority of passengers were Chinese.

"Young man, judging from your flight from Yangon, did you just attend the Myanmar jade auction?"

Not long after the plane took off, a middle-aged man in his forties sitting in front of Zhuang Rui turned around and started chatting with him with a familiar smile.

"Hehe, yeah, are you on a business trip to Mandalay, brother?"

Zhuang Rui noticed that the man was dressed rather simply, wearing only a t-shirt and jeans, and didn't seem like someone who was in business.

"Hey, what kind of business trip are we going on? This auction is over, we're just going to pick up the leftovers..."

As the middle-aged man spoke, his eyes were filled with envy as he looked at Zhuang Rui. The plane was almost entirely Chinese, and his loud voice drew everyone's attention, even the pretty flight attendants.

"Sir, do you know what the top bid price was at this public auction?"

"Young man, tell me, what was the total transaction price of this public auction?"

"Yeah, I heard it only ended this morning. And you can't make phone calls on the plane, it was so worrying..."

Upon hearing that Zhuang Rui had boarded the plane after attending a public auction in Yangon, the entire cabin erupted in noise as everyone bombarded him with questions about what had happened at the auction.

Zhuang Rui was getting a headache from these inexplicable questions, so he quickly stood up and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, this jade auction is just about trading jade stones, there's nothing much to say, really nothing much to say..."

"Young man, please tell us, whether we'll make any money on this trip depends entirely on the outcome of this auction..."

"Yeah, we might have made a wasted trip and even lost money on the plane ticket..."

"Sir, would you please have a seat?"

As soon as Zhuang Rui finished speaking, the barrage of questions came out again, this time mixed with the voice of the pretty flight attendant. She asked Zhuang Rui to sit down, but when the flight attendant looked at Zhuang Rui, her eyes were also full of curiosity.

You know, on flights from China to Myanmar, the people flight attendants see most often are those who come to Myanmar to gamble on jade. Having heard this topic for a long time, they naturally have a deep understanding of jade gambling and know that those who can go to Yangon to participate in the jade auction are all big bosses. Therefore, they also look at Zhuang Rui with special regard.

"Okay...okay, I'll sit down. Excuse me, sir, what's going on with you all? Please tell me."

Zhuang Rui had assumed that the people on the plane were all going to Mandalay on business, but now it seemed that he had misunderstood. It turned out that these people were also in Myanmar to deal in raw stones.

Zhuang Rui's guess was correct; these people were indeed trading jadeite rough stones between China and Myanmar. However, they lacked the financial resources to participate in the Myanmar jadeite auction, so they could only wait until after the auction to go to Mandalay to collect some rough stones and sell them back to China.

The reason these people went to Mandalay was that most of Myanmar's raw stone merchants were concentrated there, and they would all return after the auction. Moreover, although Mandalay was also controlled by the government army, there were many loopholes in the airport inspections there, which were not as strict as in Yangon, so these people were able to take some raw stones out of the country.

In Burmese parlance, the group on that plane were smuggling jadeite rough. They didn't have any customs clearance documents; they had simply bribed the staff at Mandalay Airport to bring a sack or two of rough stones onto the plane. Whether they made a profit or a loss depended on the small amount of rough stones they smuggled out.

The Myanmar jade auction is a bellwether for the entire jade market, and these people naturally know it very well. However, they were unable to access the latest market information while on the plane today, which is why they were so eager to ask Zhuang Rui.

"You...aren't you guys engaging in smuggling? If you get caught, won't that be a huge problem?"

Zhuang Rui hadn't expected the Myanmar government to have such strict controls on the export of raw stones, yet these people still dared to smuggle them so openly, seemingly without any fear.

"Smuggling my ass! We're just taking a few rough stones onto the plane. And the money spent on bribes and favors is more than the price of the stones themselves. Real smugglers are always escorted by cars, ships, and soldiers. What's this? The people in Myanmar are probably hoping their rough stones will be smuggled out..."

Upon hearing Zhuang Rui's words, the middle-aged man curled his lip in disdain, while others largely agreed with him. Even the pretty flight attendant was used to such things, making Zhuang Rui seem rather surprised.

Although he had been in Myanmar for quite some time, it wasn't until he heard the middle-aged man's explanation that Zhuang Rui truly understood the social structure of Myanmar.

Despite Myanmar's abundance of precious gems and teak, these are controlled by a very small number of people. Most of Myanmar's population is poor and lacks the means to make money. Driven by

desperation, the theft and sale of resources has reached an unimaginable level, which cannot be stopped simply by government decrees; they have only been slightly curbed.

In Myanmar, the country began to focus on the trade of raw jadeite only in the 1980s. Many locals in Mandalay still have a large number of raw jadeite stones, which are old mine materials from decades ago. These locals do not want to participate in the public auction and be taken advantage of by the government. As a result, there are both buyers and sellers, forming a special smuggling channel.

Zhuang Rui shook his head. These people were just ordinary businessmen who earned their money through hard work. As the saying goes, "Those who steal pearls are punished," but those who steal a country would naturally not take this small plane or make the trip just to carry a sack of stones.

"Over 20 million euros? That's over 200 million RMB!"

"Yeah, this is a bit too outrageous..."

"Old Yu, is it possible that we didn't bring enough money this time?"

As Zhuang Rui announced the bid price, everyone in the cabin, whether they were there to shop in Mandalay or on business, including the beautiful flight attendants, gaped in disbelief.

After Zhuang Rui told them the winning bid price at the Myanmar jade auction and the total transaction amount of 8 billion RMB, the entire cabin fell silent. No one spoke anymore. They were all digesting what Zhuang Rui had just said and analyzing how much rough stone they could buy in Mandalay with the money they had brought.

I believe this news will spread throughout the jewelry industry by tomorrow at the latest. At that time, no one can predict how high the price of jade jewelry will rise in the market.

At this point, the people in the cabin were no longer interested in asking Zhuang Rui for details, and Zhuang Rui, now with some free time, turned his attention to the television screen in the cabin that was showing an introduction to the city of Mandalay.

Mandalay is the capital of Mandalay Region in Myanmar, a famous former capital, and the second largest city in Myanmar, with a population of over 800,000. It is the political, economic, and cultural center of Myanmar and was once the site of the Myanmar royal palace.

Because Ava, a famous ancient capital in Myanmar's history, is located in its suburbs, overseas Chinese in Myanmar call it "Ava City".

Mandalay was a major battlefield between the Chinese Expeditionary Force and the Japanese army during World War II, resulting in a large number of Chinese people remaining there. Today, Mandalay's economy is mainly controlled by descendants of these Chinese. Due to its advantageous geographical location, it has historically been a center for the trade of raw jade, finished products, and various gemstones.

Many of Myanmar's major mines have offices in Mandalay. The Yangon jade auction has only become popular in recent years. In the last century, the auction was often held in Mandalay, and many legendary stories of jade gambling took place here. It can be said that Mandalay is a place with a long history and tradition.

The flight from Yangon to Mandalay wasn't very long; just over an hour later, the plane arrived over Mandalay Airport.

"Brother, don't be fooled by the fact that Myanmar is under a military government. The real power in Myanmar still rests with us Chinese. See those houses? They all belong to us Chinese..."

As the plane swooped down to land, Zhuang Rui could see from the window that on the edge of this city full of pagodas, rows of luxurious villas were lined up. The middle-aged man sitting in front of Zhuang Rui was introducing them to him, but his voice was soon drowned out by the roar of the plane landing.

Compared to Chinese living in places like Indonesia, the Chinese in Myanmar are much better off. Although they are wealthy, they rarely participate in politics. In addition, local forces in Myanmar are not anti-Chinese. Therefore, in Chinese-populated areas like Mandalay, the economic lifeline is basically in the hands of the Chinese.

Chapter 480 Airport Conflict

After getting off the plane, Zhuang Rui turned on his phone and found several new text messages. Some were from his mother, some from Qin Xuanbing, but the last one was from Professor Meng, reminding him not to forget the postgraduate entrance exam next week.

The preliminary exam for postgraduate studies is a written test, and the exam venue is in Beijing. Zhuang Rui had been thinking about it all along. In his opinion, he would have enough time to make it after returning from Myanmar. However, after seeing the text message, Zhuang Rui still made a phone call to Professor Meng.

During the phone call, Professor Meng knew that Zhuang Rui was in Myanmar, but he didn't say much. He just told him to go to his home first after returning to Beijing, as there were some important points he needed to discuss with Zhuang Rui. That's how China's exam-oriented education works; even last-minute cramming can be effective.

"Huh? How do you snatch a bag?"

As Zhuang Rui walked out of the passage, he was still on the phone when, unexpectedly, the suitcase he was pulling was snatched away. Zhuang Rui immediately cried out.

"Bang!"

Before Zhuang Rui could finish speaking, the person who had snatched the suitcase from behind Zhuang Rui was already flying through the air, only to be kicked in the chest by Peng Fei. However, the person was still tightly gripping Zhuang Rui's suitcase.

"What happened?"

After hanging up the phone, Zhuang Rui ran to the person who had fallen to the ground and couldn't get up. He took his own suitcase from the person's hand, and when he looked at the person again, he was a little dumbfounded.

The person lying on the ground, touching his chest and seemingly unable to speak due to the pain, was wearing airport staff clothing. At the exit, a group of people were scrambling for passengers' luggage. However, a few others noticed what was happening and approached while talking on walkie-talkies.

"Hey bro, why did you hit them?"

The middle-aged man who sat in front of Zhuang Rui on the plane also came out and frowned upon seeing the mess.

"I didn't hit him, he stole my luggage..."

Zhuang Rui said sullenly, while Peng Fei stood in front of several airport staff members, preventing them from coming forward, and was communicating with them in Burmese.

"Sigh, these people are all trying to make a few tips, brother. You don't know, at Mandalay airport, even if they help you carry your handbag, they'll ask you for \$10. Filling out a form will cost at least \$10."

Since this is your first time here, you don't know the rules. We spend hundreds of dollars on tips for these people every time. Well, I can't say any more. Take care, brother..."

Upon seeing a few people approaching from a distance, the middle-aged man quickly stopped talking and disappeared into the crowd disembarking from the plane. He frequently traveled this route, and if the airport staff took notice of him, he would be in serious trouble.

"Damn, is this even possible?"

Zhuang Rui was speechless. There are forced sales in this world, but demanding tips is something Zhuang Rui has never heard of before. Are the people of Myanmar so poor that they've gone crazy?

"Brother Zhuang, these people are demanding compensation, saying we assaulted someone and they want \$5,000 in damages. This person... wasn't actually injured much..."

After exchanging a few words with those people, Peng Fei turned back to look at Zhuang Rui, looking somewhat embarrassed. He had only kicked out subconsciously, but he had reduced the force of his kick, only making the man uncomfortable for a short while. The \$5,000 was somewhat of an extortion.

“\$5,000? Not even \$5! Are all your airport staff robbers? Snatching passengers' bags right off the bat? I'm telling you, I'm going to complain to the Myanmar government...”

Upon hearing this, Zhuang Rui immediately became furious. While good service warrants a tip, this kind of forced handbag grabbing and demanding a tip was unacceptable. He knew Burma was a former British colony and English was the common language there, so he shouted it out loud.

"Sir, your friend injured one of our airport staff members. We're just asking for some compensation for medical expenses. Is that too much to ask?"

A man who looked like a leader walked over. He had been watching from the side for a while, and only came over to negotiate with Zhuang Rui when Zhuang Rui shouted that he wanted to file a complaint. He spoke English with a slight Burmese accent.

"Who are you?" Zhuang Rui asked in English.

“My name is Wench, and I am the supervisor of the airport ground staff. It is my responsibility to seek justice for my employees...”

Actually, it's common practice for staff to accept tips at Mandalay Airport. The airport's top management are so busy accepting bribes that they're practically rolling in money. When Win Cha and his group of staff accept tips, it's just to generate revenue for themselves. Besides, he gets a cut from every tip, so of course he's going to step up now.

However, Wench didn't want to make a big fuss. All he wanted was money, and judging from Zhuang Rui and his companion's appearance and clothing, they didn't seem like those Chinese merchants who secretly smuggled a few sacks of raw stones. Wench was also quite polite in his speech.

Zhuang Rui looked at the person who was speaking. He didn't look like a supervisor at all. His fat face and big ears were completely different from the thin and weak Burmese people that Zhuang Rui knew. He looked like a head chef from a state-run canteen.

"I'm sorry, I don't think my friend did anything wrong. He was just acting in self-defense. It was your employee who violated my rights first. I didn't ask him to carry my bag..."

Zhuang Rui also took it seriously. He was usually easy to talk to, but he really couldn't stand the behavior of the Myanmar airport. It's true that money comes easily, but it doesn't grow on trees. Why should they give it to you?

"Sir, you mean you don't agree to a settlement, right?" Wincha was probably as fickle as a dog, his expression changing in an instant. He put on a stern face and spoke a few words into the walkie-talkie in Burmese.

"Brother Zhuang, he's called the soldiers outside. You go out first, I'm fine..."

Peng Fei turned to Zhuang Rui and said, "I really don't take the Burmese soldiers seriously. The Kuomintang army, which was defeated in China decades ago, was able to defeat the Burmese government army so badly that Peng Fei didn't believe that these scoundrels could hold him back."

Before Zhuang Rui could reply, a squad of soldiers rushed in from outside the airport and surrounded Zhuang Rui, Peng Fei, and the airport manager.

"It's not something that can be solved by paying \$5,000 now..."

Wencha looked at Zhuang Rui with a smug expression, thinking to himself how much money he should extort from Zhuang Rui. After all, bringing these soldiers in to act like bullies would come at a price, and these soldiers were ruthless when it came to demanding money.

"Oh? How much money would be appropriate?" A voice rang out from outside the group of soldiers.

"At least \$20,000... no, \$50,000. My employees have been injured. Without \$50,000, they'll be going to jail..."

Wen noticed that Zhuang Rui and Peng Fei were dressed well. He immediately changed the amount he was about to say, from 20,000 to 50,000, while glancing outside to see who was being so cooperative. He then asked the question he was about to ask.

“Brother Hu...” Zhuang Rui recognized the accent and looked outside, where he saw Hu Rong wearing a traditional Chinese double-breasted gown.

"Mr...Mr. Hu, Big...Big Brother?"

When Wenchu saw Hu Rong, he didn't recognize him at first. However, when he heard Zhuang Rui call him "Big Brother," he was stunned. He knew a little Chinese, but Wenchu's Chinese level was still at the level of explaining that "Big Brother" came from the same mother's womb.

No Burmese person is unaware of the Hu family. Although they do not participate in politics, in the Hpakant region, the Hu family is the local tyrant. Their mine protection teams are more powerful than the government army.

It can be said that if the Hu family wanted to, with their financial and material resources, they could easily instigate the independence of a certain region in Myanmar. After all, there are many ethnic groups in Myanmar, and they are not very harmonious. It is common for them to want to break away from each other. In fact, there are always certain interest groups behind them.

As the ground staff supervisor at Mandalay Airport, Win Cha had naturally done a lot of welcoming and seeing off guests. His understanding of Hu Rong was more in-depth than that of the average Burmese. He knew that Hu Rong had a great influence not only in the business world but also in the military, and that he had good relationships with some powerful generals in Burma.

Given Hu Rong's status and position in Myanmar, he could easily frame Wen Cha for treason or something similar with just a word, making him disappear without a trace. Therefore, Zhuang Rui's address of "elder brother" immediately terrified Wen Cha, who was now trembling with fear.

Wenchu reacted quickly, kicking the still-crying staff member on the ground hard, and looked at Zhuang Rui with a fawning smile, saying, "Misunderstanding, it's purely a misunderstanding, sir. My employee meant well and wanted to help you carry your bag, but since you don't appreciate it, then forget it. It's just a misunderstanding..."

"Since it's a misunderstanding, can we leave now?"

Zhuang Rui glanced at Wen Cha, too lazy to bother with such a person, pushed aside the soldiers with guns beside him, and went to greet Hu Rong. The two hugged.

"I'm sorry, Brother Zhuang, I was delayed on the way. I didn't expect this to happen..." As the host, Hu Rong also felt a little embarrassed.

"Mr. Hu, it's really a misunderstanding..."

Wencha was on the verge of tears. He could never get on Hu Rong's good side, and now he was being blackmailed by Hu Rong's brother. Thinking about the Hu family's power in Myanmar, he worried that if Hu Rong were to speak ill of some important person in the future, he would never have a good life. Cold sweat dripped down Wencha's spine.

"I don't want to see this happen again."

Hu Rong gave Wen Cha a cold look, then beckoned Zhuang Rui to walk out of the airport. Given his status, he had nothing to say to this airport ground staff supervisor.