

Golden 561

Chapter 561 An Expensive Gift

A modern engagement ceremony for young people should be full of romance, but with so many elders present, it's impossible to be romantic. Zhuang Rui and Qin Xuanbing followed the host's instructions like robots, proceeding according to the program.

The engagement ceremony is not much different from the wedding ceremony. The first people to be bowed to are Ouyang Gang and his wife. They are the most senior and noble people in the room, so they are naturally ranked first.

"Come here, you two..."

After Zhuang Rui and Qin Xuanbing bowed three times to the two elderly people sitting in the chairs, Grandpa Ouyang waved to his grandson.

"Here, take this. This girl is really pretty; she'll definitely give birth to a big, healthy son..."

The old lady pulled Qin Xuanbing over, took off a bracelet from her wrist with a kind expression, and was about to put it on Qin Xuanbing's hand. Zhuang Rui, who was listening nearby, broke out in a cold sweat. Fortunately, the old lady did not say anything about a slim waist and round hips.

"Grandma, this is too much, my mom gave this to you..."

Upon seeing the bracelet, Zhuang Rui couldn't help but reach out and pull Qin Xuanbing's hand back.

"My daughter gave it to me, and I'll give it to my granddaughter-in-law. What's wrong with that..."

Seeing the old lady insist on putting the blood jade bracelet on Qin Xuanbing's hand, Zhuang Rui couldn't help but laugh and cry. After all this, the thing he gave away had actually been returned.

"Well, Grandpa didn't have anything to give you, so I'll return your jade fruit plate to you..."

As Zhuang Rui was pondering this matter, the old man beside him spoke up, and a guard placed the fruit platter ornament on the table in front of Zhuang Rui.

Zhuang Rui wasn't afraid of the old man. He leaned forward and whispered, "Grandpa, this is a gift for your birthday. By the way, back when you were fighting those landlords, didn't you keep a couple of those old paintings you used to wipe your butts with?"

"Get out of my way. You think I don't know anything? That's an antique. Even if I had one, I would have donated it to the country. Why would I leave it to you, kid?"

The old man glared at Zhuang Rui, paused with his cane, but realized his gaze had no effect on his grandson. He shook his head and said, "Grandpa doesn't have many years left. I've mistreated you and your children in the past. These things are just material possessions. It's better for you to have them than for them to stay with me..."

"Thank you, Grandpa..."

Zhuang Rui clearly felt his grandfather's love for him and sincerely bowed to the old man. 000000.0000

"Mr. Ouyang, I also have a gift for you..."

Just as Zhuang Rui and Qin Xuanbing stepped back and the two elderly people were about to get up, Hu Rong from Myanmar walked out of the crowd, carrying a large travel bag.

"Oh? You're from the Hu family in Myanmar, right?"

The old man has a very good memory. Yesterday, when he was at Yuquan Mountain, he met with the Qin family from Hong Kong, including this man named Hu Rong.

"Yes, my grandfather has long admired Mr. Ouyang and specially asked me to bring a tiger skin to keep him warm. He also wishes Mr. Ouyang and his wife good health and that the tiger's roar in the mountains will continue to be a majestic sight!"

As Hu Rong spoke, he opened his travel bag. Since everyone who entered the courtyard had been checked by the guards, the travel bag was no exception, so no one stopped Hu Rong from doing so.

Hu Rong asked Qin Haoran for help, and the two of them spread out a tiger skin in mid-air. Hu Rong even held the tiger's head high above his own head, and a colorful tiger several meters long appeared before everyone's eyes.

This tiger skin was even larger than the one Hu Rong gave to Zhuang Rui. Its smooth fur shimmered in the sunlight, the yellow, white, and black colors complementing each other beautifully. The "king" character on its head added to its majestic appearance. Most remarkably, the entire skin was flawless, without a single blemish.

"Wow!"

"This is a great find! You can't find this kind of item in the country anymore..."

"Yes, judging from the color of the fur, it must have been tanned and preserved for decades..."

After Hu Rong put the tiger skin on his head, the onlookers began to murmur among themselves.

The layman might just see the spectacle and think the tiger skin is beautiful, but the expert, like Uncle De, judges its value by the condition and state of the skin.

"Alright, I'll accept this tiger skin..."

The old man's eyes lit up when he saw the tiger skin. Although he was already mostly buried, the majestic tiger skin reminded him of his glorious days of war. So he made an exception and accepted this valuable gift.

Before he retired, he had to report to certain departments when accepting gifts from foreign friends. However, the old man was no longer in office, and now it was just a private gift. Therefore, he was not afraid of what others would say and had his guard put away the tiger skin.

Because there were too many people here, which was not conducive to security, Ouyang Gang left the courtyard with guards after blessing his grandson and granddaughter-in-law and putting away the tiger skin.

After the two elderly people left, the courtyard truly became lively. Just now, when the old man was here, no one dared to make a loud noise, but now they all started teasing the two people involved, making Zhuang Rui and Qin Xuanbing suffer terribly.

Zhuang Rui vowed in his heart that when he got married, he would not announce it to the public and would just hold a small banquet at a hotel.

Both Qin Haoran and his wife gave gifts to their daughter and future son-in-law. The Qin family is considered a wealthy family in Hong Kong, so the gifts they gave were naturally quite valuable. Qin Haoran gave his future son-in-law a limited edition watch from overseas, and gave his daughter a diamond necklace.

When it was Ouyang Wan's turn, she didn't give her son a gift. Instead, she took out a jewelry box, opened it, and took out a jade necklace, which she then put around Qin Xuanbing's neck.

Qin Xuanbing had changed her clothes and was now wearing a low-cut cheongsam, revealing her collarbone and long neck. When the necklace that emitted a faint purple light was placed on Qin Xuanbing's fair neck, everyone in the room who could see the necklace gasped in surprise.

This is a necklace made of purple gemstones. Each bead is exactly the same size. Under the sunlight, every gemstone on the necklace looks like a lover's eye, radiating an endless and alluring purple light.

It's absolutely true that beautiful women need exquisite jewelry to adorn themselves. With her fair and delicate skin, firm and high breasts, and noble and dazzling violet color, Qin Xuanbing looked like a goddess, exuding endless charm with every gesture.

"What kind of gemstone is that?"

"Oh my god, it's so beautiful..."

"Honey, I want some too..."

"Is it jade? It's unlikely..."

On Earth, it's estimated that no woman could resist such captivating jewelry. In an instant, the courtyard was filled with exclamations of wonder, mixed with the coquettish voices of some women. Of course, whether their husbands could afford such things was not a concern for these women.

"Yes, if this were jade, it would definitely have purple eyes. But purple eyes are rarely seen. Who would have so many to polish a necklace?"

"I think there was a purple-eyed jade necklace at the international jewelry fair in the UK last year, right? And that necklace should have belonged to the Qin family, so how did it end up in Ms. Ouyang's hands?"

Among the crowd were many experts in the jewelry industry. Soon, someone recognized the origin of the necklace, and many more people began to inquire. Even if they couldn't get their hands on it, knowing what the necklace was all about would give them something to brag about in the future.

"That purple eye necklace won a gold medal at last year's jewelry fair in the UK. At that time, an American offered 18 million euros to buy the necklace, but the Qin family refused. Could it be that Mr. Zhuang bought it in the end?"

The speaker was Zheng Hua. He had also attended the international jewelry expo last year and knew that the Qin family had shone brightly at the expo. A string of purple-eyed jadeite necklaces had stolen the limelight from all the other jewelry on display. Now it seemed that the reason the purple-eyed necklace wasn't sold was because Zhuang Rui had bought it.

"My God, 18 million euros, isn't that almost 200 million RMB?"

Those who heard Zheng Hua's explanation couldn't help but stare in disbelief. Although their circle consisted of top-tier wealthy individuals, jewelry worth 200 million yuan was truly rare in this domestic circle.

Some female celebrities in China, when attending important occasions, wear jewelry worth millions around their necks and act all high and mighty, wanting the media to write about it extensively, as if they want the whole world to know.

However, compared to people like Zhuang Rui who subtly reveal their immense wealth, those so-called businessmen and celebrities are practically no different from vegetable vendors at the market—they're simply not presentable.

In China today, there are quite a few people with a net worth of over 100 million yuan. Some of the top-ranked people on the Forbes rich list even have net worths of tens or hundreds of billions of yuan, but those are all fixed assets or the total assets of the entire company or group.

There are probably very few people in China who can spend more than 200 million RMB on a single gift like Zhuang Rui.

Of course, these people didn't know that the necklace originally belonged to Zhuang Rui.

After attending the British Jewellery Fair last year, Zhuang Rui learned the true value of the jade necklace. At that time, his financial difficulties had also been alleviated, so he did not agree to sell the purple-eyed necklace and kept it.

After all, once you miss out on such a rare gem as a purple eye, it's hard to get it again.

Chapter 562 After Drinking

Standing in the crowd, Miao Feifei's eyes showed a hint of disappointment. Although she never wore jewelry, at this moment, she couldn't help but feel a strange mix of emotions.

At this moment, Miao Feifei even hated herself a little. With her usually flamboyant personality, why didn't she take the initiative to pursue Zhuang Rui sooner?

"You two are only engaged, not married yet. I'll definitely make sure you give me an even better necklace in the future..." Miao Feifei glanced at the two people in the room and quietly left the courtyard.

The people in the courtyard were still in shock at the jade necklace that Zhuang's mother had given them, and no one noticed Miao Feifei's departure. Zhuang Rui, however, seemed to sense something and glanced in the direction Miao Feifei had left, but of course, he saw nothing.

After making a ruckus in Zhuang Rui's courtyard house for a while, the group left the courtyard and boarded several buses that had been arranged beforehand, heading to the hotel.

The engagement ceremony can be held at home, but the meal must be arranged at a hotel. It's not like twenty years ago when weddings and banquets were all held at home and neighbors would come to help. Zhuang Rui has been living here for almost half a year and has never even seen what his neighbors look like.

Zhuang Rui and Qin Xuanbing were exhausted that morning. They hadn't sat down since they got up. Zhuang Rui was alright, as long as his spiritual energy wasn't completely depleted, he could always make up for the physical exertion. But Qin Xuanbing was standing the whole time in high heels, and after arriving at the hotel, she was so tired that she didn't want to get up from her chair.

Although he wanted to help his future wife treat her foot pain, Zhuang Rui had sworn he would never tell anyone the secret in his eyes. For now, he could only help Qin Xuanbing fend off the drinks. After toasting around the ten or so tables, Zhuang Rui's face was flushed, and he was starting to feel the effects of the alcohol.

"Brother Zhuang, come on, let's have a drink. Fatty Ma and I have some things to attend to, so we'll take our leave now..."

Just as Zhuang Rui finished toasting and sat down, Song Jun and Fatty Ma came over with several glasses of baijiu.

"Brother Song, Brother Ma, I'm so sorry for the poor hospitality..."

Zhuang Rui quickly took the wine glass. These two old men were quite honest; they used small cups, about six qian a cup, instead of the wine glasses. This amount of wine was no problem for Zhuang Rui.

However, many of those who came to Zhuang Rui's engagement ceremony today were busy people. As soon as someone led the way to leave, after about twenty or thirty minutes, when they felt that the formalities were about right, they all took their glasses to toast and say goodbye.

One or two people wouldn't matter, but Zhuang Rui couldn't handle a large group. Before long, he was already drowsy and drunk. Whenever he saw someone walking over with a wine glass, he would definitely drink the glass dry.

Yue Jing, who had just felt he could hold his liquor well and volunteered to drink for Zhuang Rui, was now in an even worse state than Zhuang Rui. After being flattered by several female guests, he had downed several glasses of baijiu in a row and was now slumped on the table, snoring.

"Little brother, how did your older brother treat you when you were in college?"

As the meal drew to a close, several classmates came over, with the fourth brother carrying two glasses filled with baijiu (Chinese liquor).

"Brothers... all my brothers have been very good to me, it's just that I'm the youngest..."

Seeing Lao Si's posture, Zhuang Rui immediately understood what was going on. "Fine," he thought, "I'll play along to the good deed." He took the large bottle of baijiu (about two ounces) from Lao Si, clinked glasses with him, and downed it in one gulp. Instantly, a spicy sensation shot up from his lower abdomen.

"Hey, Fourth Brother, your alcohol tolerance seems to have increased..."

Although Zhuang Rui's face was flushed, he was still clear-headed. Lao Si was from Guangdong and would usually pass out after just one or two ounces of baijiu. Why was he drinking two ounces in one go today?

"Damn it, fourth brother, you're not going to stop until you've got me completely drunk today..."

Zhuang Rui snatched the wine glass from Lao Si's hand and drank the rest of the wine. Only then did he realize that Lao Si had been trying to outdrink him with mineral water.

However, Zhuang Rui's alcohol tolerance had reached its limit. After saying those words, he felt dizzy and disoriented, and lost consciousness.

If Zhuang Rui knew that Lao Si had come to take revenge because he listened to Yue Jing's words and knew that he had been implicated by Zhuang Rui and had been kicked by Officer Miao, I wonder what Zhuang Rui would think.

"Water, water, I'm dying of thirst..."

After an unknown amount of time, Zhuang Rui woke up from his sleep with a splitting headache and a parched throat, feeling as if his throat was filled with sand. He barely managed to open his eyes and found himself back in his bedroom in the courtyard house.

"Rui, you're awake! Wait a minute, I'll go get you some water..."

Qin Xuanbing's voice rang in Zhuang Rui's ears. His eyes were still not fully awake, and he vaguely saw a slender figure walk to the bedside, sit down, and lift Zhuang Rui's head to rest on a soft surface. A steaming cup was then placed to Zhuang Rui's lips.

Qin Xuanbing was very caring; the water in the cup was half hot and half cold. After drinking the water, Zhuang Rui's senses slowly returned to his body.

Although the spiritual energy in Zhuang Rui's eyes could heal illnesses and injuries, it had no effect on alcohol. The drinking session at noon was truly the most intoxicated he had ever been in his life.

After drinking the water, Zhuang Rui fell into a deep sleep again. In his dream, two figures appeared intertwined. One moment it was Qin Xuanbing, but the next it was Miao Feifei. It was like a dream, and Zhuang Rui didn't know whether it was real or not.

"Xuanbing, Xuanbing!"

In his dream, Zhuang Rui seemed to be hugging Miao Feifei and doing something shameful. Qin Xuanbing saw this and left angrily. Startled, Zhuang Rui woke up calling out Qin Xuanbing's name.

"Rui, what's wrong? You're not having nightmares at your age, are you?"

Zhuang Rui felt a warm body press tightly against him. Qin Xuanbing's breath was fragrant, and her voice tickled his ears.

"I didn't have a nightmare, Xuanbing. How long have I been asleep? What did I just say?"

Zhuang Rui was truly awake this time. He saw that it was completely dark outside the window, and Qin Xuanbing was lying in the same bed with him. He quickly stretched out his arm and let Qin Xuanbing lean against his chest. However, Zhuang Rui felt a little guilty about the last question he asked.

While being questioned, Zhuang Rui's heart raced. The scene from his dream was still fresh in his mind. If he called out Miss Miao's name, he would be in big trouble. He believed that no woman could forgive her man for calling out another woman's name in his sleep.

"You were calling me just now. What time is it? Let me see..."

Qin Xuanbing stretched out her jade-like arm, turned on the bedside lamp, checked the time, and said, "It's past 5 a.m., almost dawn. You've slept for nearly 12 hours..."

Qin Xuanbing's words carried a hint of resentment. She had prepared large red candles and red wine, planning to have a romantic candlelight dinner with Zhuang Rui that evening. Who knew that Zhuang Rui would sleep so soundly that all her preparations would be in vain.

"Honey, I'm sorry, but next time those guys get married, let's get them all drunk too..."

Zhuang Rui felt relieved to realize that he hadn't made any fundamental mistakes in his sleep-talking.

"No, we're about to get up, it won't look good if someone sees us..."

Qin Xuanbing trembled as she tried to push Zhuang Rui away, but found herself wrapped in his arms around his neck, her fingers intertwined, almost merging her body with his.

"No one will see this, we're the biggest today..."

When Zhuang Rui saw Qin Xuanbing open her mouth as if she was about to say something, he immediately leaned in and kissed her.

"Mmm...mmm..."

Caught off guard by Zhuang Rui's sneak attack, Qin Xuan weakly patted Zhuang Rui's back with both hands, but the desire in her heart was completely ignited by Zhuang Rui, and she pressed her soft body against him...

Chapter 563 Farewell

After several intense battles, the room was filled with a decadent atmosphere, the air thick with the scent of desire. The bright red quilt had long been thrown to the floor, and two pale bodies lay intertwined on the bed, fast asleep.

"Oh no, what time is it...!"

When the sunlight streamed into the room through the curtains, which weren't completely blocked, Qin Xuanbing woke up from her sleep. Looking at herself and Zhuang Rui, and the scattered stains on the sheets, her pretty face flushed red.

Thinking back on her frenzy that morning, Qin Xuanbing almost didn't recognize herself. She didn't know why she was so easily aroused by Zhuang Rui's passion. If the men in Hong Kong who had pursued her knew that she had such a crazy side, she wondered what they would think.

However, what Qin Xuanbing is thinking about most right now is how to meet Zhuang Rui's mother, her future mother-in-law. You know, in ancient times, on the first day of marriage, a couple must get up early to serve tea to their parents. And the alarm clock by the bed shows that it is almost noon.

"You rascal..."

Qin Xuanbing gently lifted Zhuang Rui's right hand, which was pressing down on her, almost causing her body to go limp again. In the end, she could only pinch Zhuang Rui's waist hard.

"Ouch..."

Zhuang Rui, who was having a sweet dream, was woken up by the pinch. When he opened his eyes, he saw Qin Xuanbing looking at him angrily, but her eyes revealed more joy and affection.

"Honey, why are you up so early? You should sleep a little longer..."

Zhuang Rui grabbed the soft flesh, but felt a strong swelling in his lower body. He shook his head. He remembered that it was almost 8 o'clock when he went to bed. Why was he still having morning erections?

"Good morning? It's almost afternoon, hurry up and get up, Aunt Ouyang is probably waiting for us to have lunch..."

Qin Xuanbing became anxious after Zhuang Rui's words. Ouyang Wan certainly wouldn't blame Zhuang Rui, but she was sure to make a bad impression on her future mother-in-law. 69S1H1U1X.C101M

"Okay, let's get started..."

"Let's go eat at the Intermediate People's Court first. Aunt Li will clean up these later..."

After getting dressed, Zhuang Rui saw Qin Xuanbing busy taking off the bed sheets and duvet covers, and quickly reached out to stop her.

Qin Xuanbing blushed upon hearing this and said, "You have the nerve to let Aunt Li wash it, I feel embarrassed..."

Zhuang Rui thought about it and realized it made sense. It was really not good to let a nanny handle the couple's bedroom affairs. Putting aside everything else, the room was filled with the smell of bodily fluids. Anyone with experience would understand once they smelled it.

Zhuang Rui then got angry and the two of them put all the things to be washed into the washing machine. After opening all the windows in the room to ventilate, they walked hand in hand to the central courtyard. However, Qin Xuanbing's walking posture was slightly different from before.

"Aunt Ouyang, Dad, Mom, Grandpa, Cousin..."

Upon arriving at the central courtyard, Ouyang Wan was chatting with Qin Haoran's family. Hu Rong from Myanmar was also among them. Qin Xuanbing quickly went up to greet them, her pretty face involuntarily turning red.

"Still calling me 'Auntie'? Do you want me to give you a 'change of address fee'?"

Ouyang Wan smiled and took Qin Xuanbing's hand, then turned to Zhuang Rui and said, "You child, you're not allowed to drink so much in the future. I'm afraid Xuanbing didn't sleep well last night, did she?"

Even with Zhuang Rui's thick skin, he blushed after being scolded by his mother and immediately nodded meekly in agreement.

"Xiao Rui, we're going back this afternoon, so you have to treat Xuan Bing well..."

Seeing her daughter's expression, the mother-in-law immediately knew what was going on and said, "You two aren't young anymore, find some time to go... to the Civil Affairs Bureau, right?"

Fang Yi turned to look at Qin Haoran, and after seeing him nod, she said, "Go to the Civil Affairs Bureau and get your marriage certificate first. As for when you two will hold your wedding banquet, you can discuss it yourselves..."

Although the two were engaged, they were not legally married yet. Fang Yi was worried that the young couple would not know how to restrain themselves and would do that kind of thing recklessly. If they got pregnant and then went to get a marriage certificate, they would be laughed at by others.

"Okay, Fang... Mom, I'll do as you say, I'll take care of it when I have time..."

Zhuang Rui readily agreed, especially when he called her "Mom," which made Fang Yi beam with joy and seem decades younger. It's said that mothers-in-law like their sons-in-law more and more the more they look at them, let alone a sensible son-in-law like Zhuang Rui. Back when Qin Haoran came to her house, he wasn't this agreeable.

"Xiao Rui, you must bring Bing'er to Hong Kong often in the future, so she can see this old man..."

Grandpa Qin looked at Qin Xuanbing with deep reluctance in his eyes. He had raised this granddaughter since she was a child, and they had a very deep bond.

"Grandpa, I'll miss you too..."

Qin Xuanbing nestled into the old man's arms, her eyes filled with tears. Only now did Qin Xuanbing have a sense of being about to get married. She had been so busy yesterday that she hadn't had time to think about these things at all.

"Good child, live a good life, and Grandpa will be happy..."

The old man reached out and patted Qin Xuanbing's head, then turned to Zhuang Rui and said, "Xiao Rui, the jade jewelry at Qin Ruilin's shop in Beijing is all supplied by the head office. However, the raw materials for diamonds and other gemstone jewelry are also quite scarce recently. Although we won't run out of stock for a year or two, it's hard to say what will happen in the long run. If you have any connections, try to find a reliable supply channel..."

A jewelry store's business doesn't rely solely on one type of jewelry. Diamonds, jade, gemstones, and gold each have specific consumer bases. To succeed and grow a business, a wide variety of goods is essential; otherwise, potential customers may be poached by others.

The reason Old Master Qin said these words to Zhuang Rui was to encourage Zhuang Rui to explore overseas channels or to befriend some domestic diamond merchants and develop business in multiple ways. You should know that Qin Ruilin Store in Beijing is the best-selling store in the country. If Qin's Jewelry continues to supply it without making a profit, the pressure on Qin Ruilin Store will be quite significant.

China has now become a major diamond consumer in the world. Last year, China imported more than 2 billion US dollars worth of diamonds, but the amount of diamonds that were cleared through customs and taxed was only more than 100 million US dollars. This means that nearly 2 billion US dollars worth of diamonds were smuggled in. As a result, there are many diamond merchants in China with channels that are even more convenient than those of the Qin family and some Hong Kong merchants.

"Grandpa Qin, I understand. I'll pay attention to this when I have time, but I'll still need your support for now..."

Zhuang Rui was unaware of the details involved, and could only nod in agreement. In his mind, as long as you have money, what's there to worry about not being able to buy things? After all, the origins of jewelry like diamonds are not as limited as those of jade.

There are very rich reserves in places like Australia, Zaire, Botswana, Russia, and South Africa. In addition, countries like Congo, Brazil, Guyana, Venezuela, Angola, and even China are diamond producing areas. At least in Zhuang Rui's lifetime, there is no need to worry about diamonds being depleted.

"Alright, do your best, my dear in-law. We'll take our leave now..." Old Master Qin said as he stood up.

Upon hearing the old man's words, Zhuang Rui quickly said, "Grandpa Qin, let's finish our meal before we leave. Isn't our flight to Hong Kong at 3 PM?"

"Ha...haha, you little rascal, look at the time..."

Before Zhuang Rui could finish speaking, everyone in the courtyard burst into laughter. Zhuang Rui, puzzled, took out his phone to check the time, and his face immediately turned red. It turned out that it was already past one o'clock, and the others had probably already eaten.

It would take about 40 minutes to get to the airport, so Zhuang Rui didn't even have time to eat. He personally drove Qin Xuanbing and the three of them to the Capital Airport.

Hu Rong stayed behind. He had some things to take care of with the batch of gold he brought, so he wouldn't leave Beijing for another two days. However, he had already checked out of the hotel and would be staying at Zhuang Rui's courtyard house for the next few days.

As she watched the flight bound for Hong Kong take off, tears welled up in Qin Xuanbing's eyes. She would soon be living in the unfamiliar city of Beijing. Although she had longed to go there for a long time, she was also afraid of the unknown.

"Go back, Xuanbing, I will treat you well..."

After uttering a line from a TV drama, Zhuang Rui carefully wiped away Qin Xuanbing's tears, put his arm around her slender waist, and let her rest her head on his chest.

Zhuang Rui's understanding of men is not just about being domineering in bed; it's also about protecting one's woman in daily life.

Chapter 564 Spring Has Arrived

Apart from Uncle De, almost everyone who attended Zhuang Rui's engagement ceremony had left Beijing. Liu Chuan was busy returning to Pengcheng Mastiff Kennel, as this was a peak season for puppy illnesses. Those little guys had become Liu Chuan's precious darlings, and even Lei Lei had become a dog mom.

For the next two days, Zhuang Rui did not go out, but stayed in the courtyard. Apart from discussing jade knowledge and his experiences in the industry with Hu Rong, he spent time with his mother or Qin Xuanbing. Zhuang Rui felt somewhat guilty towards both of these women.

Qin Xuanbing stayed in England for more than half a year, and he was unable to visit her. Instead, he made a woman take a flight of dozens of hours to come to Beijing time and time again. As for Ouyang Wan, Zhuang Rui has rarely been with his mother in the past year.

Taking advantage of the free time after the New Year when no one would bother him, Zhuang Rui decided to spend some time with the two women closest to him.

However, Zhuang Rui also had another matter to attend to: the batch of gold from Myanmar had arrived, and he, along with Qin Ruilin's manager Wu and Hu Rong, brought the gold back.

However, Zhuang Rui was somewhat embarrassed because Hu Rong actually paid the customs clearance tax out of his own pocket, which was no small amount. But Hu Rong was adamant, and Zhuang Rui did not insist in the end.

The gold bricks were naturally taken to Zhuang Rui's courtyard house. Peng Fei had been accompanying Uncle De on visits to relatives and friends these past few days, while Hao Long had once again worked as a porter with Zhuang Rui, moving all two tons of gold bricks into the basement of the courtyard house.

Hundreds of gold bricks filled an entire antique shelf, emitting golden light under the bright incandescent bulbs in the basement, bathing the entire basement in a golden glow. Even Qin Xuanbing's fair face looked as if it were covered in gold dust.

Ouyang Wan never interfered in Zhuang Rui's business affairs. Although she was surprised that her son had acquired so much gold, she ultimately didn't inquire. Qin Xuanbing, however, was curious and pressed him for details. Of course, this happened after Hu Rong returned to Myanmar.

After hearing what had happened, the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law could only marvel at Zhuang Rui's good fortune. He had even unearthed a treasure that the Japanese devils had hidden abroad, because there was really no other explanation for it except luck.

"Zhuang Rui, come quick! The lotus leaves have turned green..."

Qin Xuanbing's voice came from the pavilion. Zhuang Rui, who was sunbathing and reading in the courtyard, put his book on the recliner and walked over. Behind him followed the increasingly robust

white lion. After more than half a year of recuperation, the white lion's weight had reached more than 200 pounds, and it really looked like a lion.

It's almost March now. Spring has arrived, and all things on earth are showing signs of revival. The lotus leaves that withered in the pond during winter have sprouted new green buds. It's estimated that by April, the garden will be filled with the fragrance of lotus flowers.

The jujube and osmanthus trees in the yard have also started to sprout. I believe that in a few more days, the garden will be full of spring colors. With these two gardens, there is no need to go out for a spring outing. You can see everything from home.

Zhuang Rui also instructed Peng Fei to buy some pigeons to raise in the front yard. He really liked the "cooing" sound made by the pigeons, especially the "whooshing" sound made by the whistles under their feet after they flew into the sky, which gave off a strong sense of old Beijing mansions. This kind of life was exactly what Zhuang Rui longed for.

"Zhuang Rui, do you think we look like an old man and woman in their seventies or eighties? Just staying at home all day doing nothing?"

Qin Xuanbing leaned half of her body against Zhuang Rui, talking to him languidly. After these few days of Zhuang Rui's care, Qin Xuanbing became even more radiant and beautiful. Every move she made had a mesmerizing quality. Even Zhuang Rui found it hard to resist Qin Xuanbing's charm.

"If I had a beautiful old lady like you, I'd be happy to stay at home..."

Zhuang Rui smiled and replied, pulling Qin Xuanbing closer by his right arm around her waist. He then asked, "What's wrong? Want to go out and do something?"

"Yeah, being too idle isn't good either. Eating and sleeping all day, you're going to gain weight..."

Qin Xuanbing ran her hand through her hair; a gentle breeze caused her long hair to flutter, and the indescribable charm she exuded almost made Zhuang Rui stare in disbelief.

"You idiot, what are you thinking about?"

Seeing Zhuang Rui's lecherous look, Qin Xuanbing couldn't help but pinch the soft flesh on his waist. She also realized that there was something wrong with what she had just said, and a blush instantly rose on her fair face.

These past few days, the amount of time they've spent exercising in bed almost equals the time they go to sleep. Gaining weight? That's practically impossible; I've never heard of that kind of activity burning a lot of calories.

"It's good to be a little chubby, so cute to be plump like a little girl..."

Zhuang Rui gave Qin Xuanbing a wicked smile and kissed her on the cheek. Startled, Qin Xuanbing quickly pushed Zhuang Rui away and glanced around. The two hadn't even registered their marriage yet. Although everyone knew this, Qin Xuanbing was still a little embarrassed to be intimate in public.

"How about this, Xuanbing, if you're really bored, you can design some jade jewelry. I have quite a few rough stones that haven't been cut open yet. When we get two pieces, we can make jewelry specifically for your designs. What do you think?"

Zhuang Rui thought for a moment and decided that he still needed to find something for Qin Xuanbing to do. Otherwise, the two of them were only in their early twenties, and they couldn't just live like those old men and women, wasting their lives.

Another reason is that although Luo Jiang's jade carving skills are superb, his jewelry design skills are still slightly inferior to those of professionals.

Currently, most of the items carved by Luo Jiang are common items like the twelve zodiac animals. Qin Ruilin's shop has very few distinctive jade jewelry pieces, and Qin Xuanbing is able to fill this gap perfectly.

"Great, if only there were top-quality jadeite like the purple-eyed variety..."

Qin Xuanbing was immediately delighted upon hearing Zhuang Rui's words, but her reply made Zhuang Rui smile wryly. Among so many rough stones at the Myanmar jade auction, not a single piece of top-quality purple jade was found; it's not something that's easy to come by.

"You couldn't buy a single purple eye even if you sold your husband. Wait, I need to take this call..."

Zhuang Rui made a joke to Qin Xuanbing when his phone suddenly rang.

"Hey, is this Brother Zhuang? It's me, Da Xiong. I... I just wanted to ask when we two brothers start work?"

When Zhuang Rui heard Da Xiong's voice on the phone, he was stunned for a moment. These past two days, he had been spending time with his mother and Qin Xuanbing at the courtyard house, and he had completely forgotten about taking Da Xiong and Monkey to Panjiayuan.

Zhuang Rui glanced at his watch; it was 11 a.m. Since Uncle De was returning to Zhonghai tomorrow, Zhuang Rui had specially invited him to his home for lunch. He figured they wouldn't be going to Panjiayuan until the afternoon, so he said into the phone, "Da Xiong, I'll take you two to the shop this afternoon. By the way, is Xiao Jing at work yet?"

On the day of Zhuang Rui's engagement, he introduced Xiao Jing to Manager Wu. He left the arrangements to Manager Wu, but he hadn't inquired about it for the past two days and didn't know if Manager Wu had made the arrangements yet.

"Brother Zhuang, Xiao Jing went to work yesterday, she's doing great. My brother and I both went to check on her..."

Da Xiong was quite excited when he heard that Zhuang Rui was going to take them to the store that afternoon.

They'd been in Beijing for about a week, and were getting a bit tired of wandering around. Plus, after witnessing Zhuang Rui's engagement that day, the two brothers were eager to get to work and make a good impression. Besides, Zhuang Rui had promised them a monthly salary of 10,000 yuan, so starting work a day earlier meant getting paid a day earlier.

"Okay, I'll pick you up this afternoon and call you when I get there..."

Zhuang Rui hung up the phone. He realized that he had really fallen into a trance these past few days, neglecting his work and not even knowing whether Zhao Hanxuan's shop was finished being renovated.

"Let's go out for a walk this afternoon. I opened an antique shop. Oh, and I also need to buy you a car when I have time. I'll go with you to choose what kind of car you like..."

Seeing that Qin Xuanbing looked confused, Zhuang Rui explained a few things to her. Qin Xuanbing had also been feeling a bit down these past few days, so she smiled and nodded in agreement.

Love also has an expiration date. Couples in love feel that everything about each other is perfect, but if they spend too much time together, all sorts of flaws will probably appear. This is why Zhuang Rui and Qin Xuanbing can be so passionate when they meet again after a period of separation.

More than half an hour later, Peng Fei drove Uncle De to the courtyard house.

Ouyang Wan knew that Uncle De had always treated his son as a nephew and respected him greatly. She specially cooked a table full of dishes herself, and Zhuang Rui had a few drinks with Uncle De at noon.

"Uncle De, you're going too? Okay, then let's take two cars and go together..."

After dinner, Zhuang Rui originally intended to take Uncle De back to the hotel, but when Uncle De heard that he was going to Panjiayuan, he also wanted to go and have a look. So Zhuang Rui simply drove his Audi with Qin Xuanbing and Uncle De, and had Peng Fei drive the empty Grand Cherokee to pick up Da Xiong and Monkey.

"Hey, this is way bigger than our Pengcheng antique market..."

Upon arriving at Panjiayuan, Da Xiong and Monkey stared wide-eyed at the crowded throng. The two were wondering if performing a double act in Panjiayuan would surely boost their business compared to Pengcheng.

"Alright, from now on you'll just stay here all the time. You'll have plenty to see..."

Zhuang Rui smiled and led the group toward his shop, which was located in the middle of Panjiayuan, in one of the busiest spots. If Zhao Hanxuan hadn't wanted to transfer the shop and its goods together, Zhuang Rui wouldn't have gotten this bargain.

Upon arriving at his own shop, Zhuang Rui noticed that the signboard had been replaced with the work of a master calligrapher. On the dark, heavy plaque, the three large characters "Xuanrui Zhai" were written in a flamboyant and elegant style.

Chapter 565 The Waiter

When Uncle De and the others saw Zhuang Rui stop and look up at the signboard, they also stopped and looked up. However, the dark and heavy signboard evoked completely different thoughts in each of them. 69shux.com

With Da Xiong and the monkey's eyesight, they could at most recognize what these three characters were. As for the quality of the calligraphy, Da Xiong could still make some sense of it, but the monkey was completely clueless. He looked at it for a long time but couldn't figure it out. It seemed to be no different from the signs of the previous shops.

As for Qin Xuanbing, she felt a sweet warmth in her heart when she saw the sign. Although the grass radical of her name had been removed, the three characters "Xuanrui Zhai" clearly took one character each from her and Zhuang Rui's names, and its meaning was self-evident.

Women are always easily moved, and Zhuang Rui's efforts were not in vain. At least Qin Xuanbing is now sweeter than if she had drunk honey water. She is already considering whether to grant Zhuang Rui's wish tonight for the few embarrassing things she refused yesterday.

"Xiao Rui, how did you manage to get this person to write the shop name for you? I heard the old man isn't in very good health and rarely writes for others these days..."

As the saying goes, the layman sees the spectacle, while the expert sees the details. Uncle De could tell from the size and order of the font on this signboard that it wasn't copied from somewhere else, but was indeed specially written by that calligraphy master.

Nowadays, some businesses, in order to attract customers, often use characters written by celebrities to make rubbings and then connect them to form the signs or sentences they need. However, the standardization of those characters is far inferior to that of specially written characters, and experts can tell the difference at a glance.

"A while ago, I went with Teacher Jin to pay New Year's respects to the master. He seemed to be in good spirits, so we asked him for two pieces of calligraphy..."

Zhuang Rui replied with a smile, his expression revealing considerable pride. Due to health reasons, the old gentleman had rarely picked up a brush in recent years, making his two pieces of calligraphy truly exceptional. Many shops in Panjiayuan used the master's inscription as their signs, but those written by the master after the age of 90 were definitely unique to him.

"Oh, I remember now, the calligraphy you wrote on your engagement day was also by a master. You fat Jin, you didn't even tell me that your teacher is feeling better. I was afraid of disturbing the master, so I didn't dare to visit you..."

Upon hearing Zhuang Rui's words, Uncle De immediately cursed Fatty Jin indignantly. He and the master were old acquaintances; Uncle De had known the master since Fatty Jin was still wearing open-crotch pants. This time, when he came to Beijing to visit relatives and friends, he was afraid that the master was not in good health, so he did not dare to disturb him at home.

"Boss, you've arrived! Why are you standing at the door? Please come in..."

Zhuang Rui and his group stood at the door, blocking the shop entrance. When Zhao Hanxuan saw Zhuang Rui inside, he quickly greeted him. After more than half a month of adjustment, his mentality had basically changed, and he had temporarily adapted to the identity of going from boss to employee.

"Old Zhao, you're very efficient..."

Zhuang Rui greeted Zhao Hanxuan with a smile and led everyone into the store. What greeted them was a row of glass counters, seven or eight meters long, which were exquisitely made.

Inside the display case, there is a small spotlight every few centimeters. This is a common technique used by jewelry retailers. Under the illumination of these strong lights, even jewelry of average quality can shine with dazzling brilliance.

The layout of the entire shop has also changed. The most prominent place is now reserved for the jewelry counter, while the stationery is placed on both sides. Several ancient inkstones are displayed in the jewelry counter, and these items can be considered antiques.

Zhao Hanxuan's business relies heavily on repeat customers, so he doesn't need a signboard or storefront to attract them. Judging from the people buying stationery, business seems to be doing quite well.

It's clear that Zhao Hanxuan put in a lot of effort to get all this done in just over ten days.

"Boss, how is it? Are you satisfied? By the way, that's a copy of the new shop's business license hanging over there. I've corrected it all. I'll get the original for you later..."

The reason Zhao Hanxuan didn't call Zhuang Rui was that he wanted Zhuang Rui to come and see the changes here so that he could have a direct understanding of his own abilities. Regardless of whether he would start his own business again in the future, he was working for Zhuang Rui now, so he naturally had to be worthy of the tens of thousands of yuan he received every month.

Zhuang Rui nodded, walked behind the shop counter, and looked at the business license hanging on the wall. The legal representative's name had been changed to his own, which meant that if anything happened to Xuanrui Zhai in the future, Zhuang Rui would be responsible.

"That's right, Lao Zhao. Let me introduce you. This is my teacher, Uncle De from Zhonghai, and this is my wife..."

Zhuang Rui's words made Qin Xuanbing blush. In Hong Kong, people usually introduce their wives or madams, but the word "daughter-in-law" sounded much more intimate and full of life.

After Uncle De and Qin Xuanbing had greeted Zhao Hanxuan, Zhuang Rui pointed to Daxiong and said, "His name is Daxiong, he's my friend. From now on, he'll be learning about writing implements from you. If you think he's acceptable, he can be your disciple or apprentice, as long as he understands a bit about this industry..."

The antique trade can be simple in some ways, but it can also be extremely complex. No one can become an expert in appraising certain items simply by looking at pictures in books. To master a subject, one needs the guidance of a teacher.

However, many modern antique appraisal experts are like old craftsmen who cherish their knowledge and are unwilling to pass on their experience to newcomers. It is not uncommon for apprentices to teach their masters but the apprentices starve to death. The meaning behind Zhuang Rui's words to Zhao Hanxuan was also to subtly ask Zhao Hanxuan to pass on some genuine knowledge to Da Xiong.

"Okay, this is what we agreed on, Old Zhao, I definitely won't hold anything back..."

After sizing up Da Xiong, Zhao Hanxuan readily agreed. This was because Da Xiong looked rather honest and made a good first impression. If Zhao Hanxuan had known that Da Xiong used to be a swindler in the antique market, he probably wouldn't have agreed so readily, since he himself had been badly swindled by these swindlers.

"Teacher Zhao, I can start work today. You can arrange whatever you want, I'm fine with anything..."

Da Xiong was also very perceptive. He stepped forward and bowed deeply to Zhao Hanxuan, first performing the apprenticeship ceremony. This pleased Zhao Hanxuan, who said, "Start as a shop assistant. In our line of work, the main thing is to observe people's expressions and demeanor, to find out whether customers have any desire to buy something in just a few words, and then introduce products according to their needs."

Da Xiong, you can learn these things slowly. First, familiarize yourself with the Four Treasures of the Study. Then I'll give you a price list so you can understand the market situation. It's not very complicated. Go change your clothes first, and follow Xiao Wang to see how he talks to customers..."

As Zhao Hanxuan spoke, he called over one of his former employees, Xiao Wang, and had him take Zhao Hanxuan to the back to change clothes. These employees were all wearing long robes and mandarin jackets, which was a characteristic of Panjiayuan; basically, every shop dressed like that.

To be honest, once Da Xiong changed his clothes, he really looked the part. He was completely different from the person who used to wear a cotton-padded jacket and set up a stall at the Pengcheng Antique Market. Especially his smile, which was even more honest than when he was performing a double act. He was definitely the kind of person who was kind on the outside but ruthless on the inside.

In fact, when it comes to the skill of tailoring one's approach to different people, Da Xiong is probably no less capable than the two current shop assistants. After all, he and Monkey have been in the antique market for several years, and they have dealt with quite a few people through their charade. They are not lacking in experience, which is the main reason why Zhuang Rui asked these two brothers to help him.

"Brother Zhuang, Teacher Zhao, I'm going to work with Brother Wang now..."

After greeting Zhuang Rui and Zhao Hanxuan, Da Xiong followed Xiao Wang to serve the customers. The store was quite busy today, and the two employees were a bit overwhelmed. Zhao Hanxuan himself had been serving the customers.

"Old Zhao, this guy's name is Monkey. He'll be in charge of the jewelry and antiques business from now on. I'll come over and teach him when I have time. But in the shop, Da Xiong and Monkey will be under your supervision. When there's no one around in the antiques section, have him help sell some stationery items. Also, give these two some pointers on the ins and outs of the trade..."

After Da Xiong left, Zhuang Rui introduced Monkey to Zhao Hanxuan. Monkey wasn't as steady as Da Xiong, but he was very sweet-talking. He could just set the prices for the antiques and jewelry and let Zhao Hanxuan sell them according to his prices. There was no need for Monkey to have the ability to authenticate the antiques.

"Okay, you should go change your clothes too, and learn from those two first..." Zhao Hanxuan nodded in agreement.

The monkey went in and changed into a long robe. Although he didn't appear as composed as Nobita, he exuded a cleverness and had the air of an antique shop assistant from before the liberation.

Sure enough, as soon as someone entered the shop, the monkey immediately bowed and went up to greet them, leading them to the inkstone area in just a few words.

"Boss, the two people you found are both quite good..."

Zhao Hanxuan also realized that when it came to reading people's expressions, his two former companions were probably no match for Da Xiong and Monkey.

"Hehe, they used to run stalls in the antique market for a few years, so they're familiar with these things, but their professional knowledge is lacking. Old Zhao, you should give them more guidance in the future..."

Zhuang Rui didn't intend to hide anything from Zhao Hanxuan, so he briefly explained their backgrounds. These things were obvious, and others could tell even if he didn't say anything.

"Uncle De, please have a seat. I brought some things; let me set them up first..."

After settling the two of them, Zhuang Rui invited Uncle De to sit down in the tea room where guests were entertained in the shop, while he took out the more than thirty antiques and jewelry he was carrying with him.

Chapter 566 A Joyful Celebration Upon Opening the Door

Zhuang Rui brought dozens of antiques this time, including not only jewelry and jade, but also items like a tortoiseshell ruyi scepter, gold hairpins for women, and beaded flowers—basically miscellaneous items.

These items can all be categorized as miscellaneous antiques. Zhuang Rui didn't take the boxes from Qin Ruilin, as putting these items in boxes would lower their quality. After opening the counter with the key Zhao Hanxuan gave him, he placed the items one by one inside the counter.

When the monkey saw Zhuang Rui tidying up the antique counter, it quickly came over, as this was where it would be busy from now on.

After placing them in place, Zhuang Rui turned on the spotlights, and the somewhat old jewelry inside immediately shone with a dazzling light, attracting some customers who were selecting stationery to come over and take a look.

"Boss, how much are these beaded flowers? Could you show them to me?"

No sooner had Zhuang Rui put the item in than a woman in her forties asked to see it. Zhuang Rui looked up at the woman and noticed that she was wearing a bracelet with good quality jade on her wrist and was dressed quite elegantly, so she seemed to be a wealthy person.

"It's hard to say the price of this item; it's an antique passed down from the Qing Dynasty. If you're interested, you can take a look..."

Zhuang Rui opened the counter with the key, pinched the bottom of the beaded flower with two fingers, took it out and placed it in the young woman's palm.

The center of this beaded flower features a pearl the size of a fingernail as its main material. It is then crafted using the technique of gold inlay to create a phoenix nodding its head. Additionally, it is inlaid with some rubies and emeralds. This design and craftsmanship is extremely complex and is virtually unseen in modern times.

Although there were no advanced machines in ancient times, the skills of many craftsmen were ingenious and far superior to those of today. This beaded flower looks simple, but the production process is extremely complicated. This lady has a good eye and took a liking to it at first glance.

The woman held the beaded flower in her hand and examined it for a while, then said to Zhuang Rui, "Not bad, I quite like this. Boss, name your price..."

"Well... let's talk inside, everyone. I'm sorry, the items in this display case have just been put on the shelves and are not for sale yet..."

There were quite a few people gathered around the counter, all clamoring for Zhuang Rui to bring out the items they wanted for a closer look. Zhuang Rui had no choice but to announce that he wouldn't be doing business that day.

These items are worth over five million in total, and Zhuang Rui simply couldn't possibly show them all one by one. Even when you buy a phone in a mall, they only give you a plastic case to look at.

"Hey boss, if we're not allowed to look around when we're open for business, how are we supposed to buy anything? And why did you give that woman the chance to see it?" Someone in the crowd started jeering.

Zhuang Rui frowned upon hearing this and said, "The items in my display case are all antiques, not those fakes displayed on shelves. They are all priced at over ten thousand yuan. If you are interested, I can take them to the back room so you can examine them at your leisure..."

As soon as Zhuang Rui said this, most of the onlookers dispersed. The boss had made his point very clear: if they wanted to see, they could go inside to talk, but if they went in and didn't buy anything, they would lose face. Most of these people were tourists from out of town, and they were generally unwilling to spend a lot of money to buy things here.

"Old Zhao, write a note and stick it on the counter: not for sale today..."

Before inviting the lady into the inner room, Zhuang Rui turned to Zhao Hanxuan and told him that he hadn't told Monkey the prices of these items yet. No matter how eloquent Monkey was, he would be useless if he didn't know the prices.

Zhuang Rui has no worries about selling his items. Panjiayuan has a huge daily flow of visitors, including many collectors from all over the country who come here to browse and find treasures. All his items are genuine, and he is confident that people who like them will buy them.

Zhuang Rui dropped Da Xiong and the monkey off at work today and casually put these things up there. It wasn't that they were going to start selling them today. If this lady hadn't genuinely wanted to buy, Zhuang Rui wouldn't have invited her inside.

Zhao Hanxuan also renovated the partitioned room in Xuanruizhai. Perhaps considering that Zhuang Rui is a young man who likes fashion, Zhao Hanxuan put a sofa around the room and a coffee table in the middle, while the original square table and chairs were moved to another place.

Uncle De and Qin Xuanbing had just followed them into the inner room. After taking the beaded hairpin from the lady, Uncle De put on his reading glasses and examined it for a while. Somewhat surprised, he asked Zhuang Rui, "Xiao Zhuang, where did you get this? This thing is no ordinary item. Even in the past, only the Imperial Workshop had this kind of craftsmanship..."

"Uncle De, the items are absolutely legitimate, no one will hold us accountable. Tell me, what's the approximate market price for this stuff right now? I don't really know much about it..."

Zhuang Rui smiled and poured tea for Uncle De and the lady. It was inconvenient to say here that it was brought from Myanmar. This item belonged to the miscellaneous antique category, so Uncle De could give him a price.

However, what was a little strange was that the lady didn't say anything after entering the house. After sitting down, she listened to Zhuang Rui and Uncle De's conversation. Perhaps she wanted to observe them for a while longer?

"You brat, you don't even know the price, yet you dare to put it out for sale?"

Uncle De laughed and scolded Zhuang Rui, then reached out and took the magnifying glass Zhuang Rui handed him, and began to examine the items again.

"This item is not gilded. The gold used to inlay the pearls is pure gold, and the gold next to it is old silver. These gemstones should have been tributes from Laos, Myanmar and other places in the past, and they are very valuable. What is most rare is that this was made by the Imperial Workshop. If it were in ancient times, it would have been a gift from the emperor to his concubines."

Furthermore, this craft is now lost. If it were to go to auction, this beaded flower would likely fetch between 800,000 and 1 million, and it still has significant potential for appreciation in the future..."

After examining the beaded flower several times, Uncle De gave his assessment.

"So expensive?"

Zhuang Rui was startled by Uncle De's words. He had originally priced the beaded flower at 80,000 RMB, but Uncle De had increased the price by more than ten times.

Zhuang Rui's surprise wasn't solely due to the beaded flower. If that were the case, then most of the things he brought from Myanmar were gifts from the palace, meaning their prices would be many times higher than he had estimated.

"Is this how you do business? Everyone else complains that the price is too low, but you complain that it's too high..."

Qin Xuanbing, who was standing to the side, couldn't stand it any longer and nudged Zhuang Rui, which made everyone in the room laugh.

"Hehe, it's just that I'm not very good at it yet. It's not shameful in front of the teacher..."

Zhuang Rui scratched his head, looked at the woman who wanted to buy the beaded flower, and said, "Madam, my teacher said that this beaded flower is priced between 800,000 and 1,000,000 yuan. I'll compromise and set the price at 900,000 yuan. You don't need to rush to buy it. You can have an expert come to the store to take a look before making a decision..."

Zhuang Rui could tell that the jade bracelet the lady was wearing was worth over a million yuan, indicating that she definitely had the purchasing power to buy this beaded flower.

What Zhuang Rui said next was also quite deliberate. He said, "I've set a price for the item, but I don't care if it's genuine or not. You can have an expert look at it." This shows that he has confidence in his own item.

"No need for that, boss, I've decided, I'll take this beaded flower, at your price..."

To Zhuang Rui, Qin Xuanbing, and the others' astonishment, the woman didn't hesitate at all and immediately decided to buy it. After she finished speaking, she took out her phone, dialed a number, mentioned Zhuang Rui's store name, and hung it up, seemingly to notify someone to come over.

"Excuse me, ma'am, do you know him? Why didn't you try to bargain with the price he quoted?"

Qin Xuanbing pointed at Zhuang Rui and asked the woman, "This is a bit strange."

If it weren't for the woman's rather advanced age, Qin Xuanbing would have suspected that she had some kind of relationship with Zhuang Rui. She had never seen anyone buy things like this before. The price was whatever the seller quoted, and that was the price, without even haggling. This wasn't like buying cabbage at the market.

"I not only know this boss, I also know Teacher Ma..."

The woman's words made Qin Xuanbing tense up immediately. Although the woman was a bit older, she still had a lot of charm. Who knew if Zhuang Rui and she had some kind of relationship?

If Zhuang Rui knew Qin Xuanbing's thoughts, he would be so ashamed that he would jump into the moat. Is he really that kind of person who doesn't care about anything?

"Oh? You know me?"

Uncle De was also taken aback. His surname was Ma, but he wasn't well-known in Beijing. Instead, he was more recognized in Jiangsu and Zhejiang.

"Haha, I met Mr. Zhuang Rui on TV. Teacher Ma is an appraisal expert from the Jiangsu and Zhejiang region. The items you appraised are definitely worth this price. Gentlemen, here is my business card..."

The woman took out a box of business cards from her purse and handed one to each of Uncle Zhuang Ruide and Qin Xuanbing, then said, "With such a distinguished teacher and student, I have even less reason to buy counterfeit goods..."

"Qi Zhu, Vice President of China XX Group..."

Uncle De started reading from a famous movie, then suddenly his face lit up with realization. He said, "Oh, I know, you're Chairman Qi's daughter from XX Group, right? I remember when I met Chairman Qi a few years ago, there seemed to be a girl with him. Was that you?"

Upon hearing this, Qi Zhu laughed and said, "Yes, Teacher Ma remembers now, that girl is me. Actually, my name is Qi Zhenzhu, so I especially like pearls and wanted to buy this pearl flower..."

"Get out, get out! If you don't leave, I'm calling security!"

Just as Uncle De was catching up with Qi Zhu, Zhao Hanxuan's roar suddenly came from inside the shop.

Chapter 567 Fool vs. Idiot

"Uncle De, Sister Qi Zhu, please have a seat, I'll go out and take a look..."

At that moment, not only could Zhao Hanxuan's shouts and curses be heard outside, but also the arguing of another man. Both men had loud voices, and the noise disturbed the peace inside. Zhuang Rui apologized to the group and got up to leave.

"Old Zhao, what's going on? Let's talk this out, let go of my hand first..."

As Zhuang Rui walked forward, he saw Zhao Hanxuan grabbing a man by the collar and pulling him away forcefully. After hearing Zhuang Rui's words, Zhao Hanxuan let go.

"Get out of here right now, or I'll call security..."

After yelling at the man, Zhao Hanxuan turned to Zhuang Rui and said angrily, "Boss Zhuang, it's a guy selling antique inkstones. A few days ago, someone wanted to buy antique inkstones, and now this guy's here to sell them. He's definitely one of those scammers' again. Damn it, do they think I, Old Zhao, am easy to bully or what...?"

"Hey, how can you talk like that? I heard you collect inkstones, so I brought some old items from my home to show you. If you don't want them, just say so, don't be so hurtful..."

When Zhao Hanxuan said this, the person who had just argued with him became unhappy and started shouting loudly. It's innate for Chinese people to love watching a good show. As soon as there was a quarrel at the entrance of the shop, a crowd of people quickly gathered outside, completely blocking the entrance to Xuanrui Zhai.

Zhuang Rui looked at the person who was speaking. He was a middle-aged man, about thirty-one or thirty-two years old, not much older than himself. He was dressed fairly well, but his eyes were not very pleasing. While speaking, he kept staring at Qin Xuanbing, who was following behind him.

"You're spewing insults? I'd like to hit you too, you believe me?"

Zhao Hanxuan was truly enraged, abandoning all pretense of scholarly decorum. He rolled up his sleeves, ready to engage the man in a live fight. Zhuang Rui quickly grabbed Zhao Hanxuan around the waist, managing to pull him back into the shop with considerable effort. It seemed Old Zhao was venting his anger from being scammed before the New Year on this man.

"Go ahead and hit me! You dare to hit me once? I've never seen such an unreasonable person before! Everyone, I came here to sell inkstones, and this person not only doesn't want them, but also tries to hit me. Is this how you do business?"

The middle-aged man was genuinely afraid that Zhao Hanxuan would make a move. He figured he couldn't beat the chubby, fair-skinned old Zhao. By now, he had retreated outside the shop. Seeing that a crowd had gathered outside, he began to loudly denounce "Xuanrui Zhai".

"What's so strange about a big store bullying its customers?"

"I heard this shop has changed owners, and they seem to be getting quite irritated..."

"Who would dare to enter a store like this and buy anything?"

Immediately, the onlookers began to discuss among themselves. They were talking badly about others, so they didn't suffer any loss themselves, and they weren't afraid of being overheard by the Xuanrui Zhai people. This wasn't ancient times, where the Imperial Censor could be convicted of spreading rumors.

Upon hearing the man's words, Zhuang Rui frowned immediately. "Could this be another shop trying to cause trouble?"

But thinking about it, Lao Zhao has been working here for several years, and I've never shown my face. I don't have anyone I don't get along with in Panjiayuan.

Zhuang Rui was quite annoyed that he had just closed the deal with Qi Zhu and felt like he was on the right track, but then this mess came up.

"Hey, I'm the owner of this shop. Come in and talk to me. What's going on?"

After Zhuang Rui pressed Zhao Hanxuan into a chair, he walked to the shop entrance and called out to the man. At the same time, he gave Da Xiong and Monkey a look. The two immediately stepped forward. Da Xiong dragged the middle-aged man into the shop, while Monkey went outside and shouted, "It's nothing, it's nothing. Gentlemen, you can all leave now. There's nothing to see..."

Some onlookers wanted to go into the shop, but were stopped by Monkey and the other two shop assistants. When they realized there was nothing exciting to see, they dispersed. Panjiayuan has such a large flow of people every day, it's normal for a small incident to happen, and it will soon be forgotten.

"What...what do you want? Don't think I'm scared just because there are more of you..."

After being half-dragged, half-pulled into the shop by Da Xiong, the middle-aged man's face turned pale, and his voice trembled. Outside, he had the support of many troublemakers, but inside the shop, he was at the mercy of others.

"Alright, what's your name? Sit down, have some water, and tell me what happened."

Although Zhuang Rui didn't have a good first impression of this person, he didn't want him to cause trouble in the store. Business people hate this kind of person the most; he's like a fly, and you can't swat him away. His buzzing is so annoying.

“My name is Kong Shixian. What else could have happened? I held up this inkstone and asked that person if he would buy it, and he immediately started cursing. I said, ‘Even people from the capital shouldn’t act like this, right? Isn’t this bullying us outsiders?’”

The man named Kong Shixian was clearly lacking in confidence. He had just been talking about Zhao Hanxuan's intention to beat someone up, but now he had escalated the issue to the point of portraying it as a case of Beijingers bullying others.

"Alright, alright, don't shout anymore. Neither he nor I are from Beijing, so we can't bully you..."

Zhuang Rui waved his hand to interrupt the man, and continued, "Take out your antique inkstone and let me see. If it's fake, you can complain wherever you want. Panjiayuan has a department that specializes in handling these kinds of issues, and you can go and report it there..."

"Boss, what are you looking at? This guy is trying to sell a broken brick as an inkstone. Nobody would buy it..."

Before Zhuang Rui could finish speaking, Zhao Hanxuan, who was standing to the side, stood up indignantly. He wasn't cursing as soon as he entered the door, as Kong Shixian had said, but after looking at the things, he simply couldn't hold back anymore.

"If you don't know its value, don't say it's bad. This item has been passed down in my family for hundreds of years..."

Kong Shixian's appearance lacked any of his ancestors' demeanor; he looked more like a vendor haggling over prices at a market.

Zhuang Rui wasn't interested in hearing any stories right now. While other things in the antique trade might be unique, these stories could go on for three days and three nights without repeating themselves. He quickly waved his hand and said, "Alright, take the items out and let me see..."

"This is truly a family heirloom..."

The man muttered something as he placed the cloth bundle in his hand on the table. When he opened it, Zhuang Rui was immediately stunned.

"I said, is this an inkstone?"

Zhuang Rui looked at the dark, unremarkable thing, which was about 18*16 centimeters in size and six or seven centimeters thick, and couldn't help but laugh and cry at the same time.

"Look, this surface is so smooth, it's for grinding, what else could it be but an inkstone?"

Kong Shixian's words almost made Zhuang Rui burst out laughing. What kind of logic is that? Marble floors are smoother, so are they also inkstones?

"Alright, this thing of yours is just an ancient city brick. If someone likes it, it might sell for three or five hundred yuan. Stop dawdling here and let's go..."

Zhuang Rui recognized the origin of this thing. There are some people who collect ancient city bricks now, but he doesn't have a taste for them and isn't very interested in this kind of thing.

"Hey, hey, this is unfair! It's clearly an inkstone, but you're calling it a broken brick. How am I supposed to sell it now? No way, you have to buy it..."

Upon hearing Zhuang Rui's words, Kong Shixian's voice suddenly rose eight octaves. Zhuang Rui realized that this guy was definitely a scoundrel, doing the same old tricks that Da Xiong and the monkey used to pull—if he couldn't fool them, he would force them to sell. His skills were far too low.

Zhuang Rui was getting impatient. There was a 900,000 yuan deal waiting to be discussed inside. He immediately took out his phone and said, "Fine, I'll call the police. You tell the officers how we've bullied you, okay?"

As Zhuang Rui spoke, he prepared to dial 110, his eyes sweeping over the dark brick again. Suddenly, he stopped what he was doing and said to Kong Shixian, who was packing up to leave after hearing that he was going to call the police, "You want us to buy it? How much do you want to sell it for?"

Upon hearing Zhuang Rui's words, Zhao Hanxuan became anxious and quickly said, "Boss, this is just an ancient city brick. Although it might have been used as an inkstone, it's not very valuable. Please don't be fooled..."

"Old Zhao, just give him a couple of coins and send him on his way, it'll save you the trouble..."

Zhuang Rui lowered his voice and spoke to Zhao Hanxuan, but Kong Shixian could still hear him. A smug look immediately appeared on Kong Shixian's face. It seemed that the owner of this shop was also a timid and cowardly person.

"This is an antique inkstone, it's worth at least 30,000... no, 50,000 yuan..."

To be honest, even Da Xiong and the monkey standing to the side were now looking down on this descendant of Confucius. Wasn't he doing a rather sloppy job? He hadn't even figured out how much money he was asking for, yet he dared to come and extort money from them?

"Brother Zhuang, I'll just throw this kid out..."

Nobita stepped forward, moved his wrists and twisted his neck, and immediately a series of cracking sounds came from his bones.

Zhuang Rui waved his hand to stop Da Xiong, counted out twenty pink RMB bills from his handbag, threw them on the table where Kong Shixian had placed the ancient city bricks, and said, "Two thousand yuan. If you want to sell, take the money and leave. If you don't want to sell, just take the stuff and get lost..."

"2000 yuan? That's not even enough for the travel expenses from Zhonghai. Fine, I'll be lenient, 2000 it is..."

Before Kong Shixian could continue speaking, he saw the murderous looks in Zhao Hanxuan and Daxiong's eyes, so he quickly stopped talking, grabbed the RMB on the table, and tried to make a run for it.

"Wait, write a receipt before you leave..."

Zhuang Rui stopped him, asked Zhao Hanxuan for paper and pen, wrote a receipt, and had Kong Shixian sign and put his fingerprint on it. Of course, the receipt did not say "inkstone" but "city brick".

"Damn it, a bunch of idiots. I bought this piece of junk from Zhonghai for 50 yuan and resold it for 2,000..." After leaving "Xuanrui Zhai", Kong spat at the door triumphantly.

"Boss, that guy is a fraud. You actually paid for it?"

Da Xiong, with his sharp ears, heard Kong Shixian's cursing and was so angry that he immediately wanted to chase after him.

"Idiot? I think he's just a moron, trying to sell a treasure as garbage..."

Chapter 568 Brick Inkstone (Part 1)

"Idiot? I think he's just a moron, trying to sell a treasure as garbage..."

Zhuang Rui sneered, called out to Da Xiong, and picked up the heavy ancient city brick on the table, examining it closely.

"Treasure? Boss Zhuang, while it's common to use city bricks to make inkstones, this one shouldn't be, right?"

Before opening "Shuyazhai", Zhao Hanxuan had been in the business of stationery for seven or eight years. He considered himself an expert in inkstones, Xuan paper and other items in the circle. But no matter how he looked at this inkstone, it didn't seem like an antique inkstone at all.

"Yes, boss, these city bricks and tomb bricks are pretty much the same. You can find them at the Pengcheng antique market, for thirty or fifty yuan a piece. Back when we were excavating the Guishan Han tomb, Xiong Ge and I..."

The monkey, who was standing nearby, was about to speak when Da Xiong suddenly covered his mouth. This experience was not something to be publicized everywhere. Although they did not go to rob a tomb, robbing tomb bricks was not a good business either.

"You two rascals, hey..."

Zhuang Rui was amused by the monkey's words. He didn't expect that these two brothers had such rich experiences, even having done this kind of work.

"Uncle De, come and take a look at this..."

When Zhuang Rui saw Uncle De accompanying Qi Zhu out of the room, he quickly handed over the brick he was holding.

"It's an ancient city brick, it's real. Wait, let me take another look..."

After Uncle De took a look, his initial judgment was similar to Zhao Hanxuan's. However, after rubbing the city brick for a while, his expression changed. He put the ancient city brick on the table, took out a magnifying glass and examined it carefully, almost pressing his face against it.

"This thing looks like an old item that's been renovated."

After examining the ancient city brick from all angles, Uncle De muttered to himself, "It doesn't make sense. Judging from the ink-grinding area, it must have been used as an inkstone, but why is there no carving around it? It couldn't have just been made into an inkstone surface, could it? And the patina isn't enough; it's not that old..."

"Uncle De, what's the deal with this brick inkstone?"

Qin Xuanbing watched with some curiosity. Grandpa Qin often practiced calligraphy at home and had used inkstones and brushes, but she wasn't very clear about their origins.

"Hehe, a brick inkstone is an inkstone carved from ancient bricks. Ancient bricks are from a long time ago and have high historical value in themselves."

Because of the excellent quality of the ancient bricks, the ink-grinding effect is no less than that of a famous inkstone made of Chengni clay. Moreover, the antique bricks, with their antique charm, add a touch of refined cultural atmosphere to the scholar's studio...

Uncle De smiled and gave the people in the shop a lesson on ancient inkstones. Apart from Zhao Hanxuan, who knew a little, even Zhuang Rui listened with great interest. Although he had studied miscellaneous appraisal with Uncle De, the scope of miscellaneous appraisal was too broad, and inkstones were a niche collectible, so Zhuang Rui did not know the origin of brick inkstones.

In fact, brick inkstones first appeared during the Tang and Song dynasties and became popular during the Qianlong and Jiaqing periods of the Qing dynasty. Most of them were carved by literati and scholars, some for practical use and some for appreciation. As long as the brick inkstones have been passed down from before the Qing dynasty, they are all valuable and sought after by calligraphy and stationery collectors.

The inscriptions on ancient bricks are similar in style to those on other bronze artifacts and stone carvings. Throughout Chinese history, many scholars and literati have compiled and recorded the unusual inscriptions on ancient bricks.

Especially in the late Qing Dynasty, the study of epigraphy and textual research flourished. Many literati and textual researchers took a different approach and became particularly fond of the inscriptions on broken and eroded bricks and tiles. They spent a lot of money to collect them and made great efforts to study them. As a result, "Qin bricks and Han tiles" became famous in the world.

"Uncle De, you're right. This thing really is an old object that has been remade into a new one. It was probably made in case it was lost during the war..."

Zhuang Rui smiled and took the brick from Uncle De's hand, pointing to the ink-covered surface and saying, "This ink-covered surface is smooth and clean, so it must be frequently used, but it doesn't quite match the surrounding area. It's like jade; you can't really tell what's inside just by looking at the outer layer..."

Zhuang Rui held up the ancient city brick and spoke eloquently, drawing everyone's attention in the shop. Even some customers who were originally selecting calligraphy brushes and Xuan paper stopped and listened attentively.

Qin Xuanbing had no interest whatsoever in whether the object was an ancient inkstone or an ancient city brick, but she was deeply captivated by Zhuang Rui's radiant appearance. It is said that men and women are most charming when they are working, and at this moment, in Qin Xuanbing's eyes, Zhuang Rui was a perfect man, as handsome as Pan An and as talented as Tang Bohu.

"Excuse me, Mr. Zhuang, may I interrupt you? Can we trade these beads now?"

Qi Zhu, who had always addressed Zhuang Rui as "Boss," now called him "Teacher Zhuang." As the saying goes, there is no order of precedence in learning; those who are accomplished are teachers. Zhuang Rui's comments alone were enough for her to call him "Teacher."

"Oh dear, I forgot about that. Sister Qi Zhu, no problem, let's make the deal now. Do you want to transfer the money, or what?"

Upon hearing Qi Zhu's words, Zhuang Rui immediately stopped talking, much to the dissatisfaction of some customers in the shop. They were just getting into the conversation, so why did he suddenly stop?

"Please transfer the money. Your store should accept credit cards, right? This is my husband. Please transfer 900,000 to them..."

Only then did Zhuang Rui notice a middle-aged man standing next to Qi Zhu. Although he was handsome, he was very quiet. After hearing Qi Zhu's words, he took out a card from his bag and looked at Zhuang Rui.

Judging from Qi Zhu's husband's appearance, he might be a live-in son-in-law. Being a daughter-in-law in a wealthy family is tough, but being a son-in-law in a wealthy family isn't necessarily much easier; it's almost like being a follower.

"Old Zhao, could you handle this for them? That pearl hairpin, 900,000 RMB, transfer the money and then give them a certificate..."

This was Zhuang Rui's first visit since Xuanrui Zhai reopened after renovations. He had no idea where to transfer money, so he would probably have to ask Zhao Hanxuan to handle it.

"Ah? Oh, okay, fine..."

Upon hearing Zhuang Rui's words, Zhao Hanxuan seemed to wake from a dream and agreed. He had been dumbfounded by the conversation between Zhuang Rui and Qi Zhu. They had only been inside for a short time, yet they had already made a deal worth 900,000 yuan, which was equivalent to several months' worth of his usual off-season revenue.

"Sir, let's transfer the money this way..."

When Zhao Hanxuan greeted Qi Zhu's husband, he still felt like he was in a dream. He now understood why Zhuang Rui had agreed to take over his shop so easily. It turned out that antiques were so profitable.

"Boss, tell me more about this brick. How is it considered a treasure?"

Some curious customers in the store couldn't help but ask.

"Okay, based on my judgment, this is an ancient city brick that was split in half, hollowed out, and then the inkstone was inlaid inside. However, I don't know why the ink grinding surface is left on the outside..."

Zhuang Rui was genuinely puzzled. His conclusion was based on the spiritual energy he saw in his eyes. It was clearly an ancient inkstone, brimming with spiritual energy. However, the city brick was clearly

capable of holding the entire inkstone inside. He wondered what the person meant by leaving the inkstone behind.

"Xiao Rui, are you sure? There have been cases of people covering real paintings with fake ones for framing before, but I've never heard of anything like this happening to an inkstone..."

Uncle De frowned. He knew that before the liberation and during the ten years of the Cultural Revolution in China, many people tried every means to hide their beloved possessions. Perhaps Zhuang Rui had guessed correctly.

"Uncle De, look at this brick. With a magnifying glass, you can see marks from it being polished. It's probably to cover up the seam between the bricks. Whether it's real or not, we'll find out by carefully chipping open this brick..."

Actually, the joints between the city bricks were handled extremely well; even with a magnifying glass, it was difficult to see anything. However, after Zhuang Rui's reminder, Uncle De paid special attention and did notice something amiss. He nodded and said, "The ancients used glutinous rice and paper pulp instead of cement, which had excellent adhesion. But this city brick doesn't seem to have been glued together with those things. Xiao Zhuang, be careful. It's best to soak it in water first, then scrape it open with a knife to check. If there's something inside, don't damage it..."

The stone used to make inkstones is usually quite brittle, and it can sometimes break if it is vibrated too much. That's why Uncle De said that.

"Hehe, Uncle De, why don't we just chisel it open from this side and take a look..."

Zhuang Rui knew that Uncle De was right, but he didn't have time to wait. He had just called Kong Shixian an idiot, and the people in the shop might still think he was stupid. Zhuang Rui just wanted to take out the inkstone inside and prove who was the idiot and who was the fool.

Zhuang Rui called over one of the shop assistants and asked him to find a small hammer. Since there was no chisel, he could only use a flathead screwdriver instead.

Zhuang Rui placed the brick on the ground, squatted down, used his spiritual energy to locate the gaps in the adhesive, aligned the flat end of the screwdriver with those gaps, and gently tapped the handle of the screwdriver with a hammer.

Zhuang Rui's movements were very gentle, as he was afraid that using too much force would damage the inkstone inside. However, the city bricks were fired somewhat roughly, and under the tapping of the screwdriver, a visible crack was revealed in the area that had been polished.

"Wow, it really is! Brother Zhuang, you're amazing..."

The monkey, who was squatting nearby staring intently at the city bricks, spotted the gap immediately and couldn't help but give Zhuang Rui a thumbs up. At this moment, the customers in the shop were more inclined to believe that the person selling the inkstone was a fool, and for the first time, they no longer guessed that Zhuang Rui was an idiot.

In this world, it is always easier to destroy than to create. Before long, the city brick had been broken in two by Zhuang Rui's violent cracking, and an ancient and elegant inkstone was revealed to everyone inside.

"This...this is actually a brick inkstone from the first year of the Huangwu era by Wu Changshuo..."

After the inkstone was revealed, Uncle De immediately recognized its origin.

Chapter 569 Brick Inkstone (Part Two)

Zhuang Rui didn't know much about miscellaneous antiques like inkstones. After hearing Uncle De's words, he simply assumed the inkstone had been used by Wu Changshuo and didn't pay much attention.

Most antiques are things that have been handled and collected by famous people over a long historical period. Although Wu Changshuo was a master of calligraphy and painting in modern times, he was not enough to move Zhuang Rui. If this thing was used by Wang Xizhi to wash brushes and grind ink, Zhuang Rui might be surprised.

The others shared Zhuang Rui's idea, but Zhao Hanxuan was different. He was originally in the business of writing implements and knew a great deal about this inkstone that was recorded in the contemporary famous inkstone catalog. After hearing Uncle De's words, he almost rudely snatched the inkstone from Uncle De's hand.

"In the fourth month of the Renwu year, Jin Fu presented this to me. The Huangwu brick is firm and ancient. How remarkable is the piece of earth left by Sun Lang, which ranks fifth in my inkstone collection. Wow, heavens, it really is a Huangwu brick inkstone made by Wu Lao himself..."

After Zhao Hanxuan read aloud the words engraved on the side of the inkstone, his face was full of excitement. Zhuang Rui, who was standing next to him, also understood. It turned out that this thing was not collected by Wu Changshuo, but was made by that master of painting himself.

"Teacher Ma, could you tell us about the origin of this inkstone?"

Seeing Zhao Hanxuan's excited expression, Qi Zhu knew without asking that the inkstone was extremely valuable. His father was a Confucian merchant who had collected many jade artifacts over the years and also enjoyed calligraphy. Qi Zhu wanted to buy the inkstone and give it to his father as a gift.

"Hehe, Xiao Zhuang, you're really lucky to have found this item. It's been missing ever since Old Wu passed away. I never imagined it was hidden inside an ancient city brick..."

Uncle De sighed, saying that among inkstone collections, Wu Changshuo's brick inkstone would definitely rank in the top 10, with both great collection and practical value.

"This inkstone was originally a brick from the Eastern Wu period of the Three Kingdoms, dating back to the first year of Huangwu. The Jin Fujiang mentioned on the inkstone was a man from Suzhou, Jiangsu. He was generous and chivalrous, and loved collecting antiques, especially ancient pottery and bricks. If he encountered an ancient brick or tile that he adored, he would borrow money to buy it even if he didn't have enough money, determined to acquire it.

Jin Fu learned that Mr. Wu Changshuo was a great lover of ancient bricks and considered him a kindred spirit. After being introduced to him by a friend, they became acquainted and exchanged rubbings of ancient artifacts. Their friendship deepened day by day and eventually they became close friends. It was he who gifted this city brick to Wu Changshuo.

In the eighth year of the Guangxu Emperor's reign, Mr. Changshuo presented Jin Fujiang with a horizontal scroll bearing the four characters "Dao Zai Wa Pi" (The Way is in the Tiles), which greatly pleased Jin Fujiang. A few days later, on the ninth day of the fourth lunar month, he reported this with an ancient jar from his family's collection. This jar was unearthed and dates back to the Zhou or Qin dynasty. The jar was unmarked, simple and charming.

Mr. Changshuo, who called himself "Old Jar" or "Old Jar Master," cherished this jar very much, and even after his death, he kept it in his mausoleum.

However, Jin Fu passed away not long after, causing Mr. Wu Changshuo great sorrow. When Mr. Wu was seventy-two years old, he used this brick inkstone to test the ink collected by Mr. Dongxin. Seeing the object reminded him of his friend, and tears streamed down his face. It can truly be said that the feelings of the brick inkstone were as deep as heaven and earth.

Therefore, the two most cherished objects in his life were that ancient jar and this brick inkstone that you see here..."

In fact, Jin Fu gave Wu Changshuo more than one ancient city brick. Another inkstone made from a brick from the second year of Jianheng in the Han-Jin period was also very famous. However, that one was not made by Mr. Wu Changshuo himself, so it is not as famous as this inkstone.

After Uncle De finished speaking, everyone looked at the brick inkstone and seemed to feel the deep friendship between the two friends more than a century ago. For a moment, the shop became quiet, and even the customers who were selecting stationery were moved by the story Uncle De told.

"Teacher Ma, this...this thing should have a price, right?"

Qi Zhu's voice broke the silence in the shop. After hearing Uncle De's introduction, she was even more eager to acquire the brick inkstone. Money was no problem for her; her father's company was a very famous conglomerate in the Jiangsu and Zhejiang region, and she could afford hundreds of millions of yuan. 69shux.com

"Well... it's really hard to say. There are more and more people collecting antique inkstones these days. If this inkstone were to go to auction, the starting price shouldn't be too high, around 100,000, but the final price is hard to predict. It could even be a million..."

Uncle De frowned. It was really difficult to value such an item. The starting price was not a reliable indicator. If someone liked it, it wouldn't be surprising if they spent a fortune to get it.

In recent years, some items with starting bids of only 10,000 to 20,000 RMB have often reached final prices of up to one million RMB. In Uncle De's eyes, this brick inkstone has such potential.

Actually, Uncle De's valuation isn't too outrageous, because just recently, another famous inkstone from Wu Changshuo's collection went up for auction. The starting price was only 50,000 RMB, but it was eventually sold for 660,000 RMB.

"This old gentleman is right. Many people would probably want to collect the brick inkstone made by Old Master Wu himself. If it weren't for... sigh, if it weren't for what happened, I would have been willing to buy this brick inkstone for a million..."

The things Zhao Hanxuan loved were nothing more than pens, ink, paper, and inkstones. Seeing this brick inkstone now, he couldn't help but feel an itch in his heart, as if he had been scratched by a cat's claws. He also remembered that he had been cheated out of nearly ten million yuan, and his teeth were unconsciously itching with hatred.

"My God, is this piece of junk worth a million?"

"What broken brick? Didn't you see it was an inkstone?"

"Yes, that's right. The patina on this inkstone is antique and lustrous; it's a fine piece..."

"He bought it for 2,000 yuan, and this young man can resell it for millions. He's really made a fortune..."

"Yeah, that guy surnamed Kong was a complete idiot and moron. He sold a treasure for a pittance and was still gloating over it..."

"This shop owner is really lucky..."

"What luck? Other people rely on their eyesight. You didn't even recognize him? He's Teacher Zhuang from the treasure appraisal show that aired a few days ago..."

"Teacher Zhuang, please sign your autograph for me..."

"Yes, I'm from Shaanxi. I've also watched Professor Zhuang's program. Please sign an autograph for me too..."

At this point, Zhuang Rui no longer needed to explain. The dozen or so people in the store who had witnessed Zhuang Rui buying bricks from beginning to end knew who the fool was, and they were all incredibly envious of Zhuang Rui's luck.

Some people might not believe that Zhuang Rui saw it based on his own judgment; ultimately, Zhuang Rui is simply too young.

Of course, there are quite a few people who recognize Zhuang Rui. CCTV's ratings are no joke. When Zhuang Rui enters or leaves the courtyard, he is often recognized and greeted by his neighbors. However, people in the capital are quite reserved, and no one asks him for an autograph.

"Thank you everyone, thank you, but... this isn't something I identified..."

In the blink of an eye, Zhuang Rui was surrounded by several tourists from out of town. This was the first time he had ever felt so admired. However, Zhuang Rui knew that although he knew this thing was an antique, he would not have been able to explain its origins without Uncle De's help.

People only ask for your autograph if they respect you. Zhuang Rui also carefully wrote his name in several people's notebooks. After a chaotic seven or eight minutes, the store finally quieted down.

However, this also brought some benefits. Those who got the autographs became more generous when buying things. Seven or eight people actually bought nearly 10,000 yuan worth of stationery, which made Zhuang Rui sigh. It turns out that the celebrity effect can really be converted into economic benefits.

"Teacher Zhuang, I really like this brick inkstone. Do you think... you could part with it? We can discuss the price..."

After the shop had emptied a bit, Qi Zhu expressed her intention to buy an antique inkstone to Zhuang Rui.

Qi Zhu's father was a jade collector, but after Uncle De appraised the room full of so-called antique jade, it turned out that they were mostly fake. Although Uncle De didn't say it outright, others could guess it. So after seeing her father's angry expression, Qi Zhu became extremely concerned about the authenticity of antiques.

In today's antique market, genuine items are scarce. It's rare to find an item that can be given as a gift to one's father and has been authenticated as genuine by experts. Qi Zhu has already made up her mind to buy it.

"I'm sorry, Sister Qi Zhu, one of the main businesses of my shop is writing brushes, ink, paper, and inkstones. I don't plan to sell this inkstone; I'll keep it as a prized possession of the shop..."

Zhuang Rui rejected Qi Zhu without even making an offer. Firstly, he wasn't short of money, and secondly, such a valuable inkstone was hard to find even at auctions, and now that it had been given away for free, Zhuang Rui was eager to keep it; he certainly wouldn't sell it.

"Teacher Zhuang, I'd like to give this to my father as a gift. What do you think of the price of 1.5 million RMB?"

Qi Zhu was still somewhat unwilling to give up, so she offered the highest price she had in mind. If Zhuang Rui were a businessman, he would probably sell it, right?

"I'm so sorry, Sister Qi Zhu, I personally really like this item too..."

To Qi Zhu's disappointment, Zhuang Rui still rejected her, which made Qi Zhu realize that he was not short of money and that opening this shop was probably just a hobby for him.

"Madam, if you're looking to buy an antique inkstone, I have a few nice ones here. They're much cheaper, but they're definitely genuine. You might want to consider them..."

Fearing that Zhuang Rui would succumb to Qi Zhu's pleas and sell the inkstone, Zhao Hanxuan quickly diverted Qi Zhu's attention.

The happiest person in the shop when Zhuang Rui refused to sell the brick inkstone was none other than Zhao Hanxuan. Although the inkstone wasn't his, Zhuang Rui said he would keep it as a prized possession, which meant he could play with it anytime.

Chapter 570 Ruyi

Qi Zhu's original intention was simply to buy a genuine antique inkstone. Seeing Zhuang Rui's resolute attitude, she immediately took Zhao Hanxuan's advice and went to select several other inkstones. With Uncle De, her free appraiser, around, Qi Zhu wasn't worried about buying a fake.

"Honey, you're amazing!"

After everyone around Zhuang Rui left, Qin Xuanbing whispered something in Zhuang Rui's ear.

This society is still male-centric, so Qin Xuanbing was naturally overjoyed to see her man's exceptional talent.

"Of course, your husband is great in every way..."

Zhuang Rui gave Qin Xuanbing a wicked smile and kissed her on the cheek, startling Qin Xuanbing who quickly pushed him away. Although she had studied abroad, she still couldn't understand or do what those couples did, kissing in the street without a care in the world.

"Xuanbing, let's go to Qin Ruilin's place tomorrow. I'll have my brother-in-law send over a batch of jadeite rough from Pengcheng. You can make some designs based on the rough, and then we can hand them over to Master Luo to carve..."

Zhuang Rui felt a little guilty. After arriving at the shop, he was busy selling pearl flowers and appraising this ancient inkstone, neglecting Qin Xuanbing and not exchanging a single word with her for a long time.

Although Zhuang Rui had little practical experience with women, he loved reading. He learned from books that women without jobs would eventually lose themselves and become suspicious and paranoid, always following men around.

Zhuang Rui didn't want his wife to be just a decoration at home. After all, Qin Xuanbing was a young jewelry designer who was just beginning to make a name for herself internationally. It would be too unfair to her if she didn't work.

"Okay, honey, you can go ahead and do your work, don't worry about me..."

Qin Xuanbing smiled. It's said that men are most attractive when they're working, and she also enjoyed watching Zhuang Rui's focused expression when appraising antiques.

"Um....."

Zhuang Rui squeezed Qin Xuanbing's small hand, then walked to Uncle De's side and said, "Uncle De, I'll have to trouble you to take a look at these things for me. Although they are all genuine, I'm not very familiar with the current market prices. Uncle De, could you please set a price for them?"

If it weren't for Uncle De, Zhuang Rui's beaded flower would probably have sold for a pittance. This shows that to do business in antiques, it's not enough to just be able to identify the real from the fake; you also need to understand the current market conditions for these items.

Although Uncle De no longer works at the pawnshop, he still attends antique auctions in Zhonghai in his spare time, so he is quite knowledgeable about the prices of these items. Of course, if Zhuang Rui could bring in Director Qian from the Kyoto Auction House, the pricing would be even more accurate.

Uncle De shook his head with a wry smile. He had originally intended to browse Panjiayuan Market, but Zhuang Rui had unexpectedly dragged him into it. However, he was happy to oblige. His expression immediately turned serious as he said, "You kid, you dare to open a shop and do business without

knowing anything? I can help you set prices, but you have to tell me the origin of these items. Although you have a powerful background, there are some things you still can't get involved in..."

While Zhuang Rui was talking to Qin Xuanbing, Uncle De was looking at the ruyi pearls and jade antiques in the cabinet. The more he looked, the more shocked he became, because judging from the workmanship of these items, they were basically made by the Imperial Workshop. Not only were there Qing Dynasty items, but some of them also looked like they had Ming Dynasty style.

Uncle De was worried that Zhuang Rui might have gone astray and acquired these things. He had just heard that a museum in Shenyang had been robbed recently, and it contained many precious cultural relics that Puyi had taken with him.

"Uncle De, what are you thinking? Let's go inside and talk..."

Seeing Uncle De's suspicious look, Zhuang Rui couldn't help but laugh and cry. However, with so many people around, Zhuang Rui could only open the cabinet, put all the jewelry and antiques into his bag, and take them to the inner room.

"Uncle De, that's how it is. I wouldn't dare lie to you. Xuanbing is right here, and she knows about it too..."

After entering the inner room, Zhuang Rui recounted everything that had happened in Myanmar to Uncle De.

However, Zhuang Rui kept the matter of the 10 tons of gold a secret. It wasn't that he didn't trust Uncle De, but because the matter involved Ouyang Lei's use of military helicopters, which was not suitable for too many people to know. Moreover, the gold had little to do with these antiques.

"You're really lucky, kid. By the way, if you don't like jewelry and antiques, you can sell them all. But this tortoiseshell ruyi is a nice piece; it has a lot of potential for appreciation, so you can keep it..."

After hearing what Zhuang Rui had to say, Uncle De could only shake his head. He then handed Zhuang Rui a piece of paper and marked the prices of the antiques one by one. However, when he picked up the tortoiseshell ruyi, Uncle De stopped.

Is there something special about this?

This ruyi scepter, entirely black with a sheen of ink, is made of tortoiseshell. It has a smooth, rounded patina. The front is carved with a pattern of butterflies playing among flowers, while the back features a continuous Buddhist swastika pattern.

"Of course, you still need to study more and read more books. Let me tell you about the intricacies of this object..."

Uncle De gave Zhuang Rui a disapproving look and explained the collectible value of the tortoiseshell ruyi to him.

It turns out that hawksbill turtles have been cherished by nobles and wealthy merchants throughout history and have been regarded as heirlooms, a symbol of longevity. The shells of hawksbill turtles can be used to make exquisite ornaments. The famous poem "The Peacock Flies Southeast" from the Han Dynasty contains the line "Wearing silk shoes, with hawksbill turtle shells shining on her head."

The Huidong Port Nature Reserve established in Guangdong Province, my country, primarily protects sea turtles such as hawksbill turtles and green sea turtles. For example, Empress Wu Zetian of the Tang Dynasty used hawksbill turtles to make combs, fans, musical instruments, hairpins, and even entire hawksbill turtle specimens.

The word "Ruyi" comes from the Sanskrit word "Anara" and is one of the Buddhist implements introduced from India. The handle is shaped like a heart and is made of bamboo, bone, copper, or jade. When Dharma masters give lectures, they often hold a Ruyi handle and write the scriptures on it to prevent forgetting them.

In folk tradition, the Ruyi has always been known as "self-reliant." Many people may know that this thing is used to scratch an itch, but that's what poor people call it. From the Wei, Jin and Northern and Southern Dynasties, the Ruyi became widely used and became very popular during this period, becoming an item in the hands of emperors and high-ranking officials.

During the Qing Dynasty, the emperor and empress used ruyi as a reward to princes and ministers. When the emperor was selecting a concubine, if a ruyi was given to a person, it meant that she would

become the empress. In the Republic of China era, ruyi became a valuable gift, which wealthy families gave to each other as a wish for happiness and fulfillment.

As times have changed, the Ruyi has now faded from people's daily lives and become an antique. However, each exquisite Ruyi, carrying its history and the auspicious and beautiful meaning it contains, remains pleasing to the eye and loved by people.

"No wonder I have more than a dozen Ruyi scepters; they were all bestowed upon me by the emperor..."

After listening to Uncle De's words, Zhuang Rui finally understood the true value and meaning of the Ruyi. In short, as a symbol of good fortune, this thing is now highly sought after by collectors. The Ruyi in Zhuang Rui's hands are all palace items, in other words, they were used by the emperor and his wife to scratch their backs. Therefore, their appreciation potential is many times greater than that of Ruyi in the common people.

Zhuang Rui had no interest in jewelry or antiques, but he did pick out this ruyi scepter. It was a popular collectible item among miscellaneous items, so he decided to keep it for himself.

After Uncle De marked the prices of all the antiques for Zhuang Rui, Zhuang Rui put them out and made a copy of the list by hand. He gave one copy to Monkey so that he could memorize each item, and naturally kept the other copy for himself.

Qi Zhu then selected an antique inkstone worth 80,000 yuan. Although it was not as valuable as the brick inkstone, it was still used by wealthy families in the Qing Dynasty, and Qi Zhu was quite satisfied with it.

After paying, Qi Zhu said to Zhuang Rui, "Teacher Zhuang, come visit Zhejiang sometime. We're a major producer of chicken-blood stone. Your shop sells stationery, but I see you're missing something like seals. If you need any in the future, I can take you to select some chicken-blood stone..."

Zhuang Rui took out the document Qi Zhu had just given him and waved it, saying, "Thank you, Sister Qi Zhu. If I ever go to Zhejiang, I'll definitely bother you. Just don't think it's too much trouble..."

"Old Zhao, don't we sell seals?"

After seeing Qi Zhu off, Zhuang Rui looked at Zhao Hanxuan. He hadn't paid attention to this matter before, but after hearing what Qi Zhu said, he really felt that something was missing. After the calligraphy and painting were finished, they were usually stamped with a seal. The seal was indeed inseparable from the Four Treasures of the Study.

Upon hearing Zhuang Rui's words, Zhao Hanxuan's expression turned somewhat strange. He finally said, "Boss Zhuang, we used to sell seals in the shop. Back then, I even hired a craftsman to make seals for customers. But later, when I went to Changhua to buy chicken-blood stone, I was cheated out of a fake and lost over 200,000 yuan. After that, we stopped selling them..."

Zhuang Rui laughed when he heard this. This old Zhao is really unlucky. He was tricked out of more than 8 million yuan in Beijing, and he was also tricked when he went to Changhua to buy chicken blood stone. I really don't know how he managed to keep this shop going for several years.

"I still need to sell the seals. I'll go to Zhejiang when I have time..."

Zhuang Rui remembered that a few days ago when he went to deliver an engagement invitation to his Uncle Gu, Uncle Gu had told him that when he first started learning carving, he could start with seal carving. Sure enough, Zhuang Rui took it to heart as soon as he heard that, because he had done it when he was a child.

The main reason for this was Liu Chuan. After the two brothers entered high school, Zhuang Rui had good grades, but Liu Chuan often failed every subject. Every semester, when he brought his report card home, he would inevitably get a beating. So Zhuang Rui came up with a solution for him.