

Golden 57

Chapter Fifty-Seven: Rosewood Root Carving

The root carving in Zhuang Rui's hand is dark purple overall, with an oily sheen. It is a seated Maitreya Buddha statue. Although it is only the size of a palm, it is unusually heavy. However, it is covered with dirt and oil stains, and even the face of Maitreya Buddha is somewhat unclear.

Zhuang Rui saw the stall owner return the five hundred yuan to the foreigner, so he said to him, "Brother, can I take a closer look at this item of yours?"

"Brother, look, thank you so much for today. If you like this root carving, it's yours."

The young stall owner was extremely grateful to Zhuang Rui. If Zhuang Rui hadn't been able to communicate directly with foreigners, they would probably still be kept in the dark by this traitorous translator.

"Hehe, there's no need to give it to me as a gift. Let me take a look first, and if I like it, I'll buy it from you."

Zhuang Rui chuckled and began to examine the Maitreya Buddha root carving in his hand.

Zhuang Rui vigorously rubbed the face of the Maitreya Buddha with his thumb a few times. Although he couldn't remove all the oil stains, he could still vaguely see its features. The Maitreya Buddha had a broad forehead, slightly closed eyes, a half-open smiling mouth, two large ears that drooped to his shoulders, a bare chest and belly, crossed legs and bent arms, and his body was leaning against a cloth bag. His right hand was on his knee, with a leisurely and contented expression.

Judging from the craftsmanship, the carving is exquisite, the knife work skillful, and the lines are natural and smooth. If this root carving truly belongs to the stall owner's ancestors, then his ancestors must have been highly skilled artisans. Even though Zhuang Rui doesn't know much about appraising such items, he can tell it's a rare masterpiece. However, he doesn't understand why the stall owner asked for such a low price, selling it for a mere 500 yuan.

"Huh!"

Just as Zhuang Rui turned the root carving over to examine it, his heart began to race. He noticed that the root carving's patterns and stripes shimmered with a luster, and the growth rings were so fine they were almost invisible. Moreover, there wasn't a single scar on it. Normally, tree roots are covered in scars, and it seemed that only sandalwood could possess such a unique appearance.

Seeing this, Zhuang Rui examined the root carving again, and the more he looked at it, the more it seemed to be carved from sandalwood. The purplish-black color and the deep, elegant shape, especially after he brought the root carving to his nose and smelled it, the faint fragrance made Zhuang Rui even more certain of his judgment. This Maitreya Buddha root carving was not only made of sandalwood, but it should also be an old object of some age.

It's not surprising that Zhuang Rui didn't notice at first, because there are two types of rosewood: large-leaf rosewood and small-leaf rosewood. Large-leaf rosewood has obvious and wider banded stripes on its tangential surface, and its color is purplish-brown. The furniture Zhuang Rui saw in the Song army villa was all made of large-leaf rosewood.

However, the wood grain on the surface of small-leaf sandalwood is not obvious. Its color is initially orange-red, and it turns deep purple like lacquer over time. The growth rings are almost invisible, and the veins are extremely fine, appearing as twisted silk like cow hair. Its price is four or five times higher than that of large-leaf sandalwood. This type of sandalwood is extremely rare, and large pieces are also rare. Most of the pieces that have been passed down are playthings. The one that Zhuang Rui encountered was carved from the root of small-leaf sandalwood.

After confirming that it was a sandalwood root carving, Zhuang Rui prepared to examine it again with his spiritual energy. The reason why Zhuang Rui had not used his spiritual energy to examine the object before was to gain more experience. In the antique business, you have to see and handle a lot. For example, if you spend decades in the Palace Museum, facing those old objects that have been accumulated over time, and then go to Panjiayuan to see those fake objects, you can probably tell the difference between real and fake as soon as you touch them. This is the accumulation of experience.

However, Zhuang Rui had already given his answer in his heart, and now he needed to use the spiritual energy in his eyes to make an assessment. He lowered his head slightly, and a flash of orange-yellow light passed before his eyes. The spiritual energy in his eyes had already come into contact with the root carving in his hand. In Zhuang Rui's eyes, the surface of the root carving seemed to turn into mist and decompose rapidly. Although the spiritual energy stopped after entering the root carving about one centimeter, the fibrous structure inside the root carving was still revealed to Zhuang Rui.

The internal fibrous structure of the root carving is extremely fine, like layers of waves, and each fiber pore is winding and dense, with extremely fine vein patterns that resemble twisted silk or cow hair. These are unique characteristics of sandalwood, which Zhuang Rui had heard about at Song Jun's villa.

However, what surprised him most at this moment was that an aura as thick as the couplet of the Lian Sheng quickly merged with the spiritual energy in his eyes. This aura was many times more concentrated than the spiritual energy he had absorbed from the cricket gourd and the few rosewood chairs. This puzzled Zhuang Rui. Could it be that his previous judgment that the amount of spiritual energy in wooden antiques was small was wrong?

Shaking his head, Zhuang Rui put those thoughts aside. Now was not the time to delve into the matter. After judging from the spiritual energy in his eyes that it was an antique, the weight of the sandalwood Maitreya Buddha in his hand seemed to increase even more. Zhuang Rui knew that sandalwood was known as "an inch of sandalwood is worth an inch of gold," especially old objects with a history of inheritance, which were even more expensive. The market price of this object was probably far higher than that of the cricket gourd from Sanhe Liu.

Zhuang Rui looked up and saw the traitorous translator hunched over the table writing down what had happened, while Director Wang was gesturing wildly and seemingly exchanging pleasantries with the two foreigners. So he gently tugged at the stall owner and asked, "Brother, I think your statue is quite nice. How come you sold it for only five hundred yuan?"

After hearing Zhuang Rui's words, the young man looked helpless and said, "It's an exaggeration to say there are 100 stalls selling root carvings and other small trinkets in this market, but there are definitely 30 to 50. If there are so many stalls, no one will buy them if the prices are too high."

"Are there still so many artisans now?"

Zhuang Rui was taken aback. Carving is a very delicate craft that not everyone can master.

"What kind of craftsmen are they? Those are all machine-carved. Hundreds or thousands can come out of an assembly line every day. They're just lifeless, soulless things. But they're cheap, only a dozen yuan each. And when you put them at home, they don't look any worse than these hand-carved ones. They also come in a variety of shapes. So the things on my stall are hard to sell. Today I only sold one to this foreigner, and then this mess happened."

The young people's words also reveal a reality: nowadays very few people are learning these traditional crafts, and it is likely that in a few years, there will be fewer and fewer of these skilled artisans.

"I really like this root carving. I'll buy it. Name your price."

Seeing the young man's somewhat disappointed expression, Zhuang Rui almost blurted out the truth about the root carving, but he ultimately held back. He was neither the kind of person nor did he want to be the "living Lei Feng" sung by the singer Xuecun.

I recommend this book: Title: The Sword Demon Reborn

Synopsis: The Sword Demon has been reborn, and the gods tremble.