

Golden 571

Chapter 571 Tossing and Turn

Zhuang Rui consistently achieved good grades in high school, but Liu Chuan's academic performance was abysmal. This guy was skilled at everything from walking the dog to playing with the birds, but utterly lax in his studies. He relied entirely on guessing during exams, and when it came to multiple-choice questions, he'd simply roll the dice and guess A, B, C, or D. He basically failed every subject.

By then, the two were no longer at the school where Zhuang's mother taught. So, every semester when it was time to get the exam report cards for their parents to sign, Zhuang Rui would find a carrot, carve Liu Chuan's father's name on it, and use it as a stamp for signing.

As for the report card that Liu Chuan's parents saw, the two naughty boys bought it themselves, and of course, they filled in the grades randomly. This trick worked quite well because Liu Chuan's parents were usually very busy, and they were even pleased with their son's improved grades.

Liu Chuan was finally free from that situation. Although his father found out about it during the last semester of his senior year, Liu Chuan was already beyond redemption by then. Plus, they were both older now, so for the first time in their lives, these two boys did something wrong and didn't get a beating.

Zhuang Rui was born to enter the antique business; he's been forging things since he was a child—a small example that reveals a larger truth.

"Boss, it's very difficult to tell if this bloodstone is fake. I think we should get some other seal materials instead of this bloodstone..."

When Zhao Hanxuan heard that Zhuang Rui was going to Changhua, he shook his head. Although he admired Zhuang Rui's ability to appraise antiques, no one in this world is perfect, and he did not believe that Zhuang Rui could be an expert in chicken-blood stone.

"Xiao Zhuang, you can gamble on chicken-blood stone too. Some people find the material in the mountains but don't cut it open. Instead, they judge whether there's chicken-blood stone inside by whether the outside of the stone is stained red. If you really want to try your luck, Uncle De will take you around for a while..."

Unlike Zhao Hanxuan, Uncle De knew that Zhuang Rui made his fortune through gambling on jade. His eyesight was beyond "poisonous." In the current jade gambling circle, some people even called Zhuang Rui "Golden Eyes" and referred to Zhuang Rui and the "Jade King" from Yunnan as the two jade kings of the North and South.

In Nanjing, he gambled big with small stakes, helping Liu Chuan win tens of millions from a few thousand yuan. In Pingzhou, he gambled on a piece of icy jadeite worth hundreds of millions. The Myanmar jadeite auction was Zhuang Rui's battle for fame. That piece of icy red jadeite made jadeite merchants from all over the world remember "Zhuang Rui," this ordinary Chinese name.

Although Uncle De didn't gamble on stones, he still knew about these things. He never doubted Zhuang Rui, because some things really depend on intuition. Some people just can't learn something no matter how you teach them, but others can grasp it instantly. Maybe Zhuang Rui has a talent for gambling on stones.

"Uncle De, it seems I really do have to go. Let me know when there's a deal in Changhua..."

When Uncle De mentioned that bloodstone could be gambled on, Zhuang Rui immediately became interested. He was now more interested in collecting rare and precious antiques, unlike his trip to Myanmar, which was purely for hoarding and cashing out.

"You little brat, you've been ignoring Uncle De's warnings. I told you not to get too caught up in jade gambling, but look at you, it's not right!"

Seeing Zhuang Rui's anxious state, Uncle De half-jokingly gave him a lecture.

"Hehe, Uncle De, don't you know me? I won't make a move unless I'm sure of success. Besides, gambling on bloodstone and jadeite are pretty much the same; it all comes down to having a good eye. I, Zhuang Rui, have never lost money gambling on stones in this circle..."

Although Zhuang Rui's words sounded arrogant, they were also undeniable facts. Zhuang Rui was intentionally putting on this act; after all, he was an expert. Even if he made some good bets in the future, others could only say that Zhuang Rui had excellent judgment.

In today's society, the winner takes all. No matter what you do, the final result matters. If you can win the gamble, you'll naturally be surrounded by praise.

Of course, if you lose everything in one bet, then sorry, there will be quite a few people who will kick you when you're down.

"Mr. Zhuang... Mr. Zhuang, you used to be into this kind of thing?"

Zhao Hanxuan, standing to the side, was dumbfounded. No wonder Zhuang Rui said he was going to Changhua to buy goods; it turned out he was a jade gambler. He'd been too talkative.

There's a jade gambling circle in Beijing, where a single rough stone can be worth tens of millions. Although Zhao Hanxuan couldn't afford to play the game, he had seen it and knew that the big shots who gambled on jade were incredibly wealthy.

"Hehe, I have a lot more things to play with..."

Zhuang Rui didn't explain much. After looking around the shop, he said to Zhao Hanxuan, "Old Zhao, I'm here to bring you people today. I'll leave those two to you. If there's nothing else, I'll be going now. I'll come back to the shop in a few days if I have some free time..."

Actually, staying in this antique shop is quite nice. Brew a pot of tea, meet up with three or five antique shop owners from Panjiayuan, and chat while watching the bustling crowd. It's quite a pleasant way to live.

"Okay, don't worry, I'll definitely take good care of this shop..."

Zhao Hanxuan felt that working for Zhuang Rui wasn't so bad; at least it was good to have a powerful backer.

"What?! The day after tomorrow..."

Zhuang Rui, who was about to open the car door of the Audi, stopped and looked at Qin Xuanbing when he heard Uncle De say that there would be a chicken blood stone trade fair in Changhua the day after tomorrow.

It's really inappropriate for me to run off right after getting engaged. Even if my fiancée agrees, I won't be able to get past my mother.

Uncle De nodded and said, "Yes, it's around this time every year. This trade fair also has the largest transaction volume. If you really want to get involved in this industry, you'd better participate..."

"Uncle De, let's forget about it. There are still many things to take care of in Beijing. Let's talk about it next year when there's a chance..."

After considering it for a while, Zhuang Rui gave up the idea of going to Zhejiang. Although he really wanted to go, the chicken-blood stone was not as important as his mother and wife. There would be plenty of opportunities in the future.

"Rui, why don't we go together?"

Qin Xuanbing could tell that Zhuang Rui really wanted to go, so she gave him an idea.

"Oh, why didn't I think of that? Xuanbing, we've never gone on a trip before, why don't we go to Zhejiang for a look..."

Zhuang Rui's eyes lit up. Wasn't he just afraid of neglecting his wife? This was a good idea. Even if his mother found out, she wouldn't say anything.

"You guys, forget it. Uncle De will accompany you this time. Xiao Zhuang, book your tickets for tomorrow, let's go back to Zhonghai together..."

Uncle De shook his head. "Tourism? That godforsaken place is nothing but rocks, what scenery is there to see?"

"Okay, Uncle De, let's skip the hotel tonight and stay at my place..."

Zhuang Rui nodded in agreement. With Qin Xuanbing speaking up, his mother wouldn't blame him. He immediately drove to the hotel where Uncle De was staying, checked out, and took Uncle De's simple luggage back to the courtyard house.

"Going on a trip?"

After dinner, Uncle De went to rest first, and Zhuang Rui mentioned to his mother that he was going to Zhejiang.

"Yes, it's perfect to go with Uncle De. Mom, why don't you go out for a walk too? I still have an apartment in Zhonghai..."

Zhuang Rui was speaking from the heart. His mother had only been to Zhonghai once in her life, when he had injured his eye. At that time, his mother was so worried about him that she didn't have time to enjoy herself at all.

"Alright, Mom won't go. You and Xuanbing have fun. Remember, don't make Xuanbing angry..."

Ouyang Wan shook her head and declined her son's suggestion. She wanted to spend more time with her parents when she had free time. They were already over ninety years old, and she didn't know how much longer she could fulfill her filial duties as their child.

"Mom, no, Zhuang Rui is very good to me..."

Qin Xuanbing shyly called out "Mom," which immediately made Ouyang Wan beam with joy. She promptly kicked Zhuang Rui out of the room, took Qin Xuanbing's hand, and started whispering privately. Without even listening, Zhuang Rui knew that his mother was definitely revealing his shortcomings.

As soon as Zhuang Rui stepped into the courtyard, the white lion came up to him and nuzzled him with its large head. Zhuang Rui wrapped his arms around the lion's thick neck and said with some guilt, "White Lion, I have to go out again tomorrow, and I can't take you with me this time. I'm so sorry..."

"Waaaaah..."

The white lion seemed to understand Zhuang Rui's words, letting out a few whimpers and forcefully pushing Zhuang Rui to the ground.

Zhuang Rui grabbed the white lion by the neck, and the two of them started rolling around on the ground. This was a trick that Zhuang Rui and the white lion often played. When Peng Fei first saw it, he was almost scared out of his wits. He had never seen anyone dare to be so affectionate with a Tibetan Mastiff.

After playing with the white lion for more than half an hour, Qin Xuanbing finally came out of Zhuang's mother's room with a flushed face. Zhuang Rui hurriedly went to greet her, followed by the clueless white lion. Seeing Zhuang Rui's disheveled appearance with a blade of grass on his head, Qin Xuanbing couldn't help but laugh.

Back in the backyard, Zhuang Rui ruthlessly kicked Bai Shi out, dragged Qin Xuanbing into the bathroom, and under duress, forced her to reveal the private things her mother had just said. After that, her voice became softer, while her breathing became heavier, making Bai Shi outside the door's ears perk up.

The two of them were making a ruckus in the room, which kept the white lion on edge for a long time. After an hour or two, the white lion finally slumped down and crawled into its bed to sleep. Whether the dog blamed Zhuang Rui or not is unknown.

The next morning, Hao Long drove Zhuang Rui and the others to the airport. Peng Fei also accompanied them. Zhuang Rui himself didn't care, but since Qin Xuanbing was with them, he had to pay attention to safety. Therefore, Peng Fei also went along this time.

"Hey kid, why haven't you grown up yet? You've only been in Beijing for a short time, and you're already causing trouble again..."

Upon arriving in Zhonghai, Wei Ge naturally greeted them. He had received a call from Zhuang Rui early in the morning and was waiting at the airport.

Chapter 572 Changhua

"Xiao Zhuang, we're going to Changhua first thing tomorrow morning. Uncle De won't be with you today..."

Upon seeing Yang Wei arrive to pick up Zhuang Rui, Uncle De gave Zhuang Rui some instructions.

Having been away from Zhonghai for almost a week, Uncle De had many things to take care of. He grabbed his belongings and prepared to take a taxi to leave.

"Uncle De, let Wei Ge give you a ride..."

"No need, we're not traveling together. You young people go have fun. Come pick me up from my house tomorrow morning, remember to be early, Changhua isn't close to Zhonghai..."

Uncle De waved his hand, declining Zhuang Rui's offer. After the group walked out of the airport hall, Uncle De hailed a taxi and left first.

"Hey, Wei Ge, you've upgraded from a slingshot to a cannon! Where's your Volkswagen Santana?"

When Zhuang Rui arrived at where Yang Wei had parked, he discovered that Wei had changed to a new car, a white BMW 320. Although the car wasn't very expensive, only worth around 300,000 yuan, with Wei's driving skills, it would probably be in the repair shop in less than a month.

"My brother is getting married soon, how can he be so shabby..."

Wei Ge proudly took out his car keys and waved them around. He had taken Song Xingjun home to meet his parents a while ago, and they were all quite satisfied. They had also loosened their financial restrictions on him a lot. After all, the Yang family was a well-known entrepreneur in Zhonghai, and driving a BMW was nothing unusual for them.

"Hey, that's my car..."

Just as Wei Ge was showing off, Zhuang Rui suddenly snatched the car keys from his hand, saying, "Brother, you're driving, and my heart is in my throat. Peng Fei, here you go..."

Zhuang Rui tossed the car keys to Peng Fei, opened the car door, and sat in the back with Qin Xuanbing. He rolled down the window and called out, "Brother Wei, if you're not leaving now, you'll have to take a taxi home yourself..."

"You little brat, my driving skills have clearly improved. I've been driving for over a week now and haven't had any accidents..."

Wei Ge cursed angrily, sat in the passenger seat, and gave Peng Fei the name of Zhuang Rui's residential complex. Peng Fei then started the car and drove towards Zhuang Rui's house in Zhonghai, following the car's satellite navigation system.

Although he hadn't been to Zhonghai for more than half a year, Zhuang Rui handed the house keys to Wei Ge, and he would have a housekeeping company come to clean the house once a week. Of course, whether Wei Ge brought Nurse Song here for sex was something Zhuang Rui couldn't know.

Now that they're here, they don't need to stay in a hotel anymore; they can just stay at home. However, all the cooking oil, salt, soy sauce, and vinegar were obviously expired. The group ate out before returning to the house.

Wei Ge handed the car to Zhuang Rui and took a taxi home. However, he said he would bring another car tomorrow to take Song Xingjun to Changhua for a trip. Zhuang Rui knew that he was rich and had plenty of free time, so he immediately agreed.

Zhonghai is the city where Zhuang Rui has spent the most time besides Pengcheng. Lighting a cigarette, Zhuang Rui stood on the balcony, looking at the endless stream of cars and dense crowds on the Bund. He was a little lost in thought. Even when he bought the house last year, Zhuang Rui did not expect that he would change so much.

Back then, Zhuang Rui was just an ordinary person content with a modest fortune, thinking he could make a fortune by gambling on stones, go home and live with his mother. Zhuang Rui never imagined that he would end up settling down in Beijing. Moreover, he had the money, but time seemed to have slipped away. It was as if an invisible hand was pushing him forward.

"Rui, what are you thinking about?"

Qin Xuanbing saw a hint of realization and hesitation on Zhuang Rui's face, so she stepped forward and wrapped her arms around Zhuang Rui's waist from behind.

"I'm wondering, when we met last year, you were like an ethereal fairy from the ice, so how did you end up marrying a mere mortal like me?"

Zhuang Rui pulled Qin Xuanbing close and started joking with her.

"You jerk, I haven't even married you yet..."

Qin Xuanbing playfully slapped Zhuang Rui, then peeked into the living room. Peng Fei, however, had already slipped into his room to call his girlfriend, leaving the outside to Zhuang Rui and Qin Xuanbing.

"Xuanbing, what do you think about us traveling around the world after we're done with this busy period?"

For some reason, Zhuang Rui suddenly felt a little tired. Perhaps it was because he had made too much money and had lost his motivation to make more. His purpose in coming to acquire chicken-blood stone was actually to relax and clear his head.

"Great! We can join a world cruise and spend a few days in each place..."

Qin Xuanbing smiled and agreed, her eyes full of longing. Traveling around the world with her lover is probably a common dream for all men and women on this earth, right? Of course, very few people can actually do it.

The two embraced, watching the lights of the Bund gradually illuminate, gazing at this city that never sleeps, feeling an immense sense of warmth in their hearts.

The next morning, Wei Ge brought Song Xingjun to the outside of Zhuang Rui's residential area. To Zhuang Rui's surprise, Yang Wei drove a Hummer from somewhere. But it was fine, because including Uncle De, there were a total of six people going to Changhua this time, and one car really couldn't fit them all.

"Brother Wei, we're going on a long trip, so let Peng Fei drive your car..."

Zhuang Rui's words left Yang Wei feeling quite frustrated. However, this guy knew that his driving skills weren't very good, so he gave the driver's seat to Peng Fei and went to sit in the back with Song Xingjun to be all lovey-dovey.

Zhuang Rui's BMW was in front; they needed to pick up Uncle De first before heading to Changhua.

"Xiao Zhuang, your car is no good. It might break down when we get there..."

Uncle De had been waiting at the door for a while, and shook his head when he saw Zhuang Rui's BMW.

"What's wrong? Uncle De, is there still a mountain road?"

Zhuang Rui was stunned. He wasn't going up the mountain to collect chicken-blood stone. Could it be that the trading of chicken-blood stone was done on the mountain?

"Yes, it's still several dozen kilometers from Changhua Town to Yuyan Mountain, and your car won't be able to travel that far..."

Uncle De saw the Hummer parked behind and said, "That car is alright. Forget it, let's get to Changhua first. Let Yang Wei stay in town if he doesn't have to..."

After Uncle De got into the car, the group found a restaurant, ate something, and then got on the highway, heading towards Changhua.

Although China Overseas borders Zhejiang, it is still several hundred kilometers away from Changhua. However, the entire route is a highway, which is very convenient. After about four or five hours, around 1 p.m., the two cars drove off the Hanghui Highway.

The scenery along the highway leading into Changhua Town was breathtaking. Surrounded by mountains and verdant peaks, with an endless sea of bamboo, Zhuang Rui felt that the scene resembled the setting of the movie "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon".

With such beautiful scenery, Zhuang Rui slowed down the car and sometimes even got out to take a picture. As a result, it wasn't until almost 3 p.m. that he finally drove into Changhua Town.

Changhua Town is a beautiful and rich magical land located on the western border of Zhejiang Province. It has unique culture and resources, and its specialties include mountain walnuts, tea, dogwood, ginkgo, and dried bamboo shoots. It is the political, economic and cultural center of western Lin'an and one of the central towns of Zhejiang Province.

Of course, the most famous thing here is Changhua chicken-blood stone. As a gift that is often given by national leaders to foreign friends, Changhua chicken-blood stone has long been famous at home and abroad.

The town is not big. Although the main road is paved with asphalt, you can still see from the car that some alleys are paved with long strips of bluestone, which has a kind of ancient town charm. Along the way, some attractions still retain the characteristics of ancient times.

Before coming here, Zhuang Rui had also studied some information about Changhua, but seeing is believing. After arriving here, this ancient town in Jiangnan gave Zhuang Rui a different feeling.

"Xiao Zhuang, that's enough, that's the road to Yuyan Mountain. Stop the car now..."

After entering Changhua Town, Uncle De asked Zhuang Rui to stop the car and got out.

"What's wrong, Uncle De? Shall we find a place to stay first?"

Uncle De waved Yang Wei down from the Hummer and said, "We're not staying here, Yang Wei. Switch cars. You take Xiao Song and have some fun in Changhua for a couple of days..."

"Why should I? Uncle De, I also want to see what's going on with that bloodstone..."

Yang Wei shouted unhappily. He had traveled for four or five hours, not to visit this remote town.

"This road isn't easy to drive on. The BMW's chassis is a bit low; it might get damaged if you drive over it..."

Uncle De explained to Yang Wei, but before he could finish speaking, a Mercedes-Benz with a Zhejiang license plate sped past them, kicking up a cloud of dust. The car was also heading towards Yuyan Mountain.

"Tch, Uncle De, they're not afraid of Mercedes, so why should I be? As long as I don't break down on the road and can get back to Zhonghai, that's all that matters. I know the auto repair shops like the back of my hand..."

Yang Wei's words made Zhuang Rui burst into laughter. Wei was really familiar with the auto repair shop. Since college, he had been going to the auto repair shop almost every week. Driving probably requires some talent, otherwise Wei would have been driving for seven or eight years and his skills would still be terrible.

"Okay, as long as you don't mind the cost..."

When Uncle De heard that Yang Wei insisted on going, he didn't force him and invited everyone to get in the car. However, Peng Fei got out of the Hummer and volunteered to drive the BMW. With his driving skills, he could avoid some difficult roads. Zhuang Rui and Qin Xuanbing switched to the Hummer.

Just a few hundred meters outside Changhua Town, the road conditions became quite bad. However, there were still quite a few cars heading towards Yuyan Mountain, all bumping along on the potholed,

muddy ground. Even the Hummer couldn't pick up speed and was struggling to move forward, swaying and rocking.

"Uncle De, you must make a lot of money selling chicken-blood stone in Changhua, right? Why can't you spend a little money to fix this road?"

Although the Hummer had good shock absorption, the people inside still felt quite shaken. Zhuang Rui felt as if he had returned to Hpakant, Myanmar.

Chapter 573 Farmhouse Tourism

"Hey, let's switch. Let your older brother ride in the Hummer for a bit..."

Needless to say, the BMW following behind was in a different situation. The guy who had volunteered to get in the BMW earlier was now rolling down his window, crying and begging to switch back.

Read Taiwanese novels on the Taiwanese Novel Network, twkän.cöm – super convenient!

"Brother Wei, you don't exercise much, so this bumpy ride will help loosen your bones..."

Zhuang Rui laughed as he drove, then pressed the accelerator hard, increasing the Hummer's speed and leaving the BMW behind.

"Hey kid, slow down..."

Uncle De almost hit his head on the car window because Zhuang Rui accelerated, and glared at Zhuang Rui fiercely.

Zhuang Rui quickly slowed down and laughed, "Hehe, Uncle De, we'll be there in a few dozen kilometers. By the way, you haven't told me yet, where did all the money from selling chicken-blood stone in Changhua go? Why don't you fix the roads?"

"Who's going to fix it? They've been mining chicken-blood stone since the Tang Dynasty, and by the Ming Dynasty, it had become a large-scale operation, but this road, tsk tsk, it's not much better than it was back then..."

Uncle De shook his head. These days, if there's something to make money, everyone will flock to it, but when it comes to spending money, they all run faster than rabbits.

Logically speaking, all the owners who contracted the chicken blood stone mines should be rolling in money, but now not a single one of them is willing to spend money to repair the road. However, there are reasons for this.

In the 1980s and 90s, a few mine owners jointly invested in repairing this road, but fifty kilometers is not a short distance, and they did not have enough capital to repair the asphalt road. They just laid some gravel and hired a road roller to repair it.

However, most of the trucks that usually pass by this road are heavy trucks carrying stones. The gravel road simply cannot withstand the load. In addition, when it rains, the road becomes worse than before in less than two months. The millions that the mine owners invested have gone down the drain. Since then, no one has mentioned repairing the road again.

After the car slowed down, the people inside felt much better. It's a wonder this Hummer was so bumpy; one can only imagine what Viagra must be suffering in his BMW now.

Sitting in the back with Qin Xuanbing, Song Xingjun noticed that the traffic on this run-down road was almost as heavy as on a highway, and asked curiously, "Zhuang Rui, what exactly is this chicken-blood stone? Why are so many cars heading into the mountains?"

"Hehe, this is a long story. In ancient times, when a pair of beautiful phoenixes were soaring in the heavens, they often heard mournful cries. Looking down, they saw locusts swarming, plagues spreading, crops failing to grow, desolation everywhere, and the people suffering."

Seeing this, the kind and righteous phoenix resolved to use its own power to eliminate the locust plague, drive away the epidemic, and save all living beings. The grateful people begged the phoenix to stay and share the morning songs and evening melodies with them.

Moved by the people's sincerity, the phoenix built Phoenix Marsh on the summit of a mountain—Kangshan Ridge—to live. Soon, all the rocks around Phoenix Marsh turned white and transparent, like white jade, hence the name Jade Rock Mountain..."

"Zhuang Rui, this has nothing to do with the bloodstone."

Qin Xuanbing interrupted Zhuang Rui when she heard this, as she hadn't heard anything about chicken-blood stone after listening for a long time.

"Don't interrupt, this is the story. Later, a pair of powerful bird lions, also known as phoenixes, came to Yuyan Mountain. They were jealous of the phoenix nesting on such a beautiful mountain and decided to drive the phoenix away and occupy Phoenix Swamp."

One day, just as the female phoenix entered the incubation period and the male phoenix went out to forage, he attacked the phoenix nest and attacked the female phoenix. The female phoenix bravely fought back, and the battle between the phoenix and the lion made the Jade Rock Mountain tremble with fear and the sun and moon lost their light.

When the male phoenix returned to its nest, the female phoenix had one leg pecked off by the bird lion, and its blood stained Jade Rock Mountain. In the end, the phoenix, filled with grief and indignation, still defeated the bird lion with its wisdom and strength. With tears in its eyes, it buried the phoenix eggs that had been trampled on innocently before taking flight.

Legend has it that the blood of a phoenix spilled onto Jade Rock Mountain, thus forming the bloodstone. Did you understand?

After Zhuang Rui finished telling the story, he noticed there was no sound from the back. Looking in the rearview mirror, he saw that both girls had tears in their eyes. He couldn't help but ask, "Hey, what's wrong with you two?"

"Zhuang Rui, that female phoenix is so pitiful..."

Qin Xuanbing's tearful voice left Zhuang Rui speechless. His future wife was usually so shrewd; how could she have acted so foolishly?

"Don't listen to Xiao Zhuang's nonsense, you two. What birds and phoenixes? Cinnabar stone is formed when cinnabar (mercury sulfide) seeps into kaolinite and dickite. Its composition is mercury sulfide, and the stone is dickite or kaolinite. The two are fused together, forming a natural gemstone..."

Uncle De explained to Song Xingjun and Qin Xuanbing what chicken blood stone was using relatively scientific language, but it was clear that the two women were more inclined to believe Zhuang Rui's myth. Women are always more emotional.

The 50-kilometer journey took more than two hours, and we finally arrived at the foot of Yuyan Mountain around 5 p.m. There was a small town, or perhaps a village, here, with a lot of people coming and going. It even seemed a bit more lively than Changhua Town.

This village must be quite wealthy, because the houses Zhuang Rui saw were mostly two or three-story buildings, covered with mosaic tiles that shimmered brilliantly in the afterglow of the setting sun.

The village was originally located at the foot of the mountain, but some houses were even built halfway up the mountainside, occupying a huge area. If this were in Hong Kong, it would be considered one of the most luxurious villas.

Uncle De pointed to a large shed outside the village that looked like a vegetable market and said, "That's where the chicken-blood stone is traded..."

"Uncle De, shall we go take a look?"

Zhuang Rui looked in the direction of the sound and saw that there were still lights there. He couldn't help but feel the urge to go and see for himself. The two hours of bumpy travel were nothing to him. You know, in Myanmar, such a road would take at least a whole day to travel.

Uncle De shook his head and laughed, "What's the rush, kid? It's not like you're leaving tomorrow. No rush, let's find a place to stay and get something to eat first..."

"Where can we stay?"

Zhuang Rui had already driven his Hummer into this small village with a very modern decor. In less than a minute, the car reached the end, but Zhuang Rui didn't see any hotels or similar buildings.

"Hehe, I'll take you to a farmhouse for a stay today, and you can try some local dishes. Xiao Zhuang, drive the car up a bit further up. I booked the place yesterday. If I had booked it late, we probably would have had to sleep in the car tonight..."

Uncle De was very familiar with this place, and he pointed out a road leading up the mountain, telling Zhuang Rui to drive up.

Surprisingly, once we arrived at Yuyan Mountain, the roads were much better than the way we came. Even the mountain roads had been repaired, and the BMW behind us easily drove up and parked in front of a three-story building.

Several cars were already parked in the open space in front of the small building. The Mercedes-Benz that Zhuang Rui and the others had seen earlier was also parked here.

"Holy crap, my new car..."

Wei Ge was howling like a banshee on the road, but as soon as he got out of the car, he didn't care about his loose muscles and scrambled out of the car. He looked around his BMW and felt more and more heartbroken. The area below the car door was already dented and bumped by the protruding stones on the road.

"Look at you, so pathetic. Other people drove over in Mercedes, didn't they..."

After parking the car, Zhuang Rui gloated and teased Wei Ge, saying, "Who told you to insist on coming along?"

"This...this is the best car my brother drives..." Wei Ge rolled his eyes unhappily.

Uncle De, who got out of the Hummer, ignored the two bickering brothers and went to greet an old man standing in front of the small building. When he was still three or five meters away, he called out, "Brother Wang, we're here to bother you again. This time, six people and three rooms, is that alright?"

"Teacher Ma, welcome, welcome!"

Old Wang looked a few years younger than Uncle De. Perhaps because he lived in the mountains, he was very energetic. After shaking hands with Uncle De, Old Wang hesitated for a moment and said, "Teacher Ma, didn't you book two rooms yesterday? How come there's an extra one?"

"What? Not enough rooms?"

Uncle De's expression changed slightly. Yesterday, Yang Wei hadn't mentioned coming, so Uncle De called and booked two rooms. Zhuang Rui and his wife would stay in one room, and he and Peng Fei could stay in the other. But now that Yang Wei was suddenly joining, they needed three rooms.

"Teacher Ma, as you know, these are the days when rooms are in highest demand. You said you wanted to reserve two rooms, so I booked the other 10 rooms. Now... now..."

The old man was very simple and honest. It was clearly Zhuang Rui and his friends who were in the wrong, but the old man was embarrassed to say it later. His three-story house was used for his own residence on the first floor, while the second and third floors were used as a guesthouse for guests. There were only 12 rooms in total.

The restaurant is also on the first floor. Because there are many diners, the restaurant occupies two rooms on the first floor.

"Brother Wang, is there... is there any room left in the village down there?"

Uncle De regretted not calling Old Wang when he left in the morning; otherwise, this wouldn't have happened.

Seeing Uncle De's anxious look, Old Wang thought for a moment and said, "Don't go downstairs. Let my wife and I cook for you, then you can squeeze in at my son's place..."

"Alright, alright, old brother, thank you so much..."

After thanking Lao Wang, Uncle De led Zhuang Rui and his group up to the second floor. Zhuang Rui and Yang Wei each took a room, while Uncle De and Peng Fei stayed in Lao Wang's bedroom on the first floor.

The room wasn't very big; it only had a bed and a wardrobe. However, you could tell that the bedding was clean and hygienic.

There was also a window in the room. After opening the window, you could clearly see the lush and green Dayan Mountain. At this time, the sun was setting, and everything in sight was golden yellow, which was very beautiful.

"Alright, Xiao Zhuang, the conditions here are a bit basic, there's no shower, but we're only staying for a couple of days at most. Let's unpack our things and go try some local farm food..."

Uncle De's voice rang out from the doorway. Zhuang Rui answered and threw the bag containing his change of clothes onto the bed. As for his wallet and other valuables, he naturally left them with him.

"Old Wang, it's not like I'm not going to pay you. What's wrong with asking for an extra room? They just arrived, aren't they? Tell them to give up one room..."

As soon as Zhuang Rui and the others stepped out of the room, they heard a rude voice coming from downstairs.

Chapter 574 The pigsty is spacious enough for people to live in.

"This...this isn't right. We're all guests; there's no reason to kick people out..."

Old Wang's voice followed. His little building was the best in the village, so it was the first to fill up. Many people attending the chicken-blood stone trade fair chose to stay here first, introduced by friends.

"Why all this nonsense? You charge 120 yuan a night, I'll give you 200 and have them move downstairs, that'll solve everything..."

After Zhuang Rui and the others went downstairs, they saw the owner of the arrogant voice. He didn't look very old, probably around the same age as Zhuang Rui and Yang Wei. At this moment, his finger was almost poking Old Wang's face.

There were three other people standing with him. One was older, and the other two were around thirty years old. However, it seemed that the young man was the main one, and they were all watching the excitement from the sidelines.

"Old Wang, time to eat! Is your sister-in-law's cooking ready yet? We've been driving all day, we're all starving..."

Uncle De and Lao Wang were on good terms. Just now, someone had given up their room for them, and seeing Lao Wang being harassed by others, Uncle De couldn't help but step forward and pull Lao Wang out from among those people.

Old Wang was a kind man. After Uncle De pulled him out, he said to the young man, "You booked one room before, but now you want two. There's really no way around it. Otherwise, I'll help you find a place in the village down below..."

"Damn, the area downstairs is like a pigsty, how can anyone live there..."

The man frowned slightly, then suddenly noticed Zhuang Rui and his group of five or six coming down from upstairs, with two women following behind. His eyes darted around, and he said, "Hey, with so many of you, you must have a lot of rooms. Let these two women squeeze in, and we'll make room for them."

When Old Wang saw that the man had steered the conversation toward Zhuang Rui and the others, he quickly went back and said, "Young man, they're a couple living together. Can't I help you find a clean place to live?"

"Old Wang, this has nothing to do with you. I'll negotiate with them. If they're willing, it's none of your business..."

Although the young man had brought two bodyguards, Old Wang was a native of the area, and the young man dared not offend him too much. Otherwise, if he angered the entire village, he would be in deep trouble.

But the young man didn't care much about Zhuang Rui and the others. They were all from out of town, so what if he was unreasonable? In Zhejiang, he had never been afraid of anyone.

Zhuang Rui frowned, but before he could speak, Wei Ge rushed over, pointed at the man, and said, "Why should we let you have your way? There's always a first-come, first-served rule, isn't there?"

Zhuang Rui gave a wry smile. Wei Ge had indeed grown up in a greenhouse. That person was clearly unreasonable. What was the point of reasoning with them?

Sure enough, the man slapped Yang Wei's fingers away and said, "Everything in this world has a price. Give up a room, and I'll give you ten thousand yuan..."

As he spoke, the young man waved his hand, and a man carrying a bag immediately handed it over. The man took out a wad of cash from the bag and said, "Take the money and go. It's good for you and good for me. Maybe you'll even save money on your attempt to pick up girls this time..."

The young man spoke while laughing loudly, his eyes constantly darting between Qin Xuanbing and Song Xingjun, his face full of smugness.

He never expected to see such hot girls in this remote and impoverished place. He was really itching to get his hands on these two girls, so he wouldn't be lonely tonight.

"Wei-ge, come back, let's go eat. This place is a bit remote, and there are a lot of stray dogs. Be careful not to get bitten..."

Zhuang Rui was well past the age of starting fights at the drop of a hat, but not fighting didn't mean he couldn't swear. Zhuang Rui's words brought the young man's laughter to an abrupt halt, like a duck being choked, coughing repeatedly.

"Teacher Ma, are they with you? Could you please make room for them?"

Just as Zhuang Rui and the others were heading towards the restaurant, the middle-aged man in his forties suddenly stood up and blocked Uncle De's way.

"You know me?" Uncle De frowned; he had no recollection of this person at all.

"In the Jiangsu and Zhejiang area, who doesn't know you, Teacher Ma?"

The middle-aged man smiled and complimented Uncle De, then said, "This is Yan Kai, the grandson of Secretary Yan of Zhonghai. He's currently in the business of chicken-blood stone. Teacher Ma, what do you think... would you mind making room for him?"

"Secretary Yan?"

Upon hearing this, Uncle De frowned even more deeply. As a native of Zhonghai, he naturally knew that Yan XX, who had served as the Party Secretary of Zhonghai City in the 1970s and 80s, was an old revolutionary who had come through the war years. Many of the current leaders of Zhonghai's departments were his protégés and old friends.

But this Secretary Yan has always had a very good reputation as an official, so how come his grandson is so useless?

Uncle De shook his head and said, "I'm sorry, I don't know Secretary Yan, and I won't let this room..."

"Old man, are you fucking looking for death? Asking you to give up your room is giving you face. Believe me, I can crush you with just one phone call."

Upon hearing Uncle De's words, Young Master Yan became enraged and walked over to push Uncle De, but was caught off guard by Zhuang Rui, who was standing nearby.

"Kid, let go, or I'll beat you up too..."

Yan Kai was the only son in his family and was usually doted on by his grandmother and parents. In addition, everyone who visited his home in Zhonghai treated him like a treasure, which fostered his arrogant and domineering personality.

However, these days, everything is about money. Yan Kai had been working for more than 10 years and was getting bored, so he joined his uncle's jewelry company. He didn't have much to do, so the company basically kept him as an idle person.

Upon hearing that a batch of chicken-blood stone was to be purchased from Changhua, Yan Kai, for some reason, insisted on coming to "play around." The chicken-blood stone business only accounts for a small portion of his uncle's company, and since a master craftsman was accompanying him, his uncle agreed to let him come and see for himself.

Back in Zhonghai, everyone spoke of his grandfather with utmost respect. Yan Kai had grown accustomed to the aura his grandfather brought him, so when he saw Uncle De casually say he didn't know Secretary Yan, he was instantly enraged and raised his fist to hit Uncle De.

When Zhuang Rui saw Yan Kai acting arrogantly, he couldn't help but laugh. He gestured angrily at the middle-aged man and said, "You hit me? Hey, I'm asking you, who is Secretary Yan?"

"You don't even recognize Secretary Yan? He used to be the Party Secretary of Zhonghai. I'm telling you guys, it's just about offering a room, why make such a fuss?"

The middle-aged man showed a hint of disdain on his face. Judging from the appearance of these people, they were probably from out of town. They didn't even know this much, yet they dared to come to Jiangsu and Zhejiang to do business.

"Give me a room? Sure, this must be Young Master Yan, right? See that over there? It's spacious inside, you can sleep there tonight..."

Zhuang Rui's words made Qin Xuanbing and Song Xingjun burst out laughing.

Because the place Zhuang Rui was pointing to was more than 20 meters away from here, which was Old Wang's pigsty, and at that moment a pig was sticking its nose out and making "grunt grunt" sounds.

Zhuang Rui's words were really sharp. Wei Ge was already laughing so hard he was clutching his stomach, and even Uncle De had a smile on his face. Going to sleep with the old sow, I don't know what Zhuang Rui thought of.

"Damn it, kid, you're asking for it..."

Upon hearing Zhuang Rui's words, Yan Kai looked at the old sow that was making noises at him, and his fair face turned blood red with anger. This kid was used to being arrogant, and he didn't care whether he could beat Zhuang Rui or not. He swung his left fist and punched Zhuang Rui in the face.

"Fuck you..."

Zhuang Rui had been in many fights since he was a child, so he released his grip on Yan Kai's right hand, deflected Yan Kai's left fist, and suddenly raised his right foot, kicking Yan Kai hard in the abdomen.

This kick was very solid. Although Yan Kai looked tall and strong, he was just a show-off. He was kicked squarely by Zhuang Rui, let out a scream, stumbled back several steps, and fell backward to the ground clutching his stomach.

Zhuang Rui had cursed and even fought, but thinking that resorting to violence was never a good thing, he kicked out, then turned around and smiled at Qin Xuanbing, "Wife, I'm a civilized person. You saw it yourself, I was just defending myself. This kid attacked first..."

From hurling insults to actually fighting, it all happened in the blink of an eye, in just a few seconds. The arrogant young master Yan was now lying on the ground.

For a moment, everyone was stunned. Even Qin Xuanbing hadn't expected Zhuang Rui to be so efficient in a fight.

"Can't you men solve problems without fighting? Zhuang Rui, watch out, those two..."

Qin Xuanbing was just about to say something to Zhuang Rui, feeling both amused and exasperated, when she suddenly saw the two people who were originally standing behind Young Master Yan rushing towards Zhuang Rui. She quickly shouted to warn Zhuang Rui to be careful.

Although the patriarch of the Yan family has retired, the younger generation has expanded their business and is doing quite well. Because Yan Kai has been spoiled since childhood and is somewhat unreliable, his uncle hired two bodyguards for him, the only son of the Yan family. When they saw their employer being beaten, the two men immediately rushed towards Zhuang Rui after realizing what was happening.

Before they could reach Zhuang Rui, a small, thin figure that they hadn't noticed before suddenly blocked their path. Neither of the bodyguards stopped, and they tried to shove the person in their way aside.

The person blocking the two people's way was naturally Peng Fei. However, in everyone's eyes, Peng Fei, who was only about 1.7 meters tall, looked like a mantis trying to stop a car.

Chapter 575 Selling Martial Arts Skills on the Overpass

Aside from Zhuang Rui, the people present, including Qin Xuanbing, weren't very familiar with Peng Fei. Hearing them address each other as brothers, they all assumed he and Zhuang Rui were close friends. Zhuang Rui had never explained his relationship with Peng Fei because he didn't particularly like the term "bodyguard."

Seeing two burly men, both over 1.8 meters tall, ramming into the slightly thin Peng Fei, Qin Xuanbing and Song Xingjun covered their mouths. They thought Peng Fei was bound to be thrown out of the way; after all, he was one of their own, and they couldn't bear to watch any longer.

"Bang... bang bang..."

Just as the two women closed their eyes, they heard several dull sounds like drumsticks hitting leather, followed by screams. However, what puzzled Qin Xuanbing and Song Xingjun was that the screams did not seem to come from Peng Fei.

When he opened his eyes, Peng Fei was still standing there unharmed, while the two bodyguards who had rushed at him were squatting on the ground, one on each side, clutching their ribs tightly with their hands, their faces pale and full of pain, with beads of sweat sliding down their faces.

"What...what's going on?"

Qin Xuanbing and Song Xingjun were both stunned. When they looked at Xiang Yangwei again, the guy's mouth was agape, his face showing shock and confusion.

Perhaps among these people, only Zhuang Rui saw things most clearly.

Just as the two bodyguards were about to bump into Peng Fei with their shoulders, Peng Fei suddenly took a small step back, leaving them with no point of contact when they exerted force. It was like punching cotton, feeling empty and very uncomfortable.

Just as the two men were about to regain their footing, Peng Fei suddenly ducked low, and taking advantage of their momentary pull, he struck them both under the armpits with lightning speed, delivering five or six punches in an instant. Before the two men could even react, the excruciating pain in their ribs had already reached their brains.

There's a saying that you should strike a person's weak spot, referring to the area under their armpit and ribs. A solid punch there will generally render a person incapacitated. If the force is greater, it's quite possible to damage their spleen.

Peng Fei used very precise force, neither breaking their ribs nor preventing them from standing up for a short period of time.

"Peng Fei, are you alright?"

Zhuang Rui stepped forward and whispered a question in Peng Fei's ear. He wasn't concerned about Peng Fei's safety; with Peng Fei's skills, if he were to fall into the hands of these two, he would have truly wasted his life.

Zhuang Rui was asking about the two people squatting on the ground. After all, they didn't have any deep-seated hatred for each other. If they really fought and one of them had a ruptured spleen, things would get out of hand. It wasn't that Zhuang Rui was afraid of trouble, but he was afraid of getting into trouble.

"It's alright, Brother Zhuang, they'll be fine after a few minutes..."

Peng Fei smiled. These two bodyguards must also be from the military, but judging from their skills, they didn't seem to have any training. At most, they just knew some military boxing and made a living by being strong after retiring from the army.

"That's good. Let's go eat. Uncle Wang, Uncle De praised your family's farm-style dishes..."

Zhuang Rui clapped his hands and led Qin Xuanbing past Yan Kai and his group as if no one else was there. Although they were all about the same age, in Zhuang Rui's eyes, this young master Yan was just a spoiled child.

Just as Peng Fei said, after squatting on the ground for two or three minutes, the two slowly stood up. Not only them, but Yan Kai, who had been kicked by Zhuang Rui, was also fine now. However, the arrogant look on his face had turned into astonishment, confusion and resentment.

Yan Kai never imagined that his two bodyguards, who he used to boast about being invincible, were no match for their opponents. His family background was also completely disregarded; he had lost all his leverage.

He was no match for Zhuang Rui in a one-on-one fight, and his men were taken down in an instant. Even if Yan Kai was an idiot, he knew that now was not the time for revenge. If he continued to cause trouble, he would only suffer more losses.

"Let's go, we're not staying here anymore..."

Yan Kai stared venomously at Zhuang Rui and the others' retreating figures, spitting out a sentence through gritted teeth. He then got into the car with the consultant and two bodyguards and drove down the mountain, abandoning even the room they had originally booked.

"You two, didn't you always say you were really good at fighting?"

After the car reached the bottom of the mountain, Yan Kai's face was so gloomy it was almost dripping with water. He had never suffered such a loss in his entire life. You know, from childhood to adulthood, no one had ever laid a finger on him.

Being kicked by Zhuang Rui in front of so many people, Young Master Yan felt his fragile heart had been ravaged, and he was so frustrated that he felt like he was about to explode.

"Young Master Yan, that guy is definitely a trained fighter. Even the instructor probably couldn't beat him, let alone the two of us. He might even be a bodyguard from Zhongnanhai..."

Since they were outmatched, the two bodyguards had nothing to say but to exaggerate Peng Fei's abilities. If Peng Fei knew that he, a man forcibly discharged from the army, had been given the title of a bodyguard for Zhongnanhai, how would he feel?

"Zhongnanhai bodyguards? Zhongnanhai my ass! Why don't you just say that guy is the President of the People's Republic of China?"

Upon hearing the bodyguard's words, Yan Kai completely lost his temper. His long-suppressed anger erupted, and he reached out and slapped the two useless bodyguards across the head repeatedly, cursing as he did so.

"Young Master Yan, I think you and the others should go back first. I can handle the matter of the bloodstone by myself..."

The expert on bloodstone interrupted Yan Kai's actions. This time, he had offended Uncle De from Zhonghai, but with the Yan family as his backing, he wasn't afraid of anything.

"By the way, Lao Cao, I haven't asked you yet. Is that old man surnamed Ma from Zhonghai? What's their background?"

After hearing Lao Cao's words, Yan Kai, who was furious, came to his senses. A gentleman takes revenge even after ten years. Just because he couldn't deal with Zhuang Rui and the others in this remote and impoverished place doesn't mean he can't deal with them in the future.

"That old man is from Zhonghai, and he's an expert in miscellaneous appraisals and ancient porcelain restoration. He's very well-known in the industry and is considered a prominent figure in Zhonghai's collecting circles..."

For Lao Cao, Uncle De's status in the art collecting circle was something he absolutely had to look up to, and his words were quite fair.

"What kind of people are they? They're just a bunch of poor bastards. Alright, Lao Cao, go find a clean place to stay. Tomorrow I want to see how they trade bloodstone."

Yan Kai had no intention of leaving Yuyan Mountain. "I can't beat you guys today, but I'll bury you in money tomorrow."

Yan Kai has never lacked money since he was a child. No matter what kind of sports car came out, he could get his hands on it as long as he wanted it. Now all he can think about is how to use money to make Zhuang Rui and the others unable to buy anything tomorrow.

Old Cao could see through Yan Kai's thoughts, and couldn't help but shake his head and smile bitterly. He didn't know what had gotten into this rascal, insisting on attending this chicken-blood stone trade fair. He was afraid that he wouldn't be able to complete his mission this time. He would have to find an opportunity to call the boss and tell him about it.

"Peng Fei, you're amazing! You actually took down those two big oafs all by yourself. Did you train before?"

Leaving aside Yan Kai and his group leaving in a huff, Zhuang Rui and the others were already sitting in the restaurant of the farmhouse, preparing to have dinner. After the delay, it was almost 7 p.m.

Yang Wei was curiously pinching Peng Fei's arm, wanting to see how this unassuming Peng Fei possessed such explosive power.

"The food's here, Wei Ge. Just eat. Peng Fei's family used to sell martial arts skills in the old Tianqiao area of Beijing. Someone like you could take on ten of Peng Fei's alone..."

Zhuang Rui knew that Peng Fei was unwilling to talk about the past, and that even though he had left that unit, he still had to follow certain disciplines, so he gave Peng Fei a random title.

Peng Fei, listening from the side, frowned. His ancestors for eight generations were all farmers, yet they went to Tianqiao to watch martial arts performances. His boss was really talking nonsense.

"Here, Teacher Ma, this is plum wine that we made at home. It won't make you drunk. Why don't you try some?"

After all the dishes were served, Old Wang took a bottle of liquor that was in a mineral water bottle and placed it on the table.

The Jiangzhe region is famous for its plums, and most families that grow plums will make their own. However, that usually happens in April or May. The plum wine that Old Wang brought out, on the other hand, was left over from last year.

"Uncle Wang, I'm really sorry about what happened today. We've rented the room they left behind. By the way, let's set the rent at 200 for both..."

Feeling a little embarrassed about fighting in someone else's house, Zhuang Rui quickly stood up and apologized to Old Wang when he saw him coming over.

"No need, no need. Look at what you said, 120 is 120, food and lodging are included. If that kid had tried to cause trouble again, I would have shot him out with my hunting rifle..."

Old Wang waved his hand repeatedly, pointing to a hunting rifle hanging behind the door, indicating that he wasn't exaggerating.

"Hehe, Brother Wang, you can still go hunting in the mountains, we're in for a treat..."

Uncle De chuckled and pointed to the dishes on the table, saying to Zhuang Rui and the others, "These are all farm-style dishes. This stewed free-range chicken, wild boar, wild rabbit, farm-style potato pancakes, and stewed pork with dried bamboo shoots—you can't get these outside. Brother Wang personally went up the mountain to hunt them. Come on, everyone, have a taste..."

As people get older, they are most afraid of being told they are useless. Uncle De's words really hit the nail on the head, making Old Wang smile from ear to ear.

Farmhouses don't have as many rules as city dwellers. Old Wang loudly called out to his wife, insisting on adding a few more dishes, and then sat down to drink with Uncle De.

After a few rounds of drinks, Uncle De casually asked, "Brother Wang, did you find any good materials when you went up the mountain last year?"

Chapter 576 Bloodstone (Part 1)

The mining of chicken-blood stone is similar to that of jade mines in Xinjiang, and even more chaotic. Since most of the chicken-blood stones exposed on the mountainside have already been mined, it is necessary to use explosives to blast holes, and then dig deep by hand or machine to extract the chicken-blood stones buried deep underground.

As a result, many outside forces got involved, but many locals of Yuyan Mountain were still able to collect some good quality chicken-blood stone from the mountain with their rich experience, which is why Uncle De asked this question.

"Hehe, I do have a few pieces. I'm planning to take them to the market to sell tomorrow. I'll show them to you after we've eaten, brother..." Old Wang smiled broadly after hearing Uncle De's words.

"Uncle Wang, you've also been mining in the mountains?"

With a piece of Tujia chicken stuffed in his mouth, Wei Ge asked indistinctly. As a city kid, he always thought mining was a very mysterious thing.

"Brother Wang has done more than just mining; he's also been featured in newspapers and on Zhejiang TV..."

As Uncle De spoke, he gave Old Wang a thumbs-up. Old Wang just chuckled and busied himself pouring plum wine into the empty cups of the group.

"Oh? Uncle Wang, tell me, tell me quickly..."

Uncle De's words piqued everyone's interest. There was nothing much to do in this mountain valley, so enjoying the mountain breeze, drinking a little wine, and listening to stories was a great pleasure in life.

"It's nothing, it's nothing, don't listen to Brother Ma..."

Old Wang's face was beaming like a chrysanthemum, but the simplicity of a mountain dweller prevented him from speaking of it; he simply waved his hands repeatedly.

However, the reason Old Wang was able to build such a villa-like house was because of some chicken-blood stone he quarried from the mountain. At the turn of the century, he even did something that caused a national sensation.

"Let me tell you, we already knew each other back then, right? It must have been around 1999..."

Uncle De was quite happy after drinking his old friend's plum wine, and he told Zhuang Rui and the others about this sensational event.

It turns out that not only does chicken-blood stone exist on Yuyan Mountain, but there are also stones similar to Tianhuang stone. Of course, they are only similar. After research and demonstration by

experts, it was found that the value of the "Tianhuang" stone on Yuyan Mountain is far less than that of Tianhuang stone from Fujian.

One spring at the end of the last century, Old Wang picked a yellowish stone from the mountain. When he put it at home, it was seen by a merchant from Fujian who collected chicken-blood stone. After examining it repeatedly, the man determined that it was a high-quality "Tianhuang" stone and bought it for 100,000 yuan.

Rural areas are not like cities, especially in these remote mountain valleys. Unless you're lucky enough to find a piece of bloodstone, you can't earn much money in a year. Once this news got out, everyone in the surrounding villages was green with envy.

They stopped farming and doing any other work. Everyone with arms and legs who could climb the mountain carried their tools up Yuyan Mountain and began a thorough excavation on the small hillside where Old Wang had found the stone.

The felling of trees and destruction of vegetation on that hillside at the time undoubtedly attracted great attention from the news media, and Zhejiang TV and Hangzhou TV both reported on it.

This report, which no one expected, actually caused Yuyanshan to fail. Taobao sellers from all over the country got involved, and some even started hoarding this "Tianhuang" (a type of rare stone), preparing to make a fortune through "futures trading".

For a time, a small, inconspicuous stone could cost nearly a hundred yuan, or even several thousand yuan. Out of a desire to protect resources, the Lin'an Municipal Government sought help from the Zhejiang Provincial Department of Geology and Mineral Resources, requesting that the yellow stone be scientifically identified.

After careful analysis of the mineral composition and comparison of the growth environment and external characteristics of Tianhuang stone with those of this type of stone, experts concluded that Changhua stone does not possess the "six virtues" of Tianhuang stone: "fineness, purity, warmth, smoothness, density, and greasiness." Therefore, naming it Tianhuang stone would be absolutely unscientific.

It's important to know that the formation of Tianhuang stone involves tens of millions of years of soil and water accumulation, as well as the infiltration of organic acids, which gives it its smooth, chicken-fat-like color and delicate, beautiful radish-like veins.

The yellow stones from Changhe have no "fields" to grow in; they simply live under the soil on the hillside and rely solely on rainwater for hydration, far from meeting the growth environment required for "field yellow stones".

Therefore, experts concluded that these stones were simply waste products from the early mining of chicken-blood stone. Although some of them contained stones that were originally exposed on the surface, their secondary formation in the soil would not exceed the history of mining Changhua stone. Therefore, they should not be named "Tianhuang".

Fortunately, the amount of yellow stones in this batch was not large to begin with, and the people digging for "treasure" were getting less and less. The Lin'an Municipal Government also formulated measures to close the mountain for protection. Before the name "Changhua Yellow Stone" was finalized, this "gold rush" was nipped in the bud.

However, this added another "fake" to the ranks of those counterfeiting Tianhuang stones, which undoubtedly presented another challenge for Tianhuang stone collectors, because good Changhua yellow stones can be almost indistinguishable from the real thing.

Because of this incident, Old Wang became famous and used the 100,000 yuan to build a small house.

Because this is the forefront of chicken-blood stone mining, almost every day people from other places come here to buy chicken-blood stones. By providing food and lodging and occasionally going up the mountain to try their luck, Old Wang's life has gradually become richer, which has led to every household in the village starting agritainment businesses.

With the influx of people, this small mountain village has developed into a market for chicken-blood stone, spontaneously organized by the villagers and mine owners.

"Uncle Wang, you're really amazing! You're a trendsetter!"

Wei Ge chuckled and joked with Old Wang.

"No, there's no place here. It's just a broken rock I picked up randomly. I was just lucky..."

Old Wang waved his hands repeatedly, but a smug look appeared on his face. Although some people in this small mountain village had later found valuable chicken-blood stone on the mountain, he was the one who made his first fortune. In particular, starting a farmhouse inn was his proudest achievement.

"Eat quickly, eat faster, let's go see Uncle Wang's treasures..."

Yang Wei was itching to go quarrying stones himself after hearing the story. If it weren't for the delicious farm-style dishes today, he and Qin Xuanbing would probably have asked to go see the stones first.

Zhuang Rui and Uncle De were both insiders in the business and had seen a lot. So they were drinking and eating at a leisurely pace until Yang Wei and the others urged them on. Only then did they finish their last drink, wipe their mouths, and follow Old Wang to another room.

"Here, all the stones we picked up last year are in there. Go take a look..."

This is a room used for storing miscellaneous items, including plows, rakes, and other farm tools. In one corner of the room, there are twenty or thirty stones of various sizes, but the largest is only the size of a ball, much smaller than the jadeite rough that Zhuang Rui gambled on.

This isn't to say that there aren't large pieces of chicken-blood stone. The chicken-blood stone that Zhuang Rui appraised during the Spring Festival treasure appraisal weighed several hundred kilograms. Of course, it wasn't entirely chicken-blood stone; it also contained some other types of stone.

The reason Old Wang doesn't have any large items here is probably because he hasn't encountered any, or perhaps it's too difficult for him to carry them up the mountain by himself.

Wei Ge was the most enthusiastic after entering the house. As soon as Old Wang pointed, he rushed over and started fiddling with the pile of broken stones. But less than two minutes later, Wei Ge looked

up at Old Wang with a disappointed expression and asked, "Uncle Wang? These are the chicken-blood stones? Are there any others? You can't hide all the good stuff away..."

From Wei Ge's perspective, these stones were no different from the ordinary road stones he had come from.

Moreover, he originally thought that bloodstone would definitely have large areas of red, but after searching through all the stones, he did not see the red bloodstone he had imagined, and he was very disappointed.

However, some stones do have a few red lines, but they are still far from the bloodstone in Yang Wei's mind.

"Hehe, all the stones we mined last year are here. I don't know if there's any bloodstone. You'll have to ask Brother Ma; he's an expert in that..."

After hearing Yang Wei's words, Old Wang shook his head repeatedly, but a hint of peasant cunning flashed in his eyes.

"Brother Wang, are you testing my eyesight?"

Uncle De smiled and walked over to Yang Wei, then continued, "Chicken blood stone isn't entirely about chicken blood showing on the surface. Those kinds of chicken blood stones don't even need to be identified. Most chicken blood stones are similar to jadeite rough stones, with a stone skin, which is where you have to use your eyesight to distinguish them..."

"How could anyone tell? They're all the same kind of stone. Who knows if there's chicken blood inside..."

Wei Ge tried his best to identify the stones as Uncle De had instructed, but he gave up after not seeing either of them. Apart from their size and shape, he couldn't tell the difference at all.

"Xiao Zhuang, come and take a look. I watched that treasure appraisal show. You're right, but that was a finished piece of material. You've probably never seen chicken-blood stone with its outer skin before, have you?"

Uncle De beckoned to Zhuang Rui, wanting to see what unique talent his disciple possessed in gambling on stones.

Old Wang was a very kind person. Unlike Zhuang Rui, who made the room extremely dark when looking at jade in Pingzhou, his storage room was equipped with a 100-watt light bulb. If you put a stone under the light, you could clearly see the patterns and the direction of the blood vessels on it.

"Uncle De, Uncle Wang, then I'll make a fool of myself..."

Zhuang Rui didn't stand on ceremony. He pushed Wei Ge aside and squatted down next to the pair of stones. He picked up a fist-sized stone and started looking at it.

Chapter 577 Bloodstone (Part Two)

There are three types of famous stones used for making seals in my country, collectively known as the "Three Treasures of Seal Stones".

Among the three treasures, Tianhuang stone is undoubtedly the most prized, being the most valuable variety of Shoushan stone. As early as the beginning of the Qing Dynasty, it was selected as a tribute to the imperial court, deeply appreciated by emperors. Emperor Qianlong's worship of Tianhuang stone during his sacrificial rites to Heaven further increased its value, making its ascension to the throne among stones a well-deserved honor.

The third most prized stone is hibiscus stone, also known as white Shoushan stone. Although its development started much later than that of Tianhuang and chicken-blood stone, it has won the hearts of scholars and literati with its pure, bright, and self-disciplined qualities. Under their admiration, it has joined the ranks of the "Three Treasures of Seal Stones" and is hailed as the "Gentleman among Stones".

Moreover, the main characteristics of small three-flower hibiscus stones are their condensed, oily, delicate, and pure texture, and they are the easiest to develop a patina when handled. In recent years, they have been highly regarded and have a large number of collectors.

Chicken blood stone needs no introduction. With its bright and vivid colors, it ranks second among the three treasures of seal stones and has been known as the queen of seal stones since ancient times.

The "Three Treasures of Seal Stones" are the mainstays of miscellaneous collections. As the second of the three treasures of stones, chicken blood stone naturally receives much attention and love from collectors.

When Zhuang Rui was learning the appraisal of miscellaneous antiques from Uncle De in Zhonghai, he put a lot of effort into the appraisal of chicken-blood stone. So when he heard that Uncle De was going to test his appraisal skills, he stepped forward to appraise it without hesitation.

Changhua chicken-blood stone and jadeite actually have a lot in common. The only difference is that the color in jadeite is called "blood" in chicken-blood stone, while the names of the "ground" are the same, divided into four categories: frozen ground, soft ground, hard ground, and solid ground.

As for the blood, it is divided into bright red, true red, dark red, purplish red, etc. The shape of chicken blood can be block red, strip red, star red, rosy red, etc. It is best if it is fresh, congealed, and thick. It should be deep and thick, penetrating deep into the stone, and have a cluster or even distribution of chicken blood spots.

Based on the color and texture of chicken-blood stone, it can be divided into several types, including Crimson Robe, Glass Jelly, Field Yellow Jelly, Mutton Fat Jelly, Ox Horn Jelly, Cinnabar Jelly, Lotus Root Powder Jelly, Five-Color Jelly, Peach Red Jelly, Bean Green Jelly, Agate Jelly, Wood Grain Jelly, Fish Brain Jelly, Fish Roe Jelly, Snake Skin Jelly, and Snowflake Jelly.

Completely red or six-sided blood-red is considered the best. Red and translucent chicken-blood stone is called "Big Red Robe". Just like the imperial green in jadeite, it is a rare gem among stones and is hard to find without a certain opportunity.

The "frozen" quality in chicken-blood stone is equivalent to the "glassy" or "icy" quality in jadeite.

In chicken-blood stone, pieces with less than 10% blood content are considered ordinary, less than 30% are mid-range, more than 30% are high-end, more than 50% are rare, and pieces with more than 70% blood content are extremely precious and rare.

Besides the red "chicken blood" color, chicken blood stone also has basic colors such as black, white, yellow, green, blue, gray-brown, purple, and cyan. In addition, various colors of different shades and intensities blend together naturally, forming beautiful natural patterns without the need for artificial carving.

The black and white base with chicken blood colors is called "Liu, Guan, and Zhang," and it is also a wonderful item with wonderful colors and ever-changing patterns.

Of course, these top-quality chicken-blood stones, like top-quality jadeite, are mostly legendary and rarely seen, even once every few years or decades.

While recalling his knowledge about chicken-blood stone, Zhuang Rui examined the stone in his hand. However, to his disappointment, the blood color seeping from these chicken-blood stones was not right and was too scattered. The possibility of chicken blood inside was very small. Even if there was blood, it was mostly dark in color.

After examining the pile of stones with his eyes, Zhuang Rui, fearing he might have missed something, used his spiritual energy to sift through them again. Sure enough, just as he had predicted, there were no good stones among them. The best one was only slightly reddish under the stone skin, and it was a thin, small piece with little value.

From the Ming Dynasty to the present, over the past few hundred years, the bloodstone has indeed been almost completely mined out. Zhuang Rui shook his head slightly, stood up, and stretched his legs, which had become numb from squatting.

"Uncle Wang, I can't see through these materials you found. Let's take them to the market tomorrow and have someone else take a look..."

Although Old Wang was an outsider, Zhuang Rui was still quite tactful in his speech. These were the fruits of Old Wang's hard work over the past year, and he couldn't let Zhuang Rui erase them with just a few words.

Moreover, that piece of jade with red inside looks decent on the outside. If you take it to the market to gamble, someone might offer 30,000 to 50,000 yuan. In that case, Old Wang's year of hard work won't have been in vain.

"Old Wang, it's not surprising that the kid can't tell, he's inexperienced. Let me take a look..."

Uncle De was afraid that his old friend would be angry, so he quickly added a sentence. However, this was also what he really thought. Although Zhuang Rui had some knowledge of chicken blood stone, he had never seen this kind of material before, so it was normal for him to see some discrepancies.

"How could that be? This young man has a good eye. Almost all the exposed bloodstone on the surface of Yuyan Mountain has been mined out. The ones I picked up aren't any good quality..."

Although Old Wang claimed he didn't understand, he had lived at the foot of Jade Rock Mountain his whole life. He had never eaten pork but had seen pigs run. How could he not understand chicken blood stone? At least what he just said was jargon.

After examining the jade for about half an hour, Uncle De picked out three pieces and set them aside. He said to Old Wang, "These pieces can be priced higher. There's definitely blood inside, but I'm not sure how deep the blood goes..."

"That's good, that's great, Teacher Ma, thank you so much. Every time you come, you point out a few stones to me..."

Old Wang carefully placed the pieces of jade that Uncle De had given him aside. Two years ago, Uncle De had picked out a piece for him, which Old Wang later sold for 60,000 yuan, making him extremely happy.

Old Wang's things were all here, and seeing that there was nothing left to look at, the group prepared to leave. However, as Zhuang Rui lifted his foot to walk out, he suddenly felt that he stepped on something hard.

When Zhuang Rui drives, he usually changes into a pair of cloth shoes he bought from the time-honored Beijing brand Neiliansheng. Although the shoes are made by a century-old store, the soles of the cloth shoes are thin, and if you suddenly feel a sharp pain in your soles, it hurts a little.

"What the hell is that?"

Zhuang Rui squatted down and picked up the thing, only to find that it was a stone slightly larger than a lighter. Because it was so small, it was probably something that Wei Ge had casually tossed aside earlier.

This stone is yellowish all over, with no trace of blood on its surface. It does resemble Tianhuang stone, but it is far less smooth and lustrous than Tianhuang stone. It should be a Changhua stone, the kind of stone that Uncle De discovered earlier.

"Zhuang Rui, what's wrong?"

Qin Xuanbing, who was following behind Zhuang Rui, noticed that Zhuang Rui had twisted his ankle and quickly asked him with concern.

"It's nothing, I just stepped on a rock..."

Zhuang Rui habitually glanced at it with his spiritual energy, intending to casually toss it back into the pile of stones. However, as he raised his hand, he tightly gripped the stone in his palm.

Zhuang Rui and Qin Xuanbing's conversation caused the people walking in front to turn around. Zhuang Rui simply tossed the stone in his hand and said to Old Wang, "Uncle Wang, is this the kind of fake Tianhuang stone you used to collect?"

"Let me see it..."

Old Wang was over sixty years old and his eyesight wasn't very good. After taking the small stone from Zhuang Rui, he examined it carefully and said, "Yes, this thing has been sitting here for who knows how many years. I kept it specifically when they said it was valuable, but then the government said it was fake, and nobody took it anymore..."

As Old Wang spoke, he prepared to throw the small stone back. Although it was worthless, it wasn't an ordinary rock either; he was just keeping it as a souvenir.

"Uncle Wang, don't throw it away. This thing caused such a big commotion. Give it to me, I'll buy it for reference, and I can compare it with the Santian yellow stone in the future..."

Zhuang Rui quickly stopped Old Wang, and what he said was quite proper. Even Wei Ge wanted to come and keep it for himself, since it was produced in Changhua after all.

"Why would I buy this, Brother Zhuang? You can keep it and play with it..."

Upon hearing Zhuang Rui's words, Old Wang immediately shoved the stone into Zhuang Rui's hand. This thing was too small; at its most valuable, it was only worth a few hundred yuan each. Now, even if it were sold for a few yuan, it's unlikely anyone would buy it.

"Uncle Wang, that won't do. How about this, I'll buy it for 200 yuan, is that alright?"

"No, really no, young man, giving me money is disrespecting this old man..."

"Old Wang, take it. 200 yuan isn't much. It's the little guy's kind gesture, so don't refuse..."

"Okay, I'll take it. We'll have monkey head mushroom and chicken stew for lunch tomorrow. Last time someone offered me 300 yuan for my monkey head mushrooms, but I didn't sell them..."

Finally, it was Uncle De who spoke up, and Old Wang reluctantly accepted the 200 yuan that Zhuang Rui handed over. He kept saying that he would cook wild monkey head mushrooms for them for lunch tomorrow. Those things are very precious, and Old Wang just happened to find a little bit on the mountain.

"Hehe, we're in for a treat tomorrow! Alright, it's getting late, let's all go to sleep. We'll go to the market together tomorrow morning..."

After everyone had finished looking at the stones, Uncle De waved for them to go back to their rooms. There was no entertainment in this remote mountain valley, so they all went back to their rooms and went to sleep.

Of course, this place was a bit unfamiliar, and they didn't know how well the house was soundproofed. Zhuang Rui and Wei Ge, the two couples, were very well-behaved after entering the room. Not to mention doing *that*, they even spoke much quieter than usual.

Otherwise, if someone were to sing in their room in the middle of the night and others heard it, they would be too embarrassed to face anyone the next day.

"Honey, go to sleep now, what are you looking for?"

"Looking for this!"

Zhuang Rui pulled a powerful flashlight out of his backpack, then took the flashlight, lifted the blanket, and crawled inside.

Chapter 578 The Market (Part 1)

"What are you doing with a flashlight? You...you don't mean to..."

When Qin Xuanbing saw what Zhuang Rui was holding, she couldn't help but ask a question, and then her face turned red. Since they couldn't do "that" tonight, was Zhuang Rui going to come up with some new trick?

"What are you thinking about? I'll show you something good..."

Zhuang Rui ignored Qin Xuanbing's reaction, opened his left hand, and in his palm was the Changhua stone he had just bought for 200 yuan.

"Oh dear, why did you bring this stone to the bed? It's so dirty..."

Qin Xuanbing thought it was something good, so she nudged Zhuang Rui and told him to put it back on the table.

Zhuang Rui laughed smugly and said, "It's okay, I just washed it clean, it's not dirty. Hehe, I didn't expect to find such a good item here..."

"Didn't Uncle De say that this stone isn't worth anything..."

Qin Xuanbing also heard the story and was rather dismissive of Zhuang Rui's words. She reached out and took the stone from Zhuang Rui's palm.

The cleaned stone was a bit cool, but also much smoother. Qin Xuanbing looked at it under the light for a long time, but still couldn't see why Zhuang Rui said it was good.

"Hehe, that's how you should look at it..."

Zhuang Rui smiled and turned off the room lights, then covered his head with the blanket. Even with the lights off, there was still a sliver of moonlight shining in from the window, but after covering his head with the blanket, it became pitch black.

Inside the blankets, it was pitch black and completely silent; Zhuang Rui and Qin Xuanbing could both hear each other's heartbeats.

"ah!"

A beam of light suddenly shone on Zhuang Rui's face, startling Qin Xuanbing into screaming. Zhuang Rui quickly covered Qin Xuanbing's mouth, knowing that if others heard this, they might misunderstand.

"You scared me to death! Why did you take a picture of your own face?"

Qin Xuanbing pinched Zhuang Rui in embarrassment and annoyance. The spotlight had shone on Zhuang Rui's face, making him appear deathly pale; anyone would have been startled.

"Look at this, look at this, hehe, I didn't mean to..."

Knowing he was in the wrong, Zhuang Rui quickly tried to divert Qin Xuanbing's attention by shining a powerful flashlight on the stone in his hand, gesturing for her to look.

"I can't see anything wrong, it's the same as before..."

Although the flashlight illuminated Zhuang Rui's left hand in perfect detail, revealing even his fingerprints, the stone remained unchanged, still retaining its yellowish-orange color.

Zhuang Rui flipped the stone over, pointed to the corner, and said to Qin Xuanbing, "Hey, I forgot, take another look..."

"Still the same...wait, why is there red?"

Qin Xuanbing hadn't looked closely before, but now, under the light, she could see clearly that a layer of the stone skin on one corner of the originally smooth stone seemed to have peeled off, and when viewed under strong light, a bright red color could be faintly seen inside.

"Hehe, this isn't a discarded Changhua stone, it's a piece of chicken-blood stone..."

Zhuang Rui smugly put away the stone, lifted the blanket, and turned on the bedside lamp, instantly illuminating the room.

"Even Uncle De couldn't tell it was bloodstone! Honey, you're amazing!"

Qin Xuanbing kissed Zhuang Rui on the cheek, but didn't really care about the small stone in Zhuang Rui's hand. In her opinion, even if it was a bloodstone, it was no big deal. After all, the stone was too small, and if the outer skin was polished off, it would be even less noticeable.

"Hey, I'm telling you, this is a piece of pure bloodstone, its quality is comparable to that of Da Hong Pao..."

Zhuang Rui was extremely displeased with Qin Xuanbing's reaction. He knew that, in terms of material quality, this chicken-blood stone was comparable to imperial green jadeite; although smaller in size, its value was considerable.

"Da Hong Pao? Isn't that a type of tea produced in Wuyi Mountain, Fujian?"

Qin Xuanbing really didn't know much about chicken-blood stone, and what she said made Zhuang Rui both laugh and cry.

"Sigh, Miss, this thing is about the same price as the blood jade bracelet I gave you and the purple-eyed jadeite necklace my mother gave you..."

"What? Such a small amount is so expensive?"

Qin Xuanbing was truly astonished. Not to mention that the purple eye necklace was worth nearly 100 million, even the blood jade bracelet cost tens of millions. This tiny stone was worth so much money, which made Qin Xuanbing take it seriously for the first time.

"Ahem... It's not that expensive, but for such a small amount, if it were made of seal material, it would definitely be worth three to five million..."

Zhuang Rui corrected his slightly exaggerated statement, but if this piece of chicken-blood stone were in the hands of a collector of seal stones, it would definitely be a priceless treasure.

Beneath a thin layer of stone, Zhuang Rui saw a color as thick as congealed chicken blood. In that storage room, Zhuang Rui was so shocked that he almost shouted out loud.

Because the stone that appeared in his eyes had a shimmering, iridescent sheen, as if a live chicken had just been slaughtered and its blood had been poured over it. This is the so-called "blood-activating" phenomenon of top-grade chicken-blood stone.

Zhuang Rui had seen many high-quality chicken-blood stones at Uncle De's house, and there were also some chicken-blood stone seals in the warehouse when he worked at the pawnshop, but none of those items could compare to the chicken-blood stone in his hand.

Although the outer skin of the stone had not been removed, Zhuang Rui could already assert that this was absolutely a top-grade chicken-blood stone with all six sides completely red, and it was also free of impurities. If it were to be auctioned, this stone would be enough to drive many collectors crazy.

It's worth noting that in recent years, the collection of seal stones has become extremely popular, and high-quality chicken-blood stone and Tianhuang stone are extremely rare and hard to find.

At the beginning of this year, a bloodstone seal used by Emperor Qianlong was auctioned by a multinational auction house. The starting price was 12 million RMB, and the final auction price reached a staggering 32 million RMB, which set a record for the highest price ever paid for a bloodstone seal at auction.

Of course, the Qianlong seal has its unique historical background and cultural heritage, but on the other hand, the value of the chicken-blood stone itself cannot be denied.

"Rui, how did you find it? Even Uncle De couldn't tell it was a bloodstone. By the way, how did you know it was a completely red bloodstone..."

Qin Xuanbing looked at Zhuang Rui with admiration, but the question she asked stunned Zhuang Rui. He had been so happy that he forgot that he had boasted that the bloodstone was completely red before it had even been cut open. Wasn't that a bit ridiculous?

In fact, Qin Xuanbing hadn't thought of this at all; she had just asked casually. But after asking, she felt something was off and looked at Zhuang Rui with suspicion.

"Uh, when I stepped on it, the surface of the stone on the corner of this bloodstone was polished by the ground, revealing a hint of red..."

Zhuang Rui paused here, and Qin Xuanbing, anxious, quickly asked, "I've seen the red color too, but I can't see it anywhere else..."

"Damn it, you can't make this mistake again..."

Zhuang Rui cursed himself inwardly. Wasn't this forcing his buddy to make up lies, and to make them seem plausible? In his haste, Zhuang Rui was also a little scratching his head.

"You call yourself an amateur? Let me tell you, when I was learning miscellaneous connoisseurship from Uncle De in Zhonghai, I once saw in a catalog of seals that chicken-blood stone with a yellow outer layer is generally a top-quality stone, and the chance of finding a top-grade 'Big Red Robe' is quite high..."

Zhuang Rui was taking advantage of Qin Xuanbing's lack of knowledge about antiques. Those antique catalogs only record the origin and provenance of these items, but they don't go into details about identification methods. The trace of chicken blood red that was revealed was from Zhuang Rui rubbing the bathroom floor earlier.

However, Zhuang Rui's words dispelled Qin Xuanbing's doubts, because when Zhuang Rui bought this small bloodstone, Uncle De did not handle it; it was only Old Wang who glanced at it.

"Honey, you're so amazing..."

Looking at Zhuang Rui's confident face, Qin Xuanbing's eyes revealed deep affection. Although she hadn't personally found the bloodstone, Qin Xuanbing still felt extremely satisfied and wished she could have more bloodstones for Zhuang Rui to identify.

"Ahem...so-so, far inferior to Uncle De. By the way, Xuanbing, let's keep this a secret and make our fortune quietly. Don't tell anyone. If Uncle Wang finds out, even if he doesn't say anything, he'll definitely be unhappy inside..."

Although Qin Xuanbing was praising herself, Zhuang Rui felt guilty. If Qin Xuanbing showed off to Uncle De like that again tomorrow, the charade would be exposed. He quickly gave Qin Xuanbing a few more instructions.

"Okay, I got it, go to sleep..."

Qin Xuanbing agreed and turned off the bedside lamp. Although the two couldn't actually do *that*, they still had to be intimate, something that was best left unsaid to outsiders.

Old Wang's house is built halfway up the mountain. When he gets up in the morning, he looks up and sees clouds and mist, and looks down and sees lush green trees. He opens the window, takes a breath of the fresh mountain air, and feels much more comfortable.

The sounds of roosters crowing and dogs barking from the foot of the mountain made this idyllic spring scene even more picturesque—something that could never be seen in the city. Zhuang Rui stood by the window for a while before Qin Xuanbing urged him to go wash up.

"Xiao Zhuang, come and have breakfast. We'll go for a stroll with Lao Wang later..."

After leaving the room, Zhuang Rui stood on the second floor and saw Uncle De practicing the Five Animal Frolics. This was a martial art that Uncle De had practiced for decades. Although it was not very practical, it was still good for strengthening the body. Zhuang Rui had learned it for two days, but he had abandoned it after leaving Zhonghai.

"Uncle De, didn't we agree to go to the market today?"

"Let's check out a few villagers' homes first. It's not too late to go to the market at noon, and people will come down from the mountain then; we might find some good stuff..."

After Zhuang Rui went downstairs, Uncle De also put away his airs and took a towel to wipe his sweat.

Chapter 579 The Market (Part Two)

Breakfast at Old Wang's house was boiled yam. These were wild yams that Old Wang himself dug up from the mountain; they were very nutritious, and Zhuang Rui and the others had never eaten them before. They tasted quite good.

Zhuang Rui's group wasn't the only one having breakfast; there were also seven or eight other residents from out of town. Some of them knew Uncle De and greeted each other. At this time of day, everyone who comes to Yuyan Mountain is here to buy chicken-blood stone.

"Teacher Ma, you can't take all the good stones this year. Leave some for us too..."

A middle-aged man in his forties, wearing a suit and tie, was joking with Uncle De. Uncle De was a title only used by very close people and disciples. Outside, people generally called him Teacher Ma.

Upon hearing the man's words, Uncle De deliberately feigned anger and said, "Mr. Wang, what are you saying? You have more than enough chicken-blood stone produced in your own mine, yet you come here to compete with us for this business..."

"Haha, Mr. Ma, you're joking. I wonder if this is for personal use or to help someone else inspect the goods?"

Mr. Wang chuckled and changed the subject, glancing at Zhuang Rui and the others. He had witnessed the conflict yesterday; anyone who could look down on the Yan family of Zhonghai must have a powerful background.

"I brought my apprentice here for a look around. He owns a shop in Panjiayuan, Beijing, and he's here to get some material for his shop seals. Alas, the amount of Changhua chicken-blood stone is decreasing year by year. In a few more years, it might disappear completely..."

Uncle De was 120% satisfied with Zhuang Rui as his disciple, and immediately introduced Zhuang Rui to that General Manager Wang.

"It's Teacher Zhuang! No wonder you looked familiar. Oh dear, look at my eyes! If Teacher Ma hadn't pointed it out, I really wouldn't have recognized you..."

After Uncle De introduced Zhuang Rui, President Wang slapped his forehead, grasped Zhuang Rui's hand, and shook it affectionately.

"Mr. Wang, do you recognize me? Did you see that TV program?" Zhuang Rui asked, somewhat surprised. Being on CCTV really changed things, though not everyone recognized him. At least the consultant from Yan Kai's company yesterday didn't recognize him.

"Hi, Mr. Zhuang, your reputation as the 'King of Jade' is legendary! I saw you on CCTV a while ago, I never expected to run into you here. You look even younger than on TV! No way, lunch is on me..."

President Wang held Zhuang Rui's hand tightly and refused to let go. Luckily, he was a man; otherwise, Qin Xuanbing, who was standing to the side, would probably have been jealous.

"No, no, there's nothing good to eat here. When we get to Lin'an, Teacher Zhuang, you must do me the honor of having a meal together..."

Mr. Wang thought that there wasn't even a restaurant in the area, so there was no question of having a meal. However, judging from his attitude, he was genuinely very sincere in inviting Zhuang Rui to dinner.

"No problem, no problem, Mr. Wang, you're too kind..."

Although Zhuang Rui didn't know why the middle-aged man was being so polite to him, he couldn't refuse someone who was smiling, so he returned the courtesy with a few words.

"Are you all heading to the market? I was just checking to see if the company's stones have been transported down the mountain yet, let's go together..."

"Mr. Wang, we still need to check on the goods at a few more stores. Let's meet at the market later..."

Uncle De's words disappointed Mr. Wang. After asking Zhuang Rui for his phone number, he left with a few entourage, waving goodbye to Zhuang Rui as he left.

After Zhuang Rui and the others finished their meal, they followed behind Old Wang and did not drive. They walked directly down the mountain road to the foot of the mountain. Although the vertical height was only forty or fifty meters, it was not a short walk. However, the scenery along the way was beautiful, with birdsong all around, giving it a feeling of spring outing.

"Uncle De, who is that person?"

As the saying goes, "Unsolicited kindness is either a swindle or a crime," and Zhuang Rui was somewhat baffled by Mr. Wang's attitude, so he couldn't help but ask Uncle De about it.

"That man is Wang Xiaoyi. His ancestors ran gold shops in Shanghai and Jiangsu and Zhejiang, and were very famous. Although they were nationalized after liberation, they gradually developed again after the reform and opening-up policy was relaxed. Now, the largest jewelry company in East China belongs to his family, and they also operate two chicken-blood stone mines on Yuyan Mountain..."

At this point, Uncle De stopped and looked at Zhuang Rui with a half-smile. Zhuang Rui quickly looked down at himself and realized that he wasn't wearing his clothes inside out.

"You've caused such a stir in the jade business, of course he'll be paying attention to you, hehe, he's probably eyeing those few pieces of jade you have, right?"

Uncle De's words startled Zhuang Rui for a moment, but he quickly realized that everyone knew about his successful bets on jade in Myanmar. They probably knew that he had won several rough stones.

That Mr. Wang wanted to cultivate a good relationship with me, probably because he wanted to buy some good materials from me.

"Then he might be disappointed..."

Zhuang Rui shook his head. He had no intention of unraveling those materials. Even if he did, he would leave them for Qin Xuanbing to design and play with for the time being, and he had no intention of selling them.

Zhuang Rui suddenly remembered something and asked, "By the way, Uncle De, that Mr. Wang already owns a chicken-blood stone mine, so why is he still coming to buy chicken-blood stone?"

"The output of this chicken-blood stone mine is not large. Their company mostly uses chicken-blood stone to make ornaments, and the demand is huge. In the Changhua chicken-blood stone market in China, Wang Xiaoyi's company probably accounts for 60% of the market share..."

After hearing what Uncle De said, Zhuang Rui understood. Although chicken blood stone is known as the queen of seals, its value as a seal is far less than its market value as an ornament.

Just like the chicken-blood stone ornament I saw at the Spring Festival treasure appraisal, according to Mr. Qian from the Kyoto Auction House, if it were auctioned, its value would be over 100 million yuan, but if it were broken down and made into a seal, it would probably only be worth 30 to 50 million yuan at most.

As they talked, they reached the foot of the mountain. More and more people were getting up early to work in the fields. Spring is the time to plan for the year, and now is the perfect time to tend to the terraced fields in the mountains.

Everyone they met on the road warmly invited Old Wang to come to their homes for breakfast. It was unclear whether this was because Old Wang had high prestige or because those people wanted to invite Zhuang Rui and the others to their homes to inspect the goods.

Although both are rural areas, the village at the foot of Yuyan Mountain is significantly wealthier than the villages Zhuang Rui and his companions had seen along the way, thanks to the presence of chicken-blood stone. Almost every family has built a small house, and there are signs for agritainment businesses hanging at their doors.

As we walked through the village, it was clear that many people, like Zhuang Rui and his group, were from out of town attending the chicken-blood stone trade fair.

"Erhuizi, isn't he home...?"

Old Wang led Zhuang Rui and his group to the courtyard of a small building. He pushed open the front door and entered the courtyard before shouting loudly. In the countryside, there's no such thing as knocking on doors; sometimes you can just walk into someone's house with a bowl in your hand.

"Woof woof..."

Instead of anyone coming out, a big yellow dog darted out of the house and barked at Zhuang Rui and the others.

"Hey, Second Uncle, I'm home, I'm home, get out of here..."

Upon hearing the dog barking, a young man kicked the dutiful yellow dog and led Zhuang Rui and the others into the house. There was no need to ask any further questions; Old Wang, being from out of town, had come to the house to see the chicken-blood stone.

"Second Uncle, the stones are all there. I've arranged them all and am ready to take them to the market on a cart later..."

These few days are the most important trading time for chicken-blood stone. Chicken-blood stone merchants from all over the country gather here. So not only do chicken-blood stone mine owners prepare chicken-blood stone materials, but the villagers at the foot of Yuyan Mountain also bring the stones they found on the mountain last year to the market to set up stalls.

Old Wang turned around and said to Zhuang Rui and the others, "Teacher Ma, Brother Zhuang, please take a look first. Once you've chosen, let Erhuizi set up a stall for the rest. This is my nephew, don't be shy..."

Zhuang Rui laughed upon hearing this. Sure enough, it's true that good things shouldn't go to outsiders; when inspecting goods, you should first look at your own people.

Perhaps because Erhuizi was young and strong, he had significantly more chicken-blood stone material than Lao Wangtou. In a corner of the yard, the stones were piled up full, and they looked quite good from the outside, with several pieces showing a blood-red color.

Zhuang Rui did a quick check and found there were a total of sixty or seventy pieces of material, the largest of which weighed seventy or eighty kilograms. He didn't know how Erhuizi had managed to carry them down from the mountain.

After apologizing to Old Wang, Zhuang Rui and Uncle De took flashlights and went to examine the pile of stones. As for Wei Ge and the others, they neither understood what it was nor were they interested in it. They sat on the chairs that Er Hu Zi had brought and chatted in the yard.

"This piece, this piece, and this one—I'll take all three. Brother Erhu, how much do you think they're worth?"

More than an hour later, Zhuang Rui stopped working, covered in sweat. In front of him were three stones, weighing about thirty or forty pounds in total. Only one of them was bleeding on the outside, while the other two looked no different from ordinary rocks.

"Zhuang Rui, you've already made your decision so quickly?"

Uncle De, who was still observing from the side, turned his face after hearing Zhuang Rui's words. Zhuang Rui had examined these dozens of stones far too quickly.

Zhuang Rui took the towel Qin Xuanbing handed him and wiped his sweat, saying, "I've taken a quick look, and I think these pieces are pretty good. Uncle De, would you like to take a look?"

To be honest, examining chicken-blood stone is much more tiring than inspecting jadeite. Jadeite pieces are generally at least the size of a fist, while chicken-blood stones vary in size, with some small reddish stones also placed in the stone material area.

However, having learned from yesterday's example of the seal material, Zhuang Rui didn't let even the smallest stone fragment, no bigger than a thumb, slip by today, examining each one with his spiritual energy.

Chapter 580 The Market (Part 3)

Chicken-blood stone typically has scattered "blood" patterns. A piece with about 30% "blood" on it can be considered high-grade chicken-blood stone, while anything over 50% can be considered a rare gem.

Therefore, when Zhuang Rui examines these materials, he not only needs to look at the color of the bleeding, but also the area of the bleeding. If it were a raw jade stone, Zhuang Rui could finish examining it in 10 minutes, instead of needing more than an hour.

Of the three stones Zhuang Rui selected, the largest one weighed about thirty pounds and was three or four times the size of the other two. It was also the best-looking one. The middle of this stone was no different from an ordinary stone, but at both ends, bright red blood streaks had seeped out.

There are generally two possibilities for this type of chicken-blood stone rough: one is that there is a large amount of chicken-blood under the stone skin, which can reach the whole stone; the other is that the chicken-blood is scattered, just like what we see now, with chicken-blood only present at the beginning and end.

Regardless of the possibility, it's certain that this stone will contain chicken blood (a type of mineral), and stones with such good quality generally command high prices.

"Second Uncle, how much do you think these pieces are worth?"

Erhuzi squatted down and carefully examined the three rough stones that Zhuang Rui had picked out. Then he looked at Old Wang. When it came to bargaining, his second uncle was much better than him, and since he had brought the person with him, it was more appropriate for Old Wang to negotiate the price.

"This larger one is similar to the one I sold two years ago. The market price is much higher now, it should be around 100,000..."

Before Old Wang could finish speaking, Erhuzi, who was standing to the side, was already beaming with joy. He thought that if he had to dig in the soil and farm, he wouldn't earn that much money in 10 years.

"As for these two stones, where did you find them?" Old Wang glanced at the other two stones, but saw nothing unusual about them, and immediately frowned.

There is a significant difference between bloodstone and jadeite rough. Many jadeite rough stones have no visible signs or indications on their surface, but bloodstone usually shows blood streaks on its outer skin. Conversely, the chance of blood flowing inside is very small, and the price is naturally extremely low.

Erhuzi's attention was entirely focused on the 100,000 yuan stone. He paid no attention to the two fist-sized pieces and casually replied, "Second Uncle, I found these two in an old mine. They weren't heavy, so I carried them back..."

"Found it in the old pit? Well, that's hard to say. How about this, two pieces together for 5000 RMB, Brother Zhuang, what do you think?"

Old Wang took out his pipe, took a couple of puffs, then tapped the mouthpiece on the ground before standing up and giving Zhuang Rui a price.

"Brother Zhuang, as you know, there's less and less chicken-blood stone left on the mountain. The old mines have long been depleted, and the price of stones from the old mines is generally three to five times that of stones from the new mines. So, this price is quite reasonable..."

After all, it was a piece of stone with no apparent value. Old Wang was afraid that Zhuang Rui would be unhappy with his asking price of 5,000 yuan, so he quickly explained a few more things.

Zhuang Rui didn't speak upon hearing this. Instead, he squatted down again and examined the thirty-odd-pound stone from all angles. Finally, he shook his head, stood up, and said, "Uncle Wang, this piece of stone is too risky. I can't make a profit with 100,000 yuan. How about we let Brother Erhu take it to the market to bid? Maybe we can get a better price..."

Hearing Zhuang Rui's words, Erhuzi looked somewhat disappointed. He didn't ask for much; he would be happy if he could sell it for 100,000. If no one took a liking to it at the market, it would just be a broken stone.

"These two are worth 5,000 yuan each, they're not too expensive. Brother Erhu, I'll take these two smaller ones. Will you sell them for 5,000?"

Zhuang Rui's last words brightened Erhuzi's face. Although the larger stone hadn't sold, the two stones he'd casually picked up could fetch 5,000, which was practically free money. Erhuzi quickly agreed, "Sell, sell! Wait a minute, I'll wrap them up for you right away..."

After Erhuizi finished speaking, he turned around and called into the house, "Mother of the child, mother of the child? Erqin, come out, take out one of those baskets you wove..."

As Erhuizi spoke, a young woman in her early twenties emerged from the main room of the small building, carrying a baby in her arms. She appeared to be breastfeeding, and a patch of white flesh was visible on her chest, causing the men present to immediately look away.

"You stupid woman, couldn't you leave the baby inside? Go inside, go inside..."

Although this is how babies are usually breastfed in the countryside, Erhuizi knew that city people wouldn't approve of it, so he quickly pushed his wife back into the main room and went in himself. When he came out, he was carrying a few old newspapers and a very delicately woven bamboo basket.

Erhuizi wrapped the two stones in old newspapers and put them in the bamboo basket.

This bamboo basket looks a bit like the one Guanyin Bodhisattva used to catch the goldfish monster. It even has a handle on it, and it could be sold as a handicraft. If someone who doesn't know any better were to choose it, they would definitely take the basket and throw away the stone.

Zhuang Rui took the counted 5,000 yuan from Peng Fei and handed it to Erhuizi, saying, "Brother Erhu, your bamboo basket is quite well woven. You could probably sell it for more than 10 yuan..."

"Hehe, it's not worth it, not worth it at all. My wife just made it up. Second Uncle, why don't you take these people for another look around? I need to load them into the car..."

After Erhuizi took the money, he checked it carefully before smiling and putting it in his pocket. He then got busy, as he was going to load the dozens of stones onto a flatbed cart and take it to the market. This was all hard work, and Erhuizi's wife had put down the children to help.

Zhuang Rui and the others certainly wouldn't help, but they couldn't just stand there and work either. They said goodbye to Erhuizi and left the courtyard. As for the two stones Zhuang Rui bought, Wei Ge carried them in his hands like a curious child. Speaking of which, the bamboo basket was indeed exquisitely woven.

"Xiao Zhuang, why did you take a liking to these two pieces of jade?"

During the transaction in the courtyard, Uncle De remained silent. If the bloodstone doesn't show any bleeding or mixed colors on the outside, the gamble is many times greater than that of jadeite. Generally, very few people would gamble on such material.

"Hehe, Uncle De, the outer skin of these two stones is quite smooth. I reckon there might be some chicken blood inside. Anyway, they're not expensive, so let's buy them and cut them open to play around..."

Zhuang Rui offered a casual explanation, though the reason was somewhat far-fetched. However, Uncle De knew that a few thousand yuan was just a drop in the ocean for his apprentice, and Uncle De assumed that Zhuang Rui had bought it for fun as a practice session.

Afterwards, Zhuang Rui and his group followed Old Wang and looked at several more pieces of jade. Although there were a few pieces with large patches of "chicken blood" on the surface, Zhuang Rui did not make a purchase. However, under Uncle De's guidance, Wei Ge spent 30,000 yuan to buy a fist-sized stone with a small amount of "chicken blood" on the surface.

Zhuang Rui had already used his spiritual energy to see that the chicken blood on that piece of material was a patch rather than a pool, and it had seeped very shallowly into the stone. Unless it was made into an ornament in its current form, if he wanted to turn it into a seal or change its shape, he would definitely lose money.

Zhuang Rui didn't stop Wei Ge from making a move. Anyway, Wei Ge wasn't short of money. His father had spent tens of millions on antiques, and this was just a way to help impoverished mountain areas.

It's really not worth reminding Zhuang Rui about something worth only tens of thousands of yuan, especially since it was chosen by Uncle De. If he were to say it out loud, wouldn't that be embarrassing Uncle De?

After wandering around the farmhouse for a while, it was almost noon. Old Wang had already turned around and gone back to his small building to collect the stones, while Zhuang Rui and the others strolled towards the chicken-blood stone trading shed.

At this moment, the entrance to this small mountain village at the foot of Yuyan Mountain was already bustling with noise. This trading center, which resembled a vegetable market, had no doors and was filled with people coming and going.

There are many local villagers like Erhuizi who pull flatbed carts to transport stones. Some of them are even surrounded by merchants who come to buy chicken-blood stones before they even enter the market.

"This really is... a folk market..."

Looking at the scene before him, Zhuang Rui couldn't help but shake his head. He found it hard to believe that this bloodstone, which accounts for a certain proportion of jade sales, actually came from such a place.

"Xiao Zhuang, don't underestimate this place. In previous years, it's common to see raw chicken-blood stone fetching three to five million, or even ten to twenty million. Hey, I forgot, you're a jade gambler, so of course you wouldn't be interested in this place..."

Uncle De noticed Zhuang Rui's expression and couldn't help but tease him. However, Uncle De didn't know that in Zhuang Rui's eyes, whether it was a jade gambling game worth hundreds of millions or a chicken blood stone worth a few hundred yuan, it was just a game.

"Uncle De, can stones be cut here?"

When Zhuang Rui reached the market entrance, he stopped because he saw a stone-cutting machine placed on an open space about 20 meters away on the east side of the market. Next to the stone-cutting machine were grinding machines and other equipment, which are essential for gambling on jade.

Uncle De smiled and said, "Of course we can cut the stone. There are people here who specialize in gambling on bloodstone, specifically those bloodstones that don't show any signs of life. If they win, they sell it on the spot; if they lose, they don't lose much money. Bloodstone rough is much cheaper than jadeite rough..."

"Heh, this is interesting..."

"These machines were all bought by the villagers themselves, and you have to pay to use them. I think it was fifty yuan per use the year before last, but I don't know the price now. What, you want to have your stone cut?"

Uncle De saw that Zhuang Rui's eyes were fixed on that spot, and he knew exactly what Zhuang Rui was thinking.