

Golden 661

Chapter 661 Jewelry Expo

"Uncle, why are you calling me now? Why aren't you resting so late?"

In Zhuang Rui's memory, apart from talking with his uncle on New Year's Eve, it had been several months since he had only seen his uncle on TV. He wondered why his uncle was calling him in the middle of the night.

"Late? It's only a little past 8 o'clock..."

There was a pause on the other end of the phone, followed by laughter: "I almost forgot, there's a time difference between *** and London. Sorry to disturb your rest..."

"It's nothing, it's nothing, Uncle. There are probably very few people who get to answer your call, it's my honor..."

Zhuang Rui also realized that there is a seven or eight-hour time difference between *** and London, and it is only nighttime in *** now.

"You little rascal, heh, I saw those things. Not bad, some things just need to be insisted on. Alright, I won't disturb your rest anymore. Be careful abroad..."

Ouyang Zhenshan didn't say much on the phone. Like Ouyang Jun, he said a few words incoherently before hanging up, leaving Zhuang Rui holding the phone, wide awake.

"What... what's wrong with each of them?"

Zhuang Rui was a little confused. What exactly had his uncle seen? Given his status, why would he personally call to tell him?

"Could it be..."

Zhuang Rui suddenly remembered that Ouyang Zhenshan seemed to have said he watched something. Could it be the video that he had Wei Ge upload?

Thinking of this, Zhuang Rui was wide awake. He quickly took out Qin Xuanbing's laptop, connected it to the hotel's Wi-Fi, and started searching online.

"Auction scandal video..."

"International auction giants bow down to Chinese buyers..."

"The Chinese people cannot be humiliated; even the biggest international auction house tycoon bows his head and apologizes..."

These words were everywhere on domestic news websites, leaving Zhuang Rui dumbfounded. He hadn't expected Viagra to be so efficient, completing the matter in just a few hours. 6800.00

Upon opening some overseas auction websites, Zhuang Rui discovered that videos marked as "auction scandals" were prominently featured at the top of the webpages, with extremely high engagement and numerous comments below.

"Thank goodness, thank goodness..."

Zhuang Rui opened a video and watched it; his head was completely covered by a mosaic.

Wei Ge demonstrated exceptional skill in editing this video. He not only added text descriptions below the domestic video but also altered the audio of the conversation between the two parties, omitting Zhuang Rui's name when mentioning it.

In this way, although those familiar with Zhuang Rui could see some clues, strangers would absolutely not be able to recognize Zhuang Rui from the video. This relieved Zhuang Rui, as he did not want to be watched like a panda in the future.

"Damn it, let's see you keep being arrogant, you fatso!"

Zhuang Rui, with a rather wicked sense of humor, browsed through all the videos on foreign auction websites before turning off his computer and going back to his room to sleep. As for whether Richard would discover these things today or whether he would be furious, that was none of his concern.

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The next morning, Zhuang Rui had only slept for a few hours when Qin Xuanbing pulled him out of bed. The opening ceremony of the London International Jewelry Fair was today, and as the spokesperson for Qin's Jewelry and the gold medal winner of the previous fair, they had to attend the opening ceremony.

After tidying up, Zhuang Rui put on a black suit and a white bow tie, and together with Qin Xuanbing, who was wearing a cheongsam, left the room and went to the expo venue on the third floor of the hotel.

The London International Jewellery Show, established in 1956, attracts numerous buyers and suppliers from the jewelry, gift, and related industries worldwide. Over the years, the London International Jewellery Show has provided international buyers with a vast array of high-quality jewelry products.
69shux.com

Jewelers from all over the world take pride in winning awards at the London Jewellery Show, as winning an award means receiving more attention.

After winning the gold medal last year, Qin's Jewelry received orders from jewelry buyers in many countries. According to Qin Haoran, the entire Qin's Jewelry processing plant has been extremely busy this year.

"Sir, Madam, please show me your invitations..."

The entire third floor was the venue for this exhibition, covering an area of several thousand square meters. It was filled with jewelry booths of all sizes from various countries and private individuals. However, Zhuang Rui and Qin Xuanbing were stopped by the guards at the entrance.

"What? This isn't a casual visit?"

After Qin Xuanbing took out two invitations from her handbag and entered the venue, Zhuang Rui asked her with some surprise.

"Of course not. At exhibitions like this, the jewelry is for sale. If visitors want to come in to view or buy jewelry, they have to pay a £50 fee..."

Zhuang Rui was speechless upon hearing Qin Xuanbing's words. 50 pounds is equivalent to six or seven hundred RMB. The ticket price is much more expensive than in China. For example, tickets for the China Hi-Tech Fair or the Canton Fair only cost a few dozen RMB.

Moreover, after entering the venue, Zhuang Rui learned that all the booths in the venue were paid for, and the prices were extremely high. A typical booth cost around £400 per square meter. If you add the costs of decoration and lighting, the cost of a single booth would be over one million RMB.

However, according to Qin Xuanbing, all these expenses were worthwhile. Qin's Jewelry spent more than three million Hong Kong dollars to participate in the exhibition last year, but received orders worth as much as three hundred million Hong Kong dollars. The pros and cons are not difficult to judge.

As Zhuang Rui and Qin Xuanbing walked along the aisles between the exhibition halls, they could see that although it was called a jewelry expo, some of the items on display in these halls went beyond the scope of jewelry.

In addition to branded jewelry from well-known companies, there are also showrooms specializing in second-hand jewelry, children's jewelry, apparel jewelry, fashion jewelry, and luxury jewelry. The categories are very detailed, allowing jewelers and visitors to select the items they need based on each subcategory.

In addition to the jewelry exhibits, there were also exhibition halls for antiques and gifts, which greatly piqued Zhuang Rui's interest. It was a bit like a temple fair in China, and he might be able to find some good items there.

At this moment, most of the people in the exhibition hall were exhibitors from various countries, waiting for the opening of the expo, while others were busy setting up their exhibition booths.

In the middle of the exhibition hall, there was an empty space of several hundred square meters, with only one jewelry display case. The piece of jewelry inside the glass case was the purple-eyed jade necklace that Zhuang Rui had given to Qin Xuanbing.

This was sent over in advance by Qin Xuanbing as requested by the organizing committee of the conference. This is also a convention of the conference, as the award ceremony for the gold medal jewelry of the previous conference will be held at this expo.

After waiting for about ten minutes, all the exhibitors and buyers participating in the expo gathered in this open space, and a gray-haired host stood in the center of the venue in front of the purple-eyed jade necklace display.

It seems that these opening ceremonies, both domestic and international, are all very similar. The host first introduced some of the distinguished guests who came to attend the opening ceremony, including the Mayor of London.

Fortunately, these VIPs were just there to show their support and didn't give a speech like the leaders in China.

"Next, please welcome Ms. Qin Xuanbing from Hong Kong Qin's Jewelry Group to receive the gold medal certificate from the previous expo..."

The opening ceremony proceeded very quickly. A few minutes later, the host mentioned Qin Xuanbing's name, and after the awards ceremony, the expo was officially open.

"Beautiful Miss Qin, your charm makes this piece of jewelry pale in comparison. May I ask if I may place this piece of jewelry on you?"

Qin Xuanbing was indeed radiant today. Her height of over 1.7 meters and her curvaceous figure, combined with this Chinese cheongsam, made her even more beautiful and charming. Many people's eyes were fixed on her fair thighs, which were faintly visible through the slit of the cheongsam.

"Thank you, but I would much rather have my loved one put this piece of jewelry on my finger..."

Qin Xuanbing politely declined the host's request and turned her gaze to Zhuang Rui.

"Shit, why wasn't that man me?"

"Oh, beauty from the East, I must go to the East to find my beloved..."

"Your beloved? What about your wife at home now?"

Amidst envious glances and whispers, Zhuang Rui walked over, took out the purple jade necklace that originally belonged to him from the display case, and put it around Qin Xuanbing's neck. Her fair skin paired with the alluring purple color made her look dazzling under the lights.

"Kiss her!"

"Kiss her!"

"My dear, you are one of a kind..."

Amidst cheers and jeers from the crowd, Zhuang Rui kissed Qin Xuanbing on the cheek, and applause erupted around them. The opening ceremony of the expo also began amidst the applause.

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"Miss, Mr. Zhuang, this is Qin's Jewelry's showroom for this year. Please take a look and see if there are any areas that need modification. I'll have someone make changes immediately..."

After the opening ceremony, Zhuang Rui and Qin Xuanbing, led by staff from Qin's Jewelry, arrived at the Qin's Jewelry showroom.

Because Qin Haoran had specifically instructed that Zhuang Rui's opinions should be the primary consideration for this jewelry exhibition, the staff member from Hong Kong treated Zhuang Rui with extreme respect.

"That's fine, you can proceed according to plan. Xuanbing and I have some other things to take care of..."

Zhuang Rui glanced at them and saw that most of the jewelry in the glass cases on display were red jadeite ornaments that he had gambled on in Myanmar this year.

Chapter 662 One shouldn't be too shameless

The jewelry made from this batch of jadeite, while only classified as Grade A jadeite, doesn't quite reach the level of top-grade jadeite ornaments. However, women have always had a preference for red, so there were quite a few jewelry buyers standing around the booth, inquiring about the prices.

"Xuanbing, have we completed our mission?"

Zhuang Rui and Qin Xuanbing sat on the sofa in their own showroom, and asked somewhat boredly. At this moment, his mind was already on the several showrooms selling Chinese and foreign artworks, and he had little interest in his own business.

"Well, Daddy has taken care of everything else, so we don't have anything to do..."

Qin Xuanbing nodded. She didn't really like these kinds of occasions either. If it weren't for the family business, she would never show her face in public.

"Alright, since everything's alright, go back to your room and change your clothes. Then we can wander around a bit. I have an appointment with Ezkena tomorrow; after we finish our business, we'll head back to Beijing..."

Upon hearing this, Zhuang Rui stood up, but the first thing he did was to tell Qin Xuanbing to go back to her room to change her clothes. His woman was wearing such revealing clothes and being stared at by everyone. Zhuang Rui wished he could wrap Qin Xuanbing up completely with a bed sheet.

On another note, even with that jade necklace worth hundreds of millions around Qin Xuanbing's neck, she wouldn't feel at ease wearing it. There's a group of jewel thieves in this world who specifically target expensive jewelry. Qin Xuanbing may look beautiful in the necklace, but it's also the source of trouble she might attract.

Back in the room, Zhuang Rui handed the necklace to Peng Fei. With him and Bai Shi there, he figured no thief in the world could steal the necklace from them.

"Clang!" The sound of shattering glass echoed from the luxurious office of the Paris auction house.

"Did you find out who did this? Who did it?"

Richard's short, stout body produced a voice comparable to the world's greatest tenor, causing the glass in front of him to tremble slightly. The innocent crystal ashtray on the floor, meanwhile, was torn to pieces and scattered across the floor.

"Boss, we found that this video was originally released by a company in the United States, but that company... that company has no connection with us and couldn't possibly do something like this..."

Standing in front of Richard was Bart Capraz, the auction house's public relations manager, who handled most of the external affairs. However, Bart Capraz clearly didn't have a better solution for this auction scandal.

"What company? How can you be so sure there's no contact?"

Daniel was also furious about the video circulating online, because it contained his apology, and it was filmed very clearly, even giving a close-up of his humble facial expression.

His phone had been ringing non-stop since early this morning. It was either old friends calling to ask how things were going, or colleagues making calls that seemed to be comforting but were actually mocking. The gloating in their voices meant that Daniel's phone was already ruined before the crystal ashtray hit the ground.

Daniel had had enough. Known for his composure, he now felt an urge to grab his antique hunting rifle and blow the head off the person who shared the video.

"That's a women's underwear company. I...I don't think I have anything to do with them. It's probably a hacker attack..."

Bartcap was also furious. The video had severely damaged their company's image. He had been so busy all morning that he hadn't even had time to go to the toilet, and the feeling of a swollen bladder was very unpleasant.

"Damn it, go get a hacker and find out who did this. I'm going to kill him!"

Richard, at this moment, resembled a bull—no... a boar, perhaps more accurately,—waving his short arms and spitting incessantly onto Bartcap's face.

"Richard, do you think it could have been that kid from yesterday?"

After venting his frustrations, Daniel gradually calmed down. The auction incident was rather strange. There shouldn't have been any reporters who managed to sneak into the meeting room yesterday, and if they had, they definitely wouldn't have uploaded the video directly to the internet; they would have done an exclusive report.

"It shouldn't be that. I think... it might be our rivals. You know, there's a special auction of Chinese art in Hong Kong next month. It's very likely they orchestrated it..."

Upon hearing Daniel's words, Richard's fury vanished instantly, replaced by a solemn expression. Reaching their level required more than just being able to curse.

"Shit, a bunch of selfish bastards, Richard. It seems this auction isn't going to achieve the desired results. Should we lower the bid and try to improve our relationship with those Chinese?"

Daniel swore, then thought of a solution. There were only a handful of auction houses that could rival them, and while the relationships between these auction houses weren't irreconcilable, there were still occasional frictions.

So when Daniel heard Richard's words, he immediately ruled out Zhuang Rui as a suspect. After all, the young man had praised his decision when he left yesterday, so he shouldn't turn around and expose this matter. One shouldn't be too...shameless, right?

"Alright, we'd rather have a lower profit margin this time than let those bastards profit from it..."

Richard slammed his hand on the table and immediately gave orders, instructing Bartcap to inform Jefferson to lower the starting bid.

Zhuang Rui, far away in England, was naturally unaware that the auction scandal he orchestrated had actually benefited Chinese collectors in Paris, who were able to purchase many rare items at prices far below market value.

This incident also gave those who stayed behind a taste of success. In later international auctions, they spontaneously organized themselves and used the power of the group to fight against the auction houses. As a result, although the value of Chinese artworks continued to rise steadily, there was no longer a situation where they were hyped up and inflated at an auction.

"Achoo! Who's insulting me?"

As Zhuang Rui and Qin Xuanbing strolled hand in hand through the various jewelry exhibition halls of the expo, Zhuang Rui suddenly sneezed, the sound so loud that everyone around them turned to look at him.

"Honey, are you catching a cold? It's all your fault, you wanted to just go for a little while..."

Qin Xuanbing first asked with concern, but then rolled her eyes at Zhuang Rui and pinched his waist. She had been groped by this pervert while she was changing clothes.

"It's nothing, it's not a cold..." Zhuang Rui grinned and grabbed Qin Xuanbing's small hand. Speaking of which, when women pinch someone, they always pick on the softest spot. How come they pinch so accurately?

"Could it be that those two old bastards found out?"

Zhuang Rui was feeling a bit guilty at this moment, but he was sure that he had handled the matter very cleanly. He wasn't afraid of Richard and the others coming after him; without any evidence, he could just deny it.

After fooling Qin Xuanbing, the two went to a showroom that sells handicrafts and gifts. In foreign countries, antiques are all referred to as works of art, and their market regulations and classifications are more detailed than those of Chinese antiques.

In this exhibition hall, there are some antique jewelry pieces with relatively dark colors, as well as some oil paintings, all works by emerging artists.

There were also some rusty bronze artifacts, which piqued Zhuang Rui's interest. However, when he walked up to the glass display case and examined them with his spiritual energy, he was immediately disappointed. All of these items were fake.

Zhuang Rui had long heard that there was a village in Henan that specialized in making bronze artifacts. Their craftsmanship was superb, and their antiquing techniques were so sophisticated that they could almost be mistaken for the real thing.

Many unscrupulous antique dealers frequently order bronzes from there. Although the people there will make the items according to the other person's wishes, they will leave a receipt for each item sold, which will invariably state that it is a modern craft.

In this way, even if antique dealers use these items to cheat and swindle, they won't be able to find this village. Even if someone comes to them with fake items, they can produce the original receipt and photos, leaving the person who bought the fake items speechless.

The bronze artifacts produced in that village have another characteristic: even though the vast majority are exported, the foreign exchange generated by the village in a year accounts for more than half of the entire county's total.

Judging from the manufacturing techniques of these bronzes, Zhuang Rui could almost certainly conclude that these items were brought out of China, and most likely, they were made in that village in Henan.

Several salespeople were enthusiastically explaining the value of these items to buyers and tourists.

"Xuanbing, let's go, there's nothing to see here..."

These items held no appeal for Zhuang Rui. After browsing around without finding anything that could entice him, Zhuang Rui shook his head and left the exhibition hall with Qin Xuanbing.

"Oh, dear Zhuang, I've been looking for you for ages..."

Just as Zhuang Rui stepped out of the exhibition hall, he heard someone calling his name loudly to his right. Turning around, he couldn't help but laugh. Rather than looking at these boring objects here, he might as well go and see this person's collection.

"Mr. Ezkener, it's a pleasure to meet you here. Are you interested in jewelry as well?"

Zhuang Rui and Ezkenayo's meeting is tomorrow, because Huangfu Yun can finish his business in New York tomorrow and rush to London to participate in this matter.

For transactions like Zhuang Rui's, the presence of lawyers and notaries is required so that Zhuang Rui can explain the origin of these items after returning to China.

Chapter 663 The Castle (Part 1)

“No...no, Mr. Zhuang, I’m more interested in those Picasso sketches you have than these jewels...”

After seeing Zhuang Rui at the opening ceremony, Ezkena had been searching for him throughout the venue, but after circling around several times, he hadn't seen him. Little did Ezkena know, Zhuang Rui had just taken Qin Xuanbing upstairs to...

"However, this exhibition hall was set up by one of my arts and crafts companies. Mr. Zhuang, please take a look and see if there are any items you like. I'll have them put them away as a small token of my appreciation..."

“Oh? Mr. Ezkener, those Chinese bronzes you have here are quite valuable...”

After hearing Ezkener's words, Zhuang Rui deliberately said that he wanted to test Ezkener's character. If this guy admitted it without any explanation, then Zhuang Rui would not be so optimistic about the subsequent transaction. Who knows if this British gentleman would try to fool him with fake porcelain?

"Mr. Zhuang is joking. Those are just modern handicrafts, not really works of art, and they're not worth much..."

Ezkena spoke frankly, which greatly increased Zhuang Rui's goodwill towards him. At least in front of him, Ezkena did not have the idea of treating him as a "sucker".

"Hehe, I wonder if Mr. Ezkener has sorted out the items on the list you made earlier?"

Zhuang Rui changed the subject and returned to the exchange of goods that the two had discussed earlier. Since meeting Ezkener in Paris, the jewelry fair had become secondary. Zhuang Rui's main purpose for this trip was to facilitate a transaction with Ezkener.

"Of course, I have been eagerly awaiting Mr. Zhuang's arrival. If you have time today, you are welcome to visit my castle. There is an old Chinese saying that goes, 'When friends come from afar, one is overjoyed,' and that is exactly how I feel right now..."

To get closer to Zhuang Rui, Ezkena switched to speaking Chinese with him. However, the person who taught him Chinese was probably a bit of a bum, as he gave a completely nonsensical translation of Confucius's saying, making Zhuang Rui and Qin Xuanbing almost burst out laughing.

"I'm delighted. I'm also very happy to visit Mr. Ezkener's home. I wonder when Mr. Ezkener will have some free time?"

Zhuang Rui had been excited ever since he saw Ezkena's list of antiques. Whether it was the Yuan blue-and-white porcelain jar depicting Guiguzi descending the mountain or the porcelain from the five famous kilns of the Southern Song Dynasty, they were all extremely rare in China. Even if he couldn't get his hands on them this time, being able to handle them personally would be something Zhuang Rui had always dreamed of.

"Hmm... how about tonight? To welcome you and this beautiful lady, I'm planning to host a party tonight, dear Zhuang, what do you think?"

After thinking for a moment, Ezkener decided to treat Zhuang Rui with the most formal hospitality. In British high society, a cocktail party held for a specific person is the most respectful way to express that person's feelings.

Of course, Ezkena's statement was not about respecting Zhuang Rui himself, but rather about respecting the Picasso works in Zhuang Rui's possession.

"A party?"

Upon hearing this, Zhuang Rui felt a headache coming on. He dreaded attending banquets hosted by so-called high society people.

Back in China, Ouyang Jun's social circle changed after Ouyang Zhenshan entered the central government. In the past six months, he had been asked to meet some young men in Beijing, but Zhuang Rui refused. Now that he was abroad, Zhuang Rui was even less inclined to seek the limelight.

Zhuang Rui glanced at Qin Xuanbing, who also shook her head slightly, then looked at Ezkenner and said, "Mr. Ezkenner, I am very grateful for your sincerity, but as you know, I am a connoisseur, and for me, the greatest joy comes from a beautiful work of art..."

Although he didn't directly refuse, Zhuang Rui's meaning was clear: "Dude, I'm only interested in your antiques. As for anything else, forget it."

"Well... Mr. Zhuang, do you have time to visit my castle at noon? I have a bottle of 1870 red wine there; I guarantee you'll be satisfied..."

Ezkenner was very knowledgeable about Chinese culture, and he could tell that Zhuang Rui was speaking from the heart, not just being polite like some people do. He also hoped that Zhuang Rui could select a few pieces from his collection so that he could exchange them for Picasso's sketches.

Although Ezkenner specializes in Chinese antiques, he also pays close attention to Western art, because the value of top-quality Western art far exceeds that of Eastern antiques, a fact that has long been proven in international auctions.

As an antique dealer, Ezkenner would certainly not let go of this opportunity to exchange Picasso's works with Zhuang Rui, because if a European owned Picasso's works, it would be an absolute pipe dream for Ezkenner to exchange them for Chinese antiques.

Otherwise, let alone the 1870 vintage, even the 2005 vintage would probably not be offered by Ezkenner.

"Of course, I'm very happy to receive your invitation..."

Zhuang Rui nodded in agreement, but he was quite uncomfortable with the way Ezkenner, a British gentleman, spoke.

"Oh, that's great, Mr. Zhuang. I need to make some arrangements first. A car will come to pick you both up around noon..."

When Ezkena saw that Zhuang Rui had agreed, he was delighted. After setting a time with Zhuang Rui, he left the exhibition hall, presumably to arrange the lunch banquet.

"I want the freshest foie gras, oh, and the best caviar, have it delivered to my castle immediately; it has to be done by noon..."

As soon as Ezkena left the expo, he took out his phone and made a call. If Zhuang Rui heard this, he would definitely scold those who only receive salads and fruit platters abroad: Who says foreigners are not hospitable?

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When visiting someone's home abroad, it's customary to bring a gift. Of course, the value of the gift isn't important; it's the thought that counts. Zhuang Rui rummaged through his room for a long time but couldn't find anything suitable.

Finally, Zhuang Rui went to the room where the crew members were staying and took a bottle of red wine that He Shuang had bought in Paris. Although it wasn't from 1870, it was still about 10 years old. Wasn't Ezkener a China expert? He must understand the principle of "a small gift conveys a great sentiment."

At 11 a.m., Zhuang Rui received a call from Ezkena, who had already sent a car to wait at the hotel entrance. Zhuang Rui, along with Peng Fei, Qin Xuanbing, and Bai Shi, arrived at the hotel entrance.

This trip abroad really made White Lion feel cooped up; it was far less comfortable than staying in the courtyard house. Zhuang Rui had only thought of taking White Lion out for a stroll after hearing Ezkena mention that his house was a castle.

"Mr. Zhuang, I am Mr. Ezkener's butler. I'm here to meet you. Please get in the car..."

Ezkena sent a two-door, extended Rolls-Royce, which was at least *** meters long. A middle-aged white man stood at the door. After seeing Zhuang Rui, he opened the door. The middle-aged man was very calm about the appearance of the white lion and did not seem afraid.

Zhuang Rui had often heard of Rolls-Royce, but this was his first time sitting in one. The interior was very spacious; the three of them, plus the white lion, didn't feel cramped at all. There was also a wine cabinet and a sound system between the two rows of sofas.

The white butler sat in the passenger seat, and the car drove out of the hotel and headed towards the outskirts of London. It was quite a long drive, taking about forty minutes, until they reached the lower reaches of the Thames.

"Mr. Zhuang, Mr. Ezkener's castle is just ahead. Welcome to visit us..."

Ahead of the car, Zhuang Rui could see a magnificent ancient castle standing tall. Compared to it, all the villas and manors Zhuang Rui had seen before seemed so small and insignificant.

Zhuang Rui knew that castles were everywhere in England. Although they were not as numerous as churches, their long history, beautiful scenery, and rich cultural connotations were unmatched by churches.

It can be said that castles are a great spectacle of Britain. The years of war between England and Scotland, strategic relations with various European countries, and the long-standing monarchical system have resulted in countless castles of all sizes scattered across the island of Great Britain.

The construction of castles serves two purposes: firstly, as the residence of the owner, which includes living spaces such as bedrooms, living rooms, dining rooms, and banquet halls. Nobles and royalty would try their best to decorate them in a magnificent and comfortable manner, and also to ensure that the scenery is beautiful.

Another function was defense. Castles were self-sufficient and could resist foreign invasions. Therefore, castles were often built in strategic locations, utilizing natural defenses and equipped with strong walls and military equipment.

However, after entering the 20th century, most of the castles in Britain were taken back by the British Royal Family and managed, protected, maintained and introduced to the public by special foundations.

However, some castles are private property, but the huge inheritance tax makes the descendants of various title heirs happy to open the castles to the public, which is not only a good way to raise funds, but also to show tourists from all over the world the rich collections they have collected over the years.

Only the truly super-rich live in these historic castles and spend huge sums of money on their maintenance every year. Ezkena is clearly one of them.

What you read in books is different from what you see with your own eyes. Looking at this private castle belonging to Ezkena from afar still left Zhuang Rui deeply shocked.

There was a special road leading to the castle. According to the butler, the area from that road onwards belonged to Ezkena's private property. After passing through several iron gates, the car stopped directly in the open space in front of the castle gate.

Chapter 664 The Castle (Part Two)

After passing through the first few iron gates, Zhuang Rui understood why the butler and driver weren't afraid of the white lion. It was because large dogs and some ferocious beasts were kept at each of the iron gates—yes, ferocious beasts!

As the car passed the last iron gate, a black cheetah was tethered. As the car drove by, the cheetah seemed to sense a threat, arching its back. The white lion in the car also bristled at the neck, letting out a low growl.

Tibetan mastiffs are warriors of the snow-capped mountains, and the white lion is the king of Tibetan mastiffs. After Zhuang Rui's repeated attempts to calm it down, the restless white lion finally quieted down.

Although the white lion had never experienced the trials of wild battles since birth, Zhuang Rui had no doubt that it would not back down if it faced the cheetah. Its kingly pride and Tibetan mastiff bloodline would make it brave enough to face any powerful opponent.

However, Zhuang Rui obviously wouldn't let the white lion fight wild beasts. Although this would make the white lion more courageous, would you let your friend or brother show their strength in this way?

Ezkena Castle is very quiet and beautiful. In April, London is already full of blooming flowers, while everywhere in the castle, the grass is lush and green.

The car was about a hundred meters from the castle gate. In between, there was a maze-like garden. After getting out of the Rolls-Royce, the straight path leading to the entrance was sandwiched between the gently sloping, maze-like geometric gardens on both sides. The view was unobstructed, making every step toward the castle a salute to be admired.

As the distance decreases, all the details, lines, and material textures enrich your vision layer by layer, making Zhuang Rui involuntarily admire the castle's unique design and the harmony formed through the refinement of time.

The castle, nestled against the Thames River and facing a vast garden, offers a stunning visual experience with its lush greenery, architecture, sculptures, and clear lake.

Compared to Ezkena Castle, Zhuang Rui felt his own courtyard house looked so shabby. If the White Lion lived here, it would definitely be much more luxurious. However, looking at the size, it seemed that he couldn't afford it now.

"Dear Zhuang, it's a pleasure to have you visit my home. What do you think of my castle? Isn't it quite nice? It's nearly a thousand years old..."

As the host, Ezkener stood at the castle gate early in the morning. Behind him stood more than a dozen servants. Upon seeing Zhuang Rui and the others, they all placed their right hands on their chests, bowed slightly, and performed a British gentleman's salute.

To show his affection for Zhuang Rui, Ezkena went up and hugged him. However, this action was almost misinterpreted by the White Lion as unfriendly. If Peng Fei hadn't quickly grabbed the White Lion's neck, Ezkena would probably have been tackled to the ground by the White Lion.

"Thank you so much for the invitation. Your castle is the best building I've ever seen. To be honest, I'd love to try living here and see what it would be like..."

Zhuang Rui handed the gift to a servant beside him, praising Ezkena Castle highly. He was telling the truth; British castles were like Chinese imperial palaces, inspiring much contemplation.

If you were to ask what the most famous building in Britain is, many people would probably say Buckingham Palace. But when it comes to culture, it would be Britain's vampire culture, and the earliest origins of vampire culture are these historic old castles.

In Europe, especially in Britain, the legend of vampires has been spreading since the beginning of history, with hundreds of thousands of people believing in it and trembling in the dark because of it.

Legendary vampires are an ancient and mysterious race. They have no heartbeat or pulse, no breath, and no body temperature, but they possess some kind of consciousness; they can think, talk, and move around. They are also immortal and are creatures that prefer to lurk in the darkness.

To this day, many people believe that some of the owners of castles in England were vampire dukes who had lived for thousands of years. As a result, castles are not only a symbol of wealth, but also represent mystery, much like temples in China, and have many different meanings.

Many vampire fans from all over the world make a special trip to England to stay in castles that have been converted into hotels, in order to experience the vampire culture.

Although Zhuang Rui doesn't have this hobby, he is an antique collector and has a heartfelt love for ancient things. Of course, this love is directed towards the castle itself; as for vampires... well, forget about them.

"Oh, dear Zhuang, you can stay here tonight. I promise, it will be much more comfortable than a hotel..."

When Ezkena heard Zhuang Rui's words, he smiled broadly. No one dislikes guests praising their residence, especially such a historic castle. If it is not used to entertain guests often, wouldn't it be a waste of its existence, like wearing fine clothes in the dark?

Greeted by a group of servants, Zhuang Rui and Qin Xuanbing walked ahead and entered the castle, whose gates were wide open.

Upon entering the castle, one is greeted by a spacious banquet hall, with intricately carved Genoese chandeliers containing 39 candles, and antique furniture of simple elegance. The walnut armchairs and Venetian and Victorian-style dining tables and chairs showcase the owner's luxury.

On the walls of the castle hang many Western-style oil paintings, mostly portraits of people, including men wearing captain's hats and sporting upturned mustaches, and some women wearing corset dresses.

"Could Ezkena's ancestor have been a pirate captain back in the day?"

Zhuang Rui secretly wondered to himself, because after entering this place, he felt as if time had suddenly returned to the Middle Ages.

A waiter approached Ezkenard and whispered, "Sir, everything is ready..."

"Zhuang, we can eat now..."

Ezkena extended an invitation to Zhuang Rui and Qin Xuanbing, while Peng Fei was kept behind by the butler and took the white lion to another restaurant for a meal, where the dishes were also very sumptuous.

The restaurant was next to the banquet hall. After Zhuang Rui and the others sat down, various prepared dishes were served one by one, while the waiters wrapped a bottle of red wine in a towel and poured it into the glasses in front of Ezkena and Zhuang Rui.

"Dear Zhuang, beautiful Miss Qin, you are the first Asian guests to visit my castle. Cheers to our friendship..."

Ezkena raised his glass to Zhuang Rui, who followed suit, picking up the surprisingly large glass, swirling it around, sniffing it, and then taking a small sip.

Zhuang Rui just couldn't sense any difference between this so-called 1870 red wine and the red wine he bought for 10 yuan in the supermarket when he was in college, just to appear cultured.

"Thank you very much for your hospitality. I think that if Ezkena ever comes to *** in the future, I must give him the opportunity to reciprocate your hospitality..."

Regardless of Ezkena's purpose in entertaining him, Zhuang Rui felt very comfortable with the other party's behavior. This was true nobility, showing sufficient respect in a dignified yet humble manner.

Richard, the owner of that auction house, was as vulgar as a pig-feeding man in the English countryside compared to Ezkenner.

"Hehe, then thank you in advance. *** is an ancient city, I think there will be an opportunity. Here, Miss Qin, please try this, it's the freshest caviar..."

Ezkenner was definitely a British gentleman. While entertaining Zhuang Rui, he didn't neglect Qin Xuanbing either. The three of them enjoyed their food and chatted about the customs and culture of Britain and the United Kingdom. The atmosphere was very harmonious.

"Mr. Ezkenner, how much does your castle cost each year for maintenance and management?"

Zhuang Rui was genuinely curious. With all the miscellaneous expenses in his courtyard house plus the salaries of Li Sao and others, his annual income should be around 400,000 to 500,000 RMB.

This castle is many times larger than Zhuang Rui's courtyard house, and with so many professional managers and servants hired, I really don't know how much it must have cost.

There are specialized butler training schools in the UK, and British butlers are world-renowned.

Moreover, even the servants in the castle were trained in those specialized schools, and of course, their status was extremely high. To enjoy medieval treatment in the 21st century was an extremely luxurious thing.

Zhuang Rui asked this question because he was also itching to do it himself. He was thinking about when he would have the chance to build a castle like this. This was something that French manors and Italian

resorts couldn't compare to. Staying here was all about culture, like staying in the Forbidden City in China.

"Well... I haven't calculated it carefully, but if you include the cost of repairing the castle, it's probably around three million pounds a year, right? What, Zhuang, do you also want to buy a castle like this?"

Ezkenar was very perceptive and immediately saw through Zhuang Rui's thoughts. He then said, "There are no more private castles for sale in England, but there are still some in France. If you're really interested, I'll have someone keep an eye out for you..."

"No...no, I can't afford to stay here..."

After hearing about the annual expenses from Ezkenar, Zhuang Rui had long since given up the idea of owning a castle. More than three million pounds a year, which is about 50 million RMB, and that's just the cost of maintenance and management, not to mention buying the castle.

With Zhuang Rui's meager funds, even if he could buy a castle, he'd probably be penniless within a few years.

Chapter 665 The Treasure Room (Part 1)

After lunch, Zhuang Rui, accompanied by Ezkenar, took the white lion for a walk around the castle.

Although he couldn't afford it, the castle really attracted Zhuang Rui. Standing next to the castle near the Thames River, he could see swans resting on the lake in the distance. The various rare birds and ancient trees inside the castle also added a lot of romantic charm to the ancient castle.

"White Lion, calm down, calm down..."

Standing by the castle near the Thames, the white lion, who had been suppressing its emotions for a long time, either in a hotel or in an airplane cabin, suddenly raised its head and roared. The deep roar carried far, and near the gate, a cheetah's low growl could also be heard, making the white lion somewhat restless.

"Zhuang, your Tibetan Mastiff is exceptionally purebred. I've been to China before, but I've never seen such a fine Tibetan Mastiff..."

Ezkena also praised the white lion highly. He could see Zhuang Rui's attitude towards the white lion, but he didn't express any intention to buy it. Just like the black panther that Ezkena kept, he wouldn't sell it no matter how much money others offered.

"Of course, the white lion is the king of Tibetan mastiffs. Someone once offered 40 million RMB, but I didn't sell it..."

When the White Lion is mentioned, Zhuang Rui can't help but praise it as if it were his own child.

Ezkena nodded and said, "You're right, I also like large dogs. Although there's another breed in China that's even more expensive than the Tibetan Mastiff, I still prefer the Tibetan Mastiff..."

"Are there any dogs more expensive than Tibetan Mastiffs?"

Zhuang Rui was taken aback. In his memory, apart from Tibetan Mastiffs which could sell for a few million, the most expensive ornamental dogs were only a few hundred thousand. However, since these words came from Ezkena, they must have some basis.

"Of course you don't know?"

Ezkena looked at Zhuang Rui with some surprise and said, "Last year, there was a Chinese king dog called the 'Emperor' that sold for \$10 million. That's the most expensive pet dog ever sold internationally..."

"Hawk hound?"

To be honest, Zhuang Rui really didn't know anything about these things. A little over a year ago, he was just a low-level employee at a pawnshop and knew absolutely nothing about these high-society items.

"Yes, it's a Hound. It's a pity that the dog was bought by someone in France. I arrived too late and only saw a picture..."

With a look of regret, Ezkena explained the origins of the Eagle-Bark Dog to Zhuang Rui, which made Zhuang Rui suddenly realize the truth.

It turns out that the Eagle-style Pekingese was originally a breed of Pekingese. In 1995, a breeding dog named "Dudu" owned by Pekingese expert Zhang Zhizhou already showed the characteristics of an Eagle-style Pekingese and gained recognition. This was the earliest Eagle-style Pekingese in Chinese history.

As the name suggests, the Eagle-Bak Dog is a Pekingese dog with a face that looks like an eagle.

At first glance, the hawk appears very majestic, with a kingly demeanor and a deterrent effect against evil. However, it is also very docile and easy to get along with, making it the breed that men, women, and children can all handle.

The eagle-bellied dog is arguably one of the rarest, most beautiful, and most precious dog breeds in the world. There are only a few hundred left, and exceptional specimens are even rarer. It is even rarer than the giant panda, of which there are still about 2,000.

For this reason, some people call it the panda of dogs, and it is extremely popular in the international pet market.

"Hehe, I really don't know anything about these things, I'm ashamed, I'm ashamed..."

Zhuang Rui shook his head with a self-deprecating laugh. It was quite embarrassing that a foreigner had to explain a Chinese product to him.

Seeing the two return to the castle gate, Zhuang Rui said, "Mr. Ezkener, if it's alright, I'd like to take a look at your collection now. If there's anything I like, I think we can proceed with the transaction after my lawyer arrives tomorrow..."

"Of course, I'll take you there right now..."

Ezkenar's true purpose in hosting Zhuang Rui's dinner wasn't the Picasso works Zhuang Rui possessed. He was worried that Zhuang Rui wouldn't appreciate his collection, and the deal wouldn't go through.

Now that Zhuang Rui had brought it up himself, Ezkena immediately had the butler bring a set of keys and led Zhuang Rui into the castle.

Following behind Ezkena, Zhuang Rui walked up the wooden stairs to the second floor of the castle.

The walls on both sides of the staircase were decorated in the same magnificent style as the banquet hall, but in their splendor and beauty, there was no vulgarity. Many murals were also hung in the glass. Although Zhuang Rui did not know anything about oil paintings, he could see with his spiritual energy that the murals contained a strong spiritual energy. They were obviously genuine works and of great value.

Upon reaching the second floor of the ancient castle, one is greeted by a living room with a separate fireplace. The light shining down from the ceiling makes the entire living room bright even without the lights on.

Ezkena didn't stop. He led Zhuang Rui through a short corridor and stopped in front of a door that was over three meters tall and felt very imposing.

Ezkena took out the key and opened the solid wood door. He pushed it open, and Zhuang Rui, who was standing outside, immediately felt that the temperature seemed to have increased by a few degrees, and it felt a bit dry, as if he had gone from a forest to a desert.

"Dear Zhuang, my ancestors have been collecting Chinese and European artworks, and now they are all presented to you..."

Ezkena entered the room first and turned on the lights. The room, which was originally dim, suddenly became bright. What Zhuang Rui saw before him shocked him.

"Wait a minute, I need to turn off the security system first..."

Just as Zhuang Rui was about to step into the room, Ezkena stopped him. He stood in front of a monitor panel at the door for a full minute before nodding to indicate that Zhuang Rui could come in.

Ezkena had put a lot of thought into this treasure room. If Zhuang Rui had been wearing infrared goggles, he would have seen that every corner of the treasure room was filled with infrared rays, and even a mosquito flying in would have triggered an alarm.

After receiving Ezkena's permission, Zhuang Rui entered the room.

"My God, these...are all your drugs?"

This is hardly a single room. In Zhuang Rui's view, the entire second floor of the castle, except for the living room at the top, is probably all here. At the very least, standing by the door, Zhuang Rui couldn't see the end of this treasure room at all.

The space was so large that everything in sight was filled with things. Zhuang Rui didn't know how many collections there were. Even an ordinary museum probably didn't have as much wealth as Ezkena.

Upon entering the hall, which resembled a museum, Zhuang Rui noticed a faint machine noise. Looking around, he realized it was an air dryer, and there was more than one. There was one machine every twenty or thirty meters, placed in a corner, keeping the air inside dry at all times.

The hall floor was covered with a thick red carpet, which kept the dryer's noise to a minimum. It was not very noisy, which Ezkena must have taken into account during the installation.

Zhuang Rui knew that humidity was the biggest factor that damaged antiques. He also had a dehumidifier in the basement of his courtyard house, but compared to the air dryer in Ezkena, Zhuang Rui felt that he was not very professional.

"Mr. Ezkener, you are a true master!"

Regardless of where the antiques and artworks in Ezkena's treasure room came from, Zhuang Rui felt a sense of respect. Even if his ancestors had plundered wealth from China, the fact that they were preserved so well was worthy of respect.

"Hehe, art is universal. I believe, dear Zhuang, you will definitely find something you like here..."

Ezkenar laughed. He had only brought a very few people into his collection room, and all of them were amazed by his vast collection. Now it seemed that his chances of reaching a deal with Zhuang Rui were still very high.

Zhuang Rui nodded and said nothing more. The hype surrounding Chinese art began after 2005. At that time, Ezkenar had not yet realized that many of his collections contained objects of value no less than Picasso's drawings.

However, this is a matter of opinion. In the eyes of some prominent figures abroad, the ubiquitous Chinese artworks still cannot compare with the works of masters like Picasso and Van Gogh.

At the entrance to Ezkena's collection hall were displayed silverware and weapons from various countries that he had collected over the years, as well as some shields and armor. There was even a set of medieval armor on a mannequin with a helmet that startled Zhuang Rui, who thought it was a real person standing there.

There were also a few bronze swords from China, but their quality was quite ordinary, and the spiritual energy they contained was rather thin. They were far inferior to Zhuang Rui's Dingguang Sword and did not attract Zhuang Rui's attention.

As they continued walking inside, the tall walls were covered with various patterns made of cold weapons such as guns, swords, and axes, as well as tiger heads and crowns that appeared to have been looted from India or Egypt. Zhuang Rui couldn't help but imagine that these must have been plundered from various countries during Britain's heyday.

Of course, none of this mattered to Zhuang Rui. His target was the list Ezkenar had given him, and the Chinese porcelain on that list was Zhuang Rui's main purpose for this trip.

Looking at the dazzling array of collections, Zhuang Rui walked to the center of the hall, where rows of porcelain displayed on wooden shelves immediately came into view.

Chapter 666 The Treasure Room (Part Two)

"These...these are all porcelain pieces from China?"

Zhuang Rui glanced around and saw four or five rows of wooden shelves, stretching over twenty meters long. On each shelf, just centimeters apart, sat a beautiful piece of porcelain. Zhuang Rui had no idea how many ancient Chinese porcelains were here.

Zhuang Rui had often heard Uncle De or Fatty Jin say that the best antiques in China were all abroad. Although he had heard it a lot, he didn't have a direct understanding of it. But now, seeing what was in front of him, Zhuang Rui finally understood.

Porcelain is fragile, a fact known to all. Throughout China's thousands of years of history, war and turmoil have been constant companions, and many unique and exquisite porcelain pieces have been lost in the flames of war.

Later, official kiln porcelain from the Song and Ming dynasties was mostly confined to the Qing dynasty court, reserved for the emperor's enjoyment and appreciation, and rarely seen by the common people.

It can be said that Emperors Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong were the greatest antique collectors of their time. There was no way around it; they had the means to use the resources of the entire nation to collect the things they liked. You couldn't argue with that.

However, this is precisely the source of the cultural relics lost in later generations. After the Eight-Nation Alliance forced open China's doors in the 19th century, countless precious cultural relics displayed in the Yuanmingyuan were looted, and it is impossible to count them all.

Later scholars made a rough estimate that millions of precious Chinese antiques were lost overseas, most of which were from the Yuanmingyuan Garden. In other words, at least one million Chinese artworks were looted from the Yuanmingyuan Garden.

Putting aside other things, even in the 1950s and 60s, the pigsties and fences around the Yuanmingyuan were made of fine stone with carved beams and painted rafters. You can imagine how precious those looted items must have been.

Renowned modern Chinese painters such as Wu Guanzhong and Chen Danqing have stated that among the antiques that have survived throughout Chinese history, the items from the Yuanmingyuan (Old Summer Palace) are of the highest quality and artistic value.

At this moment, these precious porcelain pieces, which only existed in legends, were placed in front of Zhuang Rui. Even though Zhuang Rui had prepared himself mentally, he was still excited and took several deep breaths to calm himself down.

Perhaps Picasso's sketches are more valuable than these porcelain pieces, but psychologically, Zhuang Rui would rather exchange Picasso's works for these items. After all, the production techniques of the two are different, and it is difficult to say which is more precious.

The successful firing of a beautiful and precious piece of porcelain requires the hard work of countless people, while the cost of a sketch is extremely low—just a sheet of sketch paper and a few pencils are enough—yet it still represents the dedication and effort the artist has poured into it.

Of course, this was just Zhuang Rui's thought. If Ezkena, who was standing next to him, knew that he calculated the value between the two in this way, Ezkena would definitely treat Zhuang Rui like a pig to be slaughtered.

...

"Yes, Zhuang, these porcelain pieces have been collected since my grandfather's father, and several generations have passed to me. There are more than 20,000 pieces in total."

Starting with Tang Dynasty sancai porcelain, I have all kinds of porcelain from the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties. Several people have tried to buy these items from me, but I refused. Zhuang, you are the first Chinese person to come here..."

Looking at these exquisite porcelain pieces of various shapes and sizes, Ezkener was filled with pride. He had visited the treasure rooms of many collectors who specialized in Chinese art, but no one could surpass him in the appreciation of porcelain.

"More than 20,000 pieces?"

Even with Zhuang Rui's good mental fortitude, he still exclaimed in surprise.

"Yes, there are over 20,000 pieces. Underneath these display cabinets are porcelain items. If you're interested, you can examine them one by one, but that would take a long time..."

Ezkener, fearing Zhuang Rui wouldn't believe him, crouched down, opened a cabinet door under a wooden shelf, and took out an object wrapped in layers of old newspapers. Upon opening it, Zhuang Rui clearly saw that it was indeed a piece of porcelain, and a high-quality Qing Dynasty cloisonné enamel plum vase with figures.

Seeing that this piece of porcelain, which would easily be classified as a second or third-grade national cultural relic in China, couldn't even be displayed in a showcase in Ezkena, Zhuang Rui found it somewhat unbelievable.

However, looking around, the layers upon layers of porcelain densely covering dozens of square meters of space made Ezkena's actions clear. If it were Zhuang Rui, he would probably have picked out the best pieces to display on the outside as well.

"Mr. Ezkener, this is a plum vase from the Qing Dynasty in China. They are not very rare, and their value is not very high. I wouldn't even consider such a piece of porcelain..."

After Zhuang Rui took the enamel and gold-flecked plum vase from Ezkena, he examined it for a while and then said to Ezkena.

However, Zhuang Rui was still a little guilty when he said this. Although the auction price of this item would be around 300,000 to 400,000 RMB in the Chinese art market, Zhuang Rui did not have a single item like this in his collection.

Of course, Zhuang Rui's restored Ru kiln porcelain and Longshan culture black pottery are far more valuable than this porcelain piece, but a museum can't just display those two pieces, can it?

Porcelain pieces like these, which can represent the level of cultural craftsmanship in a certain period, are still very important to a museum.

"Of course, of course... Zhuang, these are just some of the more common porcelain pieces from my collection. The best items are displayed on the shelves, and you can choose one by one..."

After hearing Zhuang Rui's words, Ezkena quickly explained that, as he himself said, he didn't even care about this plum vase. Imagine you are surrounded by tens of thousands of precious porcelains every day, how could you possibly care about these porcelains with only average firing techniques?

Even the best things become tiresome after you see them too often.

To give an example, if you lived in a house where everything was made of gold, you probably wouldn't consider it a particularly remarkable object even if you knew the price of gold. This is exactly how Ezkener felt!

"Mr. Ezkener, your collection has amazed me. Perhaps I would consider exchanging a few more of Mr. Picasso's works with you, however..."

Zhuang Rui understood the principle that one must give before taking. He knew that Ezkener's desire for Picasso's work was much stronger than his own, so he deliberately left things unsaid, waiting for Ezkener to finish his sentence.

Sure enough, Ezkener's eyes lit up upon hearing Zhuang Rui's words, and he said, "Dear Zhuang, you are truly a great artist, to have acquired so many Picasso works. Rest assured, I will definitely exchange them with my Chinese friends in the most reasonable way..."

Seemingly feeling that his confession wasn't direct enough, Ezkena thought for a moment and then said, "Some of these pieces in my collection came from your homeland. Of course, I won't hide it; the methods used were not honorable. Zhuang, we're friends now, so I can consider giving you some of these porcelain pieces free of charge!"

"Give me some?!"

Zhuang Rui wondered if he had misheard. He turned his gaze to Ezkena. These items, worth hundreds of thousands, were just given away like that?

Ezkena nodded and said with certainty, "Of course, to compensate for the harm my ancestors caused to the Chinese people, I can make the decision to send you a batch of such porcelain."

However... Zhuang, I hope you can understand that I cannot give you the items on the list I gave you, because there are other heirs in my family. Exchanges are possible, but gifts are not something they would agree to..."

"I understand, of course I understand. On behalf of my museum, I thank you for your generosity. As a friend, I won't put you in a difficult position in front of your family, Mr. Ezkenner. Rest assured, our deal will make you a true international tycoon..."

Zhuang Rui wanted to hug and kiss Ezkena right then and there. This guy was so particular! Although these porcelain pieces weren't very valuable on the market right now, they were all genuine Qing Dynasty imperial porcelain.

With the Chinese antique market heating up, it's normal for prices to increase tenfold or more in a few years. Zhuang Rui didn't expect Ezkena to be so generous, offering to give away a batch right off the bat. If Fatty Jin and the others found out, wouldn't they be green with envy?

However, Zhuang Rui doesn't know what the market will be like in a few years, but for now, this batch of porcelain is absolutely crucial to his museum.

In fact, Zhuang Rui was unaware that in foreign countries, some private collectors often donate their collections to national museums, while others donate them to private museums, without charging any fees or returns. Although these people's actions are hard to understand, this is indeed a real phenomenon.

"Alright, Mr. Zhuang, you can now choose the porcelain pieces that interest you..."

After hearing Zhuang Rui's words, Ezkena knew that his actions had truly won Zhuang Rui's friendship.

For Ezkenard, if he were to put all these porcelain pieces up for auction, he estimated that it would destroy the market. Even if he auctioned them off slowly, he probably wouldn't be able to sell them all in his lifetime.

Giving away a hundred or so pieces is not a big deal; Ezkener's grandfather once donated thousands of pieces of Chinese porcelain to the British Museum.

After expressing his gratitude to Ezkena again, Zhuang Rui turned his attention to the porcelain pieces displayed on the shelf.

Although most of the porcelain pieces were not on display, there were already thousands of pieces on the surface alone.

Chapter 667-668 Transaction Completed

Walking among the rows of shelves filled with exquisite porcelain, Zhuang Rui felt as if he had stepped into the imperial workshops of the ancient palace, a time warp transported hundreds of years, with countless people dressed in ancient clothing bustling about before his eyes.

The production process of Chinese porcelain is extremely complicated. The creation of a fine piece of porcelain requires countless steps. With the changing of dynasties throughout history, it can be said that every piece of porcelain hides a story. So many pieces of porcelain are a living history.

Zhuang Rui released the spiritual energy in his eyes, and everywhere he looked, there were colors of white, yellow, red, and purple. He didn't need to observe them deliberately; the colors of the spiritual energy in the porcelain were reflected in Zhuang Rui's eyes. Zhuang Rui vaguely felt that the spiritual energy in his eyes seemed to have become more active.

Whether it was because there were too many antiques or for some other reason, these spaces filled with porcelain seemed to be filled with spiritual energy. As soon as the spiritual energy in Zhuang Rui's eyes left his body, it merged into the energy.

"Is it about to evolve again?"

Sensing the stirring of spiritual energy, Zhuang Rui was both surprised and delighted.

Zhuang Rui gave a name to each change in the spiritual energy in his eyes: evolution. Because the quality of the spiritual energy in his eyes seemed to be getting higher and higher, it seemed difficult to absorb it from other antiques. So after returning from Myanmar, he had been stagnant.

Although his eyes had undergone several strange changes, Zhuang Rui still couldn't figure out any pattern. Each time it happened so abruptly that Zhuang Rui was helpless and could only wait for the spiritual energy in his eyes to merge with the omnipresent spiritual energy in this space before returning to his eyes.

Last time in the Pagoda Forest in Myanmar, he sat there for an entire afternoon. Zhuang Rui was afraid that if he stood there like an idiot for an entire afternoon, things would get a bit complicated. So he tried to see if he could recall his spiritual energy.

To Zhuang Rui's surprise, the spiritual energy, following his will, instantly separated from the spiritual energy of this space and returned to his eyes.

As the spiritual energy entered his eyes, Zhuang Rui felt as if his eyes were being washed with warm water, an exceptionally comfortable sensation that made him involuntarily groan softly.

Two or three minutes later, Zhuang Rui opened his eyes again. After releasing his spiritual energy, he found that it could no longer absorb and integrate the rich energy in the space, and it seemed that nothing had changed.

"how so?"

Zhuang Rui was stunned for a moment, then looked into the distance. The spiritual energy in his eyes immediately passed through the thick walls of the castle and came to the outside. Zhuang Rui saw Qin Xuanbing walking with the white lion, accompanied by the butler.

The white lion was particularly sensitive to the spiritual energy in Zhuang Rui's eyes. When the spiritual energy got close, it couldn't help but sneeze, then broke free from Qin Xuanbing's hand and looked suspiciously at the air in front of it. It sensed Zhuang Rui's presence, but couldn't see him, so it couldn't help but feel a little anxious.

Seeing the white lion's actions, Zhuang Rui quickly used his spiritual energy to circle around the white lion's body, and withdrew his spiritual energy while the white lion was comfortably shaking its head.

"This...is it about 100 meters away?"

After Zhuang Rui withdrew his gaze, his face was filled with surprise. Although his spiritual energy had not advanced, the distance he could release it had increased from 30 meters to 100 meters, more than three times the previous distance.

However, now is not a good time to observe spiritual energy. Zhuang Rui was thinking of signing an agreement with Ezkena to exchange collections tomorrow after Peng Fei arrived. He had been abroad for more than a week and was starting to miss home.

Zhuang Rui's dazed state didn't last long. From Ezkena's perspective, Zhuang Rui seemed to be captivated by the sea of porcelain. It was understandable that he would react this way when he encountered something he liked.

Coming to his senses, Zhuang Rui began examining the porcelain on the shelf. There were simply too many to check individually, so he resorted to using his spiritual energy to distinguish the intensity of colors, focusing only on the pieces with purple spiritual energy.

"A carved plum vase from the Ding kiln of the Northern Song Dynasty..."

Suddenly, Zhuang Rui's eyes lit up as a plum vase with a slender neck, small mouth, and large belly came into view.

"The Five Great Kilns..."

Zhuang Rui sighed inwardly as he carefully took the plum vase, which was about 40 centimeters tall, down from the shelf.

White Ding porcelain is considered the pinnacle of white porcelain produced during the Song Dynasty. This plum vase is entirely milky white, with an extremely pure color that has not yellowed over time.

The glaze of the plum vase has a glossy appearance between glassy and opaque. The carved and incised lines on the vase are strong, vigorous, and smooth, with a sparse layout. The lines are mostly parallel, with one wide and one narrow line running side by side. This is a unique style of carving on porcelain during the Northern Song Dynasty.

This was also the first time Zhuang Rui had seen a complete set of porcelain from the five famous kilns. If it were in China, this plum vase would definitely be considered a national first-class protected cultural relic, and it would be extremely rare even among the many cultural relics in museums in China.

After Zhuang Rui put the plum vase back, he said to Ezkena behind him, "Mr. Ezkena, this plum vase can be used as collateral for our transaction..."

"no problem!"

Ezkenar answered bluntly that although the porcelain piece was considered a fine piece in his collection, it was nothing compared to Picasso's work.

Walking along these wooden frames, which were about 1.5 to 1.6 meters high, Zhuang Rui's eyes scanned the porcelain pieces like radar. After walking only five or six meters, he had already selected seven or eight pieces of porcelain.

Zhuang Rui had his eye on at least seventeen or eighteen pieces, but he understood that while Ezkena desired Picasso's works, these porcelain pieces also had a price, and he couldn't be too greedy. That's why he reluctantly gave up several pieces he had his eye on.

In addition to the white porcelain plum vase that Zhuang Rui selected, there was also a Song Dynasty Jun ware bowl with purple spots, which was said to have "one color going into the kiln and ten thousand

colors coming out of the kiln". Its colors were red with blue, intricately interspersed, colorful and extraordinary.

In addition to the porcelain from the Song Dynasty kilns, there are also Southern Song Dynasty official kiln wash basins and Southern Song Dynasty Longquan kiln celadon chrysanthemum petal tea cups. The other pieces are Ming Dynasty porcelain, including Chenghua doucai tianzi jars, Jiajing wucai fish and bath pattern large jars, and colorful Wanli wucai large vases, etc.

Zhuang Rui estimated in his mind that these few pieces of porcelain were worth at least 200 million RMB, and they were the kind that were priceless and hard to find. In domestic auction houses, one might not see even one of these items for three to five years.

Especially the large Wanli polychrome dragon-patterned vase, although it is slightly later in date than these porcelain pieces, is extremely exquisite in its craftsmanship. The four sides are painted with lingzhi and dragon patterns in polychrome, with auspicious and celebratory designs. The base has a blue-and-white regular script mark that reads "Made in the Wanli period of the Great Ming Dynasty", with neat characters and a clear provenance.

These porcelain pieces can all be considered national first-class cultural relics. It should be noted that even among the millions of items in the Palace Museum's collection, only a little over 1,000 have been designated as national first-class cultural relics.

Seeing that Ezken's expression remained unchanged and he didn't change his mood because of the items Zhuang Rui had chosen, Zhuang Rui calmed down a little. He couldn't bear to give up any of the items he had selected.

"Mr. Ezken, why are the Yuan blue and white porcelains listed in your inventory not here?"

When Zhuang Rui reached the end of the wooden shelf, he still hadn't seen the Yuan blue-and-white porcelain he had been looking forward to, so he couldn't help but ask.

Although the Yuan Dynasty lasted only a little over a hundred years, Yuan blue and white porcelain holds an irreplaceable position in the history of Chinese porcelain.

Yuan blue and white porcelain ushered in a new era of transition from plain porcelain to colored porcelain. It is magnificent and powerful, with a bold style, many layers of painting, exquisite production, and very few pieces have survived to the present day, making it extremely precious.

Zhuang Rui had never seen an authentic Yuan blue-and-white porcelain piece in any of the major museums he had visited in China, so seeing one in the Ezkena collection truly excited him for a long time.

"Hehe, Zhuang, you're an expert. The value of Yuan blue and white porcelain far exceeds that of the porcelain pieces you just selected..."

Ezkena smiled, took a few steps ahead of Zhuang Rui, and led him to the end of the wooden shelf. Zhuang Rui found that there was a cabinet that was only a little over a meter tall, and on it, there were only six pieces of porcelain, all of them blue and white porcelain.

Zhuang Rui was immediately drawn to the blue and white porcelain jar at the top. The jar was about 27 or 28 centimeters tall, with a plain base, a wide foot ring, a straight mouth, a short neck, a slightly thick lip, sloping shoulders, a round belly, which gradually widened below the shoulders and narrowed towards the bottom, with a slightly flared base.

The main decorative motif on the porcelain jar is "Guiguzi Descending the Mountain," which depicts the story of Guiguzi, Sun Bin's teacher, agreeing to descend the mountain to rescue Sun Bin and Dugu Chen, famous generals of Qi, who were trapped by Yan, at the repeated request of Su Dai, an envoy from Qi.

The entire blue and white porcelain decoration is rich in color, full in composition, well-balanced in density and sparseness, with clear distinction between the main and secondary elements, forming a harmonious whole. The figures are depicted smoothly and naturally, full of charm, and the rocks are rendered with unrestrained and vivid brushstrokes, each stroke exquisite, making it a perfect piece.

"Mr. Ezkener, I'll take this blue and white porcelain jar!"

Zhuang Rui's tone was very certain; even if it came with several Picasso sketches, he was determined to bring this Yuan blue-and-white porcelain jar with figures back to China.

It is worth noting that among the very few surviving Yuan blue and white porcelain pieces, those depicting figures and stories are extremely rare. There are only eight known surviving Yuan blue and white porcelain jars with figures and stories, such as the "Guiguzi Descending the Mountain" jar, and none of them are in China.

If Zhuang Rui can bring this porcelain piece back to China, it will definitely cause a sensation in the domestic collecting world, and it will also be beneficial to the opening of his museum.

“Zhuang, as you know, this kind of Yuan blue and white porcelain with figures is extremely rare. I only have this one...”

For the first time, a look of embarrassment appeared on Ezken's face.

Although not explicitly stated, Ezken had conveyed his meaning: Zhuang Rui's six Picasso figure sketches alone were insufficient to acquire so many porcelain pieces.

“Mr. Ezken, we are friends, and I will not let you suffer a loss. How about this, this Yuan blue and white porcelain with figures, plus this blue and white porcelain jar with fish pattern, and I will also bring out six Picasso drawings, what do you think?”

The blue-and-white porcelain jar with fish pattern that Zhuang Rui mentioned is a piece of porcelain placed next to the Guiguzi blue-and-white porcelain. This piece of porcelain is decorated with a pattern of four fish playing in the water: mackerel, silver carp, bighead carp, and mandarin fish.

Zhuang Rui knew that in Chinese culture, the four fish—mackerel, whitebait, silver carp, and mandarin fish—are homophones for the four characters "清 (qing, meaning pure), 白 (bai, meaning white), 廉 (lian, meaning honest), 洁 (jie, meaning clean)."

In addition, there are peony scrolls on the shoulder of the jar and auspicious lotus petal patterns on the foot. The mouth of the jar has wave patterns unique to the 14th century, the shoulder has peony patterns, and the bottom of the jar has auspicious cloud treasure box with patterns of lingzhi, conch, coins, flames and other designs.

Although it is not as valuable as the Guiguzi Yuan blue and white porcelain jar, this fish-patterned jar is still a fine example of Yuan blue and white porcelain. It has a rich purple aura inside, and few pieces in Zhuang Rui's collection can compare to it.

"Bring out six more Picasso works?"

Ezken's eyes lit up for a moment, but then he said, "Zhuang, this Yuan blue and white porcelain is no less valuable than that blue and white porcelain with figures. What do you think..."

Zhuang Rui smiled wryly upon hearing this, and said, "Dear Mr. Ezken, although there aren't many Yuan blue and white porcelain pieces in existence, the number of fish-patterned jars seems to be greater than that figure-figure blue and white porcelain. I know of no fewer than twenty of them. The value of these two pieces is incomparable..."

There are indeed a few fish-patterned jars in some museums in China. Although Zhuang Rui has never seen them, he knows where they are.

After a pause, Zhuang Rui continued, "Mr. Ezken, three years ago at a Paris auction, a five-sheet sketchbook by Mr. Picasso sold for \$12 million. Now that three years have passed, you should know how much the twelve sketches I have presented will be worth, right?"

If Zhuang Rui's statement is true, and he produces twelve sketches, enough to bind at least two books, then given the current market value of Picasso's paintings, which are often priceless, these two sketchbooks would be worth at least \$40 million, or around 300 million RMB.

Judging from the current market value of Yuan blue and white porcelain in the international auction market, this Guiguzi Descending the Mountain porcelain jar should be worth around 100 million RMB, while the fish pattern jar is much less valuable, at most around 20 million RMB. In comparison, even with the other seven or eight porcelain pieces, Ezken seems to have gotten a better deal.

More importantly, the Picasso works in Zhuang Rui's possession are different from these Chinese porcelains. Chinese artworks often fail to sell at international auctions.

However, Ezkener knew that if Zhuang Rui put Picasso's sketches at auction, even if he offered \$40 million, he might not be able to acquire them.

"Zhuang, just as you said, we are friends. I think this deal between us can be finalized..."

Ezkenner was much more familiar with the prices of these items at international auctions than Zhuang Rui was. In terms of price, if we don't count the porcelain he promised to give to Zhuang Rui, he actually got a better deal.

Although Ezkenner had received information that some people were planning to hype up Chinese porcelain in recent years, the hype hadn't even started yet. Ezkenner's current thought was to get his hands on Picasso's work first.

To prevent Zhuang Rui from changing his mind, Ezkenner quickly added, "As a friend, dear Zhuang, I've decided to donate another 200 pieces of Chinese porcelain to enrich your soon-to-open museum. I hope you'll accept them..."

"200 pieces?"

Zhuang Rui smiled upon hearing this, extended his hand to Ezkenner, and said, "Thank you. I think you can definitely become my good friend. I hope you can attend the opening of my museum..."

"Definitely, I've longed to visit the beautiful and mysterious China for a long time..."

Ezkenner grasped Zhuang Rui's hand, and the two looked at each other and smiled. As for what they were thinking, only God knows.

To be fair, it's hard to say who lost out or gained in this transaction. The porcelain pieces Zhuang Rui selected were all top-quality Chinese porcelain, extremely rare both domestically and internationally, and their prices have been rising steadily over the years.

However, the Picasso sketches that Zhuang Rui presented are equally valuable and sought after by many international collectors. They are also works of art that appreciate in value. As for which will be more important in the future, no one can say for sure right now.

As for the 200 pieces of Chinese porcelain that Ezkena brought out, Zhuang Rui had not seen the actual items and found it difficult to assess their value. However, given Ezkena's collection, it seemed quite difficult to find anything of questionable quality.

"Boss, I've been traveling back and forth so much, you'll have to reimburse me for all the expenses..."

In the hotel where Zhuang Rui was staying, Huangfu Yun was eating an apple. He had been extremely busy these past two days. After returning to New York, he immediately packed up all his collections in New York and mailed them back to China. Then he resigned from his law firm. All of this took him only one day.

Because of his choice, Huangfuyun suffered heavy losses. He had to hand over several deals to others, and the consultant positions he was assigned by the law firm were also canceled. He was essentially left with nothing.

"Hehe, Brother Huangfu, in a while you will definitely be proud of your choice..."

Zhuang Rui laughed upon hearing this. He could imagine the impact and shock that this collection would have on China's antique world once it appeared in his museum. Of course, all of this depended on the museum being able to open.

"How could I have believed your empty promises..."

Huangfu Yun muttered something to himself, took out an agreement from his bag, handed it to Zhuang Rui, and said, "The quantity of the traded items is blank. See if there's anything that needs to be changed. If not, fill in the names of the items you and Ezkena are exchanging, and the trade can proceed..."

The agreement was drafted by Huangfu Yun on the plane. Zhuang Rui glanced at it and nodded, saying, "That's fine. We'll go to Ezkena Castle this afternoon..."

Zhuang Rui did not accept Ezkena's invitation to stay in his castle yesterday, mainly because he felt that the place was too remote, and there might really be vampires at night.

"Zhuang, my dear friend, it's so good to see you. You Chinese always talk about chatting late into the night by candlelight. I wish you hadn't gone back yesterday..."

The same Rolls-Royce picked up Zhuang Rui and the others from the hotel. When they arrived at Ezkenard Castle, the English gentleman was already waiting at the door.

"Hehe, when you have the chance to visit Beijing in the future, I will definitely do my best to be a good host..."

Zhuang Rui laughed and said, "Dude, why are you having a long talk with this foreign devil at night instead of cuddling your wife? Are you crazy?"

Upon entering the castle's main hall, Zhuang Rui discovered that Mr. Sterling, with whom he had previously had some disagreements, was in the living room, along with a man and a woman. Judging from their clothing, they appeared to be government employees.

"Zhuang, these two are Alice and Gasper from the London Notary Public Office. They will be notarizing our transaction..."

As expected, Ezkena's introduction confirmed Zhuang Rui's idea. The two notaries, with curious eyes, stood up and bowed slightly to Zhuang Rui and the others.

Although Alice and Gasper didn't know Zhuang Rui's background, someone who could do business with a tycoon like Ezkener must be no ordinary person.

After returning the greeting to the two men, Zhuang Rui looked at Ezkener, handed him a drawing board, and said, "Mr. Picasso's twelve drawings are all here. Ezkener, you can have Mr. Sterling appraise them..."

After Ezkena took the items, he smiled and said, "Zhuang, I had someone prepare all the porcelain you wanted overnight. You can take a look first..."

Ezkena waved his hand, and more than 10 people placed several cardboard boxes of different sizes on the floor in front of Zhuang Rui.

"Zhuang, the porcelain I promised to give you is already on the truck outside, ready to be delivered to the airport at any time. If you need to inspect it, that's fine too..."

Zhuang Rui told Ezkener yesterday that he would be leaving London today, and the porcelain pieces on the ground were the ones Zhuang Rui valued most and were the most valuable, which is why Ezkener made that comment.

"Mr. Ezkener, I always trust my friends completely, there's no need to check..."

Zhuang Rui smiled and waved his hand. Long before these porcelain pieces were even put down, Zhuang Rui had already used his spiritual energy to verify that they were indeed the two Yuan blue and white porcelain pieces and the Song and Ming porcelain pieces. Ezkena had not faked them.

As for the other carts loaded with porcelain, they were parked at the castle gate, within Zhuang Rui's spiritual energy range. Although Zhuang Rui did not examine them one by one, the spiritual energy inside indicated that they were all genuine.

"Boss, yes, it is indeed an authentic work by Mr. Picasso..."

Skipping Zhuang Rui's inspection process, Sterling didn't take long to authenticate Picasso's work; he identified its authenticity in just over 10 minutes.

After Zhuang Rui and Ezkena signed the agreement, two notaries issued a notarized certificate, and the transaction involving goods worth hundreds of millions of dollars was completed quietly.

"Mr. Ezkener, Beijing welcomes you!"

After the transaction was completed, Zhuang Rui and Ezkena both breathed a sigh of relief.

Chapter 669 It's all done!

"Brother Huangfu, I'm entrusting the matter in Paris to you. Once it's settled, I'll host a welcome banquet for you in Beijing..."

Standing beneath his silver eagle-like plane, Zhuang Rui waved goodbye to Huangfu Yun, who had come to see him off.

Although Huangfu Yun also wanted to experience the luxury of a private jet, he had to make communication with the Guimet Museum in Paris, and Huangfu Yun was the most suitable candidate.

"Hey, I'm following you from now on. Brother Zhuang, you can't let me down in the future..."

Zhuang Rui, who was walking back on the plane, stumbled and almost fell when he heard Huangfu Yun's words. Was this some kind of friendly talk? If Qin Xuanbing heard this, she would definitely suspect that he and Huangfu Yun were having an affair.

Turning back, Zhuang Rui gave Huangfu Yun the middle finger before diving into the cabin without looking back.

As He Shuang's takeoff announcement sounded, the plane slowly accelerated on the runway, soared into the sky, and disappeared into the clouds.

However, on the journey back to Beijing, only Zhuang Rui and Bai Shi stayed in the cabin, while Peng Fei, Tian Ya, Liu Li, and Qin Xuanbing, among others, took an international flight from London to Beijing.

The reason is simple: Zhuang Rui's private jet has now been converted into a transport plane.

The more than 200 pieces of porcelain packed in various cardboard boxes filled all the space, including the cargo hold. Even the restrooms were packed tightly with them, and there were also a dozen or so small cardboard boxes in the cockpit.

"Damn, I should have taken an international flight back too..."

Zhuang Rui looked at the white lion sandwiched between various cardboard boxes and said, "I'm doing this to keep you company, White Lion. We can't move it carelessly. If any of these things break, that's hundreds of thousands..."

Because Zhuang Rui's private jet was so small, many of the porcelain items had to be taken out of their cardboard boxes and repositioned; a slight mishap would result in them shattering into pieces.

So when these porcelain pieces were transported to the airport, the entire Ezkena estate mobilized. Just loading them onto the plane took three or four hours. These were truly precious items that required the utmost care and handling.

It was fortunate that Ezkener's men were well-trained; if it had been airport baggage handlers, who knows how many items would have been broken.

With nothing else to do, Zhuang Rui simply used his spiritual energy to examine each piece of porcelain. He had already seen them when they were being loaded onto the plane. Ezkena was quite particular; the porcelain he gifted to Zhuang Rui was all intact and in very good condition.

However, compared to the Yuan, Song, and Ming dynasty porcelain pieces that I personally selected, these porcelain pieces are several levels below. There are none from the Yuan and Song dynasties, and there are a few from the Ming dynasty, but they are mostly small teacups and not very expensive.

Of course, the largest number of these porcelain pieces are from the Qing Dynasty. Although they are all official kiln tribute items, there are very few porcelain pieces from the reigns of Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong. Most of them are from the Jiaqing and Xianfeng periods.

While both are official kiln porcelain, their prices are incomparable to those of porcelain from the Three Dynasties. It's like comparing Moutai and Erguotou – both are Chinese liquors, yet their prices are worlds apart.

Even so, Zhuang Rui was already quite satisfied. At least with this batch of porcelain, he could set up a porcelain exhibition hall, which, in addition to Huangfu Yun's swords, would be another highlight of Zhuang Rui's museum.

With those two Yuan blue-and-white porcelain jars and Song Dynasty porcelain pieces from the five famous kilns, which are rarely seen in complete pieces in China, Zhuang Rui's porcelain exhibition hall is no less impressive than any other museum in China, and may even surpass it.

Thinking about this, Zhuang Rui, who was sitting on the sofa with his legs curled up, felt that the journey was not so bad after all.

More than ten hours later, the plane landed at the Capital Airport.

Although he kept using his spiritual energy to relieve the soreness and numbness in his legs, Zhuang Rui almost fell to the ground after standing up. Unlike Bai Shi, who leaped out of the cabin, he didn't fall.

Zhuang Rui could tell from the white lion's low growl that this old fellow would absolutely never travel with him on a plane again.

"Fourth Brother, I'm troubling you with this matter again..."

After Zhuang Rui got off the plane, before he could even stretch his body, he saw Ouyang Jun looking displeased. Next to him were two cars, one of which was a truck. Zhuang Rui had specifically instructed Ouyang Jun to park there when he contacted him on the plane.

Ouyang Jun waved his hand and said, "Alright, you've troubled me enough already, haven't you? Let me tell you, your sister-in-law's been in a bad mood lately. If anything happens to me, you'll have to step in..."

"Fourth Brother, if your wife is in a bad mood, go and comfort her yourself. What does it have to do with me?"

Zhuang Rui frowned and shook his head upon hearing Ouyang Jun's words. His fourth brother was no longer a child, how could he speak so unreliably? His sister-in-law was in a bad mood, so he was making his younger brother take her place? This... this was going to be a mistake.

"Pah... I don't need your support. Uh, just say you're with me when your sister-in-law calls to check up on you, or have your wife come with you. I'm busy..."

Ouyang Jun realized he had made a grammatical error in his words and quickly corrected himself. This time, Zhuang Rui understood clearly that his older brother had been holding back for too long and wanted to sneak out to have sex, so he was using him as a cover.

Zhuang Rui knew he'd need to get the museum's paperwork approved in the next few days, which would inevitably involve troubling Ouyang Jun, so he said, "No problem, Fourth Brother, I'll have Xuanbing stay with my sister-in-law for a couple of days later..."

Hearing Zhuang Rui's words, Ouyang Jun nodded in satisfaction and said, "Hmm, that's more like it. Alright, let's move the things. I brought seven or eight people with me. Let's finish quickly and go home. My aunt has been talking about you for days..."

"Okay, let's have a drink tonight, you two brothers..." Zhuang Rui agreed and turned to enter the cabin.

"Boss, you can rest over there. I'll bring some people to move it..."

Hao Long's voice rang out behind Zhuang Rui. Zhuang Rui turned around and said, "Brother Hao, these things are very valuable. Each one is worth over 100,000. Be careful..."

Upon hearing Zhuang Rui's words, not only Hao Long was startled, but the real estate company people brought by Ouyang Jun were also stunned, and their movements became lighter.

Seven or eight people lined up in a row, with the person at the very back passing the porcelain pieces out one by one. The people on the outside would then receive them and put them on the car. Because of Zhuang Rui's warning earlier, everyone was very careful, and there were no mishaps.

It took two or three hours to unload all the porcelain from the cabin. By the time they got back to the courtyard and moved the porcelain to several rooms in Zhuang Rui's backyard, it was already past 11 p.m.

Zhuang Rui and Ouyang Jun didn't get to drink either, as the guy was urged to go back by more than a dozen phone calls from the big star around 9 o'clock.

"Mom, you're still awake?"

After seeing off the real estate company employees, Zhuang Rui arrived at the Intermediate People's Court and found that the light in the main room was still on. After pushing the door open, he found his mother sitting on the sofa reading a book.

"Mom is waiting for you. You child, you've been gone for so many days without even a phone call. And now, you've even lost your wife..."

Looking at her son's somewhat haggard face, Ouyang Wan hardened her heart and scolded him a few times. How could she not know that Qin Xuanbing's flight required a transfer and that she would arrive in Beijing tomorrow morning?

"Mom, your trip was very fruitful. When my museum opens, I promise you'll be the first to visit..."

Zhuang Rui smiled and sat down next to his mother, gently massaging Ouyang Wan's shoulders with his hands. Hearing his mother's scolding words, Zhuang Rui felt a deep sense of warmth and affection.

"A museum? What museum?"

Ouyang Wan asked doubtfully. Although she knew that Zhuang Rui had collected a lot of antiques, it seemed that he was still far from opening a museum.

Seeing that his mother had shifted her attention, Zhuang Rui quickly began to exaggerate and boast, almost calling his still-developing museum the Palace Museum.

"What you do isn't important, just be careful when you go out. Okay, go home and get some rest..."

Although Ouyang Wan never interfered in Zhuang Rui's affairs, it would be a lie to say she wasn't worried when she saw her son go through all that trouble in China and end up abroad. She waited until now just to give Zhuang Rui some instructions.

The next day, after picking up Qin Xuanbing, Zhuang Rui drove her directly to Ouyang Jun's courtyard house. Xu Qing didn't have many friends, and now that she was pregnant, she really needed a woman to keep her company and talk to.

What? You expect Ouyang Jun to accompany you? You should be grateful if the child doesn't jump out of your belly sooner than expected.

"What?! It's done? Fourth Brother, you're not kidding me, are you...?"

Zhuang Rui was startled by Ouyang Jun's words. It had only been a few days, yet the museum's approval procedures had been completed. The relevant departments couldn't be this efficient, could they? Could it be that Ouyang Jun had persuaded his uncle to pull some strings?

"What are you yelling about? Keep your voice down. I'm counting on this to stay outside for a few days. Come on, let's talk outside..."

Ouyang Jun quickly covered Zhuang Rui's mouth and turned around to say loudly, "Wu'er and I are going to take care of some business. You two chat. If you don't have dinner tonight, you can go to your aunt's house..."

Zhuang Rui gave Ouyang Jun a disdainful look, guessing that after this brother's son was born, he definitely wouldn't recognize him as his father.

"Fourth Brother, tell me quickly, what's going on? Where are the paperwork? Where's the museum's business license? Let me see it..."

As soon as he stepped out of the courtyard, Zhuang Rui eagerly reached out his hand to Ouyang Jun.

With the museum's operating license, they could discuss exchanging collections with the Guimet Museum in Paris. Huangfu Yun harbored deep resentment towards Zhuang Rui for leaving him in Paris.

"Don't ask me, I don't know what happened either. The old man said you should go see him after you come back, all your things are with him..."

Ouyang Jun shrugged. Not to mention Zhuang Rui, even he was a little confused. Minister Ouyang, who was always impartial and incorruptible, had actually abandoned all principles this time and personally instructed his secretary to expedite the approval process for Zhuang Rui's museum.

Chapter 670-671 Things

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"My uncle wants to see me?"

Zhuang Rui was taken aback. In his memory, although his uncles all doted on him, none of them had ever visited him except during holidays. The only times they did see him were when Ouyang Zhenwu and others came to Zhuang Rui's courtyard to visit Ouyang Wan.

"Yes, the old man instructed that you should visit him when you have time after you get home. It seems this matter has something to do with my uncle, but I'm not entirely sure. Let's go, I still want to know what's going on..."

Ouyang Jun was also very curious about this matter. He had quite a few cousins, and he had never seen these old men nervous about any of them. Even when Ouyang Lei was promoted to lieutenant general, he was never mentioned being personally summoned by his father, Ouyang Zhenshan.

"I'm free now. Why don't you call your uncle and ask if he has time?"

I heard that the museum's paperwork is done. Even if Ouyang Zhenwu doesn't contact him, Zhuang Rui still has to go to his uncle for the business license. Moreover, after hearing what Ouyang Jun said earlier, Zhuang Rui guessed something was amiss. It must be related to his behavior abroad.

Ouyang Jun nodded, took out his phone and dialed a number. Ouyang Zhenwu's secretary answered the phone and hung up after a few words. Before Zhuang Rui and Ouyang Jun even reached the car, the phone rang back, saying that they would have lunch together and that Ouyang Jun should wait at a restaurant first.

"Haha, seeing my dad is harder than seeing a national leader..."

Zhuang Rui laughed, but Ouyang Jun was already used to it. When had that old man ever treated home as a home? He always treated it as an office.

Ouyang Jun was already used to spending time with his father like this, and he was also very familiar with that restaurant. He took Zhuang Rui to a private room in a restaurant that wasn't very big, but was decorated very elegantly. He ordered a pot of tea and some snacks, and chatted with Zhuang Rui.

The two waited for about an hour. At 12:15, the door to the private room was pushed open, and Ouyang Zhenwu walked in, while his secretary remained outside.

"Uncle..."

Upon seeing Ouyang Zhenwu, Zhuang Rui immediately stood up and respectfully greeted him. Of all his uncles, this one was the one who doted on him the most.

"Hehe, Xiao Rui, have a seat. Have you ordered yet?"

At this moment, Ouyang Zhenwu looked like a kind old man. After Zhuang Rui sat down, he continued, "I have a meeting this afternoon and can't drink. Xiao Jun, have a drink with your brother..."

"Dad, if I drive drunk again, will you come pick me up?"

Ouyang Jun was very dissatisfied with his father's attitude. He didn't think he had ever seen his father speak to him so kindly in his entire life.

"Can't you take a taxi? When have you ever stopped drinking, except at your grandpa's?"

Ouyang Zhenwu glared at his son with displeasure, while Ouyang Jun immediately shrank back and fell silent when he heard the old man mentioned. Even the boldest person has something to fear.

Perhaps this place is frequented by leaders, because the waiters usually won't come into the room without being called, and the dishes can be served from inside the room without having to go out and call them.

Zhuang Rui walked to the door, picked up the walkie-talkie hanging on the wall, and said, "You can serve the food now..."

"Uncle, you're so busy with work, how come you have time to have dinner with us?"

Zhuang Rui stared at a file folder next to Ouyang Zhenwu, and his words sounded somewhat insincere.

"How could I be so busy with countless affairs? That's more like a description of your uncle..."

Looking at Zhuang Rui's expression, Ouyang Zhenwu laughed and said, "Little Rui, you want to ask what's inside here that's the real thing, right?"

"Hehe, Uncle, is it for the paperwork for my museum? I really have to thank you for this, otherwise I don't know when my museum would be able to open..."

Seeing that Ouyang Zhenwu had made his point clear, Zhuang Rui scratched his head and laughed.

"You little rascal, don't thank me. This was asked of you by your uncle. You've got some serious connections, haven't you..."

Ouyang Zhenwu smiled and handed the file bag to Zhuang Rui; this matter really had little to do with him.

Just two days ago, Ouyang Zhenwu received a call from his elder brother, who asked him to look into the approval process for a private museum at the museum department. After Ouyang Zhenwu retrieved the documents, he realized that it was Zhuang Rui's.

Ouyang Zhenwu was still a little confused. What big thing had Zhuang Rui done that made his elder brother call to inquire about it personally? You know, at Ouyang Zhenshan's level, whatever he did would attract a lot of attention.

Those who are interested know about the relationship between Zhuang Rui and Ouyang Jun. Ouyang Zhenshan's open instruction to handle the matter so openly is bound to attract attention.

"Wait, I need to take this call..."

Just as Zhuang Rui was about to speak, Ouyang Zhenwu's phone rang. He had three cell phones, two of which were in the hands of his secretary, and only this one was in Ouyang Zhenwu's possession. The only people who could call him were his closest relatives or his superiors.

"Big brother, why are you calling? Xiao Rui, I'm with him, what's wrong..."

After receiving the call, Ouyang Zhenwu kept nodding, which puzzled Zhuang Rui and Ouyang Jun. At this moment, a waiter knocked on the door, but Ouyang Jun turned him away and told them to wait a few minutes before serving the food.

The phone call lasted quite a while; four or five minutes later, Ouyang Zhenwu finally hung up and said to Ouyang Jun with a smile, "Alright, call the food..."

"Uncle, what does this have to do with me?"

Zhuang Rui heard Ouyang Zhenwu mention his name earlier, so he asked a question.

"Yes, that's why my brother called. He's been quite busy these past few days, otherwise he would have met with you..."

Only after receiving Ouyang Zhenshan's call did Ouyang Zhenwu understand what was going on.

It turns out that just as Zhuang Rui released that video, some radicals in France made some inappropriate remarks, leading to a tense situation in Sino-French relations.

In the video, Zhuang Rui said that France refused to face its mistakes after the war, unlike Germany, which was honest. Although this was just the opinion of an ordinary person, it was a real slap in the face to France.

Many media outlets in France also reported on this incident. In addition, some French companies that were making money in China were very dissatisfied with the government's actions and used this incident to stir up trouble, forcing certain people to issue a public apology, which made China feel very proud.

The trigger for all of this was merely the auction scandal that Zhuang Rui had spread just a few days ago. Even the newly appointed leader praised Zhuang Rui after watching the video, which is why Ouyang Zhenshan personally called Ouyang Zhenwu to expedite the approval of Zhuang Rui's museum.

After hearing Ouyang Zhenwu's explanation, Zhuang Rui finally understood what was going on. He hadn't expected that his unintentional words would actually do something for the country. It seemed that his trip hadn't been in vain; he had gained quite a bit of benefit.

As they were talking, the waiter knocked on the door and brought the food. Ouyang Zhenwu stopped talking and waited for the waiter to leave. Then, Ouyang Zhenwu looked at Zhuang Rui and said, "Xiao Rui, as a private museum with 'Guo' (national) in its name, this is the first one in the country. My idea is to properly publicize the fact that you bought Chinese cultural relics abroad. It's also a form of patriotic education..."

What?! They're promoting me?!

Zhuang Rui was taken aback for a moment upon hearing this, then waved his hands repeatedly, saying, "Uncle, promoting the museum is fine, but promoting me is out of the question. Besides, personally, I don't agree with private individuals going out to bid for and bring back Chinese cultural relics that have been lost. Instead, we should use other methods to demand the return of these relics..."

Zhuang Rui assumed Ouyang Zhenwu was unaware of the foreign speculators hyping up Chinese cultural relics, so he quickly explained the whole story in detail.

"I know about what you're saying. The ministry has set up a special office to recover lost cultural relics, but the results haven't been very good. What you said makes sense. I'll think about it some more..."

As the person in charge of culture, Ouyang Zhenwu was well aware of what Zhuang Rui was talking about. Although this matter could be used as a form of patriotic education, the pros and cons were hard to say. Not only would it lead to speculation on Chinese artworks, but it was also very likely to cause domestic tomb raiding and smuggling activities to run rampant again.

"Hey, Uncle, we don't need to publicize that, but my museum needs some publicity. This time I can bring back several hundred pieces of Ming and Qing dynasty imperial porcelain from abroad. That'll be a great opportunity to promote it..."

When Zhuang Rui heard that Ouyang Zhenwu wanted to reconsider, he immediately became anxious. If the museum became famous, more people would come to visit. Although he didn't really care about making a profit, he couldn't keep losing money, could he?

"Huh? Hundreds of items? What's going on?"

Ouyang Zhenwu was unaware of Zhuang Rui's exchange of collections with Ezkena, so he asked about it.

Zhuang Rui recounted the whole story in detail, and then explained that he should be able to exchange a batch of collections with the Guimet Museum in the near future, so in terms of both quantity and quality, his museum absolutely deserves to be called a "national" museum.

"Good, well done!"

After listening to Zhuang Rui's words, Ouyang Zhenwu slammed his hand on the table. Although Zhuang Rui had also given up Picasso's works in the process of this exchange, from the perspective of Chinese people's feelings, they naturally valued the cultural relics that had been lost from China more.

"Xiao Rui, I've made the decision. After your museum opens, we'll produce a special feature that details how those collections returned to the motherland. As for whether you want to make an appearance, that's up to you then..."

Ouyang Zhenwu's words reassured Zhuang Rui. His purpose was to promote the museum, and as for himself, he should keep a low profile. Huangfu Yun could handle this matter.

After leaving the restaurant, Zhuang Rui returned to the courtyard house. Ouyang Si Shao naturally did not accompany him. He had finally managed to get leave from his wife, and by now he was nowhere to be found.

It's already late April, and the garden is full of blooming flowers, filling the air with their fragrance. The lotus flowers in the pond are especially beautiful. Hao Long found some tadpoles somewhere and threw them into the pond. He believes that in a while, the yard will be filled with the croaking of frogs.

There's no place like home. After returning home, Zhuang Rui realized that although his courtyard house wasn't as spacious as Ezkena's castle, it was undoubtedly more lively.

Ouyang Wan, Zhang Ma, Li Sao, and others were building flower beds in the courtyard, while the white lion was chasing butterflies that flew into the garden. Upon seeing Zhuang Rui, it immediately ran over and affectionately rubbed its big head against him.

"It's time to find a wife for the white lion..."

Most Tibetan Mastiffs can mate when they are a little over one year old, but White Lion is nourished by Zhuang Rui's spiritual energy every day, so its bone development and growth are far superior to that of ordinary Tibetan Mastiffs. Seeing that he will be getting married soon, he can't let White Lion remain a bachelor forever.

However, last time I took White Lion to Pengcheng Mastiff Garden, there were so many female mastiffs, but White Lion didn't like any of them. It seems that I will have to make a trip to Tibet in the future to see if I can find a female mastiff with a pure bloodline. Of course, White Lion has to like her too.

After chatting with his mother for a few minutes in the yard, Zhuang Rui returned to the backyard.

He had refrained from taking anything out of the file bag the whole way, but now that he was seated, Zhuang Rui opened the bag and pulled out a stack of documents.

For someone at Ouyang Zhenwu's level, handling such matters is incredibly easy. Not only are the approval procedures completed, but even the business license required for opening a business is also provided.

Although there are now more than 300 private museums of all sizes in China, the approval process for museums is still quite strict. If Zhuang Rui were to go through the proper procedures, it would probably take him at least six months to obtain these items.

Feeling somewhat excited, Zhuang Rui took out his phone and dialed Huangfu Yun, who was probably in France at the moment.

"What? It's done?!"

Upon hearing Zhuang Rui's words, Huangfu Yun was so surprised he almost bit his tongue off. He had returned to China some time ago with the intention of opening a sword museum, but he was hampered by insufficient funds and the approval process. Huangfu Yun knew all too well how difficult it was to get a museum approved.

Huangfu Yun had suffered greatly from the bureaucratic style of some departments in China, and he simply couldn't believe that Zhuang Rui could have approved the procedures in just a few days.

"Yes, the paperwork and business license are all done, Brother Huangfu. I'll fax you a copy later, and you can talk to the Guimet Museum about exchanging collections tomorrow..."

It wasn't that Zhuang Rui was impatient, but rather that the museum's location was already readily available. With just a few minor modifications and the installation of some anti-theft measures, it could open for business. To be honest, the time it would take to order those exhibition stands and display cases would probably be longer than the time it would take to renovate the museum.

"Brother, don't make fun of me. Counterfeit goods won't work overseas..."

Huangfu Yun hadn't really believed that the museum's paperwork could be approved so quickly, and now that Zhuang Rui said that even the business license had been obtained, he was even more certain that Zhuang Rui's paperwork was not legitimate.

Although he had been abroad for seven or eight years, Huangfuyun was still very familiar with companies like Asia International Global Document Forgery Group in China. As long as you have money, they can even forge love letters from Clinton to Sister Furong for you.

"Hey, Brother Huangfu, it's really all done. The video from the auction a while ago was seen by some people, and they gave me some leeway. Would I lie to you about this?"

When Zhuang Rui heard that Huangfu Yun didn't believe him, he had to explain a few things to him, but he didn't mention his own connections.

"Damn, buddy, I've been begging and pleading to open a sword museum, but I can't get it done. And you..."

After hearing Zhuang Rui's words, Huangfu Yun believed him. Fortunately, Zhuang Rui did not mention that his uncle was the leader in charge of this area, otherwise Huangfu Yun would definitely have accused him of abusing his power for personal gain.

"It's not too late to open a sword museum later when you have a bigger collection. Let's get this exchange of collections settled first..."

Zhuang Rui laughed when he heard this. In this day and age, having money is not as good as having power. Of course, it is indeed as difficult as climbing to heaven for those who have neither money nor power to get things done. If Huangfu Yun were to follow the American system and formally apply for approval, it would not be impossible for it to be delayed for three to five years.

"Also, those items I wrote to you, and the artifacts the Frey family donated to the Guimet Museum and the Louvre, you must exchange them. In addition, Huangfu Yun, you might as well mention the donation of items to my museum by Mr. Ezkener of England..."

Zhuang Rui shifted the topic to the exchange of collections with the Guimet Museum. Although Britain and France have always been on good terms, they still have many differences of opinion on certain matters.

Zhuang Rui wanted Huangfu Yun to convey the following meaning: if a private individual in Britain could donate so many cultural relics, it would be unreasonable for a French museum to be stingy.

Moreover, for Picasso, who had always lived in Paris, France was like his second home, and the French people had a very high level of recognition for Picasso. The Guimet Museum's desire for the collection in Zhuang Rui's hands should be far greater than that for Ezkena, which could be used to negotiate the price.

"Hehe, brother, don't worry. The Guimet Museum has over 30,000 Chinese artifacts, but only about a thousand are on display. I'll have a good talk with them..."

Huangfu Yun laughed on the other end of the phone. If Zhuang Rui could get so many "donations" from Ezkena, it would be too embarrassing for him if he couldn't pull out a few hundred Chinese antiques from the Guimet Museum.

"I'm so happy today, I'm really happy today..."

After hanging up Huangfuyun's call, Zhuang Rui felt a huge weight lifted from his heart and sang as he arrived at the Central Court.

"Zhuang Rui, why are you so happy? Is it because I've been staying with your wife these past few days, and you've been enjoying your time on your own?"

As soon as Zhuang Rui entered the Intermediate People's Court, he saw Qin Xuanbing glaring at him angrily, with Xu the big star standing next to her, secretly laughing.

"Oh, wife, I'm more wronged than Dou E..."

Zhuang Rui immediately cried out in protest, then said, "My museum's business license has been issued, so you'll be the boss's wife from now on. Aren't you happy?"

Qin Xuanbing didn't seem particularly happy to hear this, but Xu Qing, who had been secretly laughing, frowned and said, "Zhuang Rui, where's your fourth brother? He just called me and said he was busy with the museum matter for you..."

Ouch!

Zhuang Rui was so focused on explaining to Qin Xuanbing that he forgot this young lady was also there. His head suddenly started spinning, but there was no other way. If he didn't help Ouyang Jun cover up the lie, he probably wouldn't be able to get anything from that young master in the future.

"Sister-in-law, I asked Fourth Brother to ask Brother Bai if he has any antiques he wants to sell. You know, my museum is dirt poor right now, and it can't function without some impressive items. Fourth Brother has a lot of connections, so I asked him to help me inquire..."

"real?"

Xu Qing thought it made some sense, but she knew her husband's character all too well, so she still found it hard to believe.

"Of course it's true, I'll call him if you don't believe me..."

Zhuang Rui was inwardly groaning, but he had to put on a brave face. As he spoke, he took out his phone and pretended to dial a number.

Xu Qing waved her hand to stop Zhuang Rui's actions and said, "Never mind, he's just busy with important business. He probably won't be back until he's had enough to drink..."

"Hey, maybe it's Fourth Brother calling..."

As Zhuang Rui was speaking, the phone in his hand rang.

"Hey, Lao Zhao, what's up? Still at the shop so late? Sister-in-law, we can talk about this later..."

After Zhuang Rui answered the phone, it was Zhao Hanxuan, the head manager of "Xuanrui Zhai". Zhuang Rui quickly greeted Xu Qing and Qin Xuanbing and went to the side to answer the phone.

"Hey Lao Zhao, your call came just in time. What's up?"

Zhuang Rui has absolutely no sense of being a boss. He hasn't been to the store for almost half a month, and the first thing he asks is what's going on.

"You're such a boss, tsk tsk, can't even my little buddy call you?"

Zhao Hanxuan laughed heartily on the other end of the phone. Zhuang Rui knew it was probably nothing serious and replied, "Come on, you've sold out all your old stock. You're making just as much as I am now, Lao Zhao. What's up? I just got back to Beijing..."

Zhuang Rui was still thinking about Ouyang Jun's matter. He had to let that person know first, otherwise, if the secret was exposed, the couple might make up after a fight, but the big star would definitely hold a grudge against him.

"It's nothing serious. It's like this, Monkey's always out there dabbling in things, you know. A few days ago he brought some people to the shop and brought a few bronze artifacts. They look quite old to me, but you know how I get ripped off on things like this. I wasn't sure, and since you should be back in the next few days, I thought I'd give you a call so you could come and take a look yourself..."

Zhao Hanxuan had thrown away his millions of dollars on a cast iron "bronze bodhisattva". He had never been very friendly to these door-to-door salesmen, but since Monkey was brought by Zhuang Rui and was in charge of the jewelry and antique business, he couldn't say much.

In addition, Zhuang Rui had previously acquired a valuable brick inkstone at the store, which showed that those who came to sell antiques weren't necessarily selling fakes. That's why they made the call to Zhuang Rui.