

Golden 681

Chapter 681 The King of Thieves (Part Two)

"Mr. Wei, this matter has really troubled you. You see, I haven't been able to help at all, but have only made things worse..."

Standing on the second floor of his family's real estate company's sales office, watching the busy renovation workers, Zhuang Rui felt a slight surge of excitement. In a little while, this would become his family's private museum.

After dealing with the two bronze wine vessels at noon, Zhuang Rui drove to the real estate company. This was his first visit since handing things over to Wei Ming in Paris.

Wei Ming just explained to him that most of these people are from security companies, installing various anti-theft measures.

For a museum, theft prevention is naturally of paramount importance. Many museums in China have experienced incidents of artifact theft, so Zhuang Rui specifically instructed Wei Ming to find the best security engineering company to handle the work.

As Zhuang Rui moved from the first floor to the second floor, he saw that cameras were installed in the corners of many walls. These cameras would be collected in the monitoring room and monitored by dedicated personnel.

In addition, hundreds of infrared sensor alarms have been installed in the more than 20,000 square meters of space. While it's not fair to say that flying insects can't get in, there are basically no blind spots.

It's worth noting that these security projects alone would have cost nearly three million RMB. However, after Chairman Ouyang acquired 10% of Zhuang Rui's shares, he had a change of heart and the real estate company paid for all of it.

"Mr. Zhuang, you're too kind. This little project is nothing. But you need to give me the dimensions and photos of all those antiques so I can find someone to make display cases for them..."

When the second boss of the real estate company arrived, Wei Ming, the general manager, naturally had to accompany him personally. However, although Zhuang Rui held the title of assistant to the general manager in the company, Wei Ming still addressed him as "Mr.", knowing that the title was not to be taken seriously.

After receiving Zhuang Rui's call, Wei Ming assigned a construction team to work with a security company to renovate the sales office. Fortunately, most of the properties had already been sold, so the impact was not significant.

Wei Ming took Zhuang Rui's instructions very seriously. He even hired someone with experience in museum decoration and management to join the company. It was that person who reminded him about things like creating display cases for exhibits.

Upon hearing Wei Ming's words, Zhuang Rui knew that the other party had put a lot of effort into his museum, and quickly said, "Thank you, Mr. Wei. I'll take pictures of all those items and send them to you later..."

The display case for a precious cultural relic must be custom-made, designed according to its size, and must also include lighting and other features to showcase the object's extraordinary nature.

Compared to installing an anti-theft system, custom-made display cases may take longer because those display cases are also anti-theft, with the glass and cabinet body being specially made.

Wei Ming nodded. He had delegated these tasks to his subordinates, so they didn't require much effort. He nodded and said, "Okay, Mr. Zhuang, don't worry, I will definitely hire the most professional company to make it."

Let me show you the locations of some of the museum's exits. Originally, the main entrance to this club was inside the residential area, but since it's being converted into a museum, it needs to be open to the public. I'm thinking of opening a new entrance at the back as the main entrance to the museum..."

"Excuse me, Mr. Wei, I need to take this call..."

As the two were talking, Zhuang Rui's phone suddenly rang.

Zhuang Rui glanced at the caller ID; it was Monkey calling. He asked curiously, "Monkey, what's up? Didn't I tell you to go out to dinner with Da Niu?"

"Brother Zhuang... I'm... I'm eating, but that guy surnamed Ren called and said... he has something else to sell..."

The monkey on the other end of the phone had clearly drunk quite a bit, and was now speaking haltingly, making Zhuang Rui frown.

"Hey monkey, go wash your face and get yourself ready before you call me..."

After hanging up the phone, Zhuang Rui pondered, "Could it be that the police have already taken care of it?"

A wanted criminal like Yu Zhenping, with around 100,000 yuan in hand, would probably not risk selling cultural relics again.

The only reason the monkey received Yu Zhenping's call to continue selling antiques could be that the police had probably managed to take away all the money Yu Zhenping had.

After thinking for a moment, Zhuang Rui picked up the phone and dialed Miao Feifei's number.

"Officer Miao, that person just called and wants to continue selling antiques. What should I do? Should I ask to see the goods?"

"Yes, not only do we want to see the goods, but they must be important artifacts; small things are not acceptable. Only then will he take you to the lair where the artifacts are hidden..."

Miao Feifei didn't seem surprised by the result and explained it to Zhuang Rui over the phone.

"Yes, I understand. Officer Miao, could you tell me how you made that person's money disappear?"

Zhuang Rui agreed verbally, but his heart was itching with curiosity. What method did the police use to make Yu Zhenping's hands empty?

"Don't ask about things that aren't related to the case. Alright, I'm busy. Just do as I say..."

Unexpectedly, the voice on the other end of the phone after Zhuang Rui asked the question almost made him drop his phone. What kind of person was this? It was like a magistrate who could set fires while forbidding ordinary people from even lighting lamps!

Actually, Zhuang Rui didn't know. It wasn't that Miao Feifei didn't want to talk about it, but rather that the matter was not something to be proud of, and it was simply impossible to say.

Miao Feifei's branch office has now been converted into the special task force office for the Yu family's major tomb raiding group. In addition to the members of the task force, a thin old man is now sitting in the office.

The old man looked to be in his sixties, but he had a good complexion. Half of his hair was gray, and he was a very ordinary person, no different from those retired workers who spent their days walking their birds and playing cards in the park.

The only difference was that his left hand was always tucked into his sleeve. If you took it out, you would find that the old man's entire left hand had been severed at the wrist, and his right hand only had three fingers, with his index finger and little finger also missing.

"Miao government, all this money is right here. I haven't touched a single penny..."

When the old man wasn't speaking, he appeared quite composed as he sat there, but as soon as he spoke, a fawning look appeared in his eyes and brows.

However, once you know the old man's background, you won't find his expression strange.

The old man's real name is Zuo Ya, but no one in the martial arts world would recognize him. However, Zuo Yidao is a very famous name, one of the five great thieves of the time, and also the oldest.

Zuo Yidao had a tough childhood, growing up in a lot of hardship. Although he was born in Beijing, he had seven or eight hungry children in his family, and he never had a full meal before the age of 12.

During the Great Leap Forward in 1958, when everyone was selling their possessions, they almost starved to death. Left with no other choice, Zuo Yidao left home and began a life of wandering, becoming a vagrant.

When this man was starving, he lost all sense of shame. When Zuo Yidao was wandering, he not only begged for food, but also became dishonest. Whenever he saw a house that was empty, he would steal a few things and run away, gradually developing a habit of petty theft.

When Zuo Yidao turned sixteen, he came to Zhengzhou. He was caught stealing something, but instead of the police or the victim, he was arrested by people of the same identity as him—a gang of thieves.

In the thieves' gang, Zuo Yidao was initially a petty thief who was bullied. When stealing, he could only stand guard on the sidelines and could not get close to the inner circle. When dividing the loot, he was lucky to get some food and drink and could not even dream of getting a share of the money.

After two years of doing odd jobs, the gang of thieves was busted. The thief king, who had come from before the liberation, fled to another city with Zuo Yidao. Out of consideration for their shared hardships, the thief king began to teach him his skills.

It took him half a year to master the skill of picking up coins from soapy water and to perfect his left-handed knife-wielding skills. However, at this time, his master was also arrested by the police and executed for his numerous crimes.

Zuo Yidao dared not stay in Zhengzhou any longer and wandered to Xi'an alone. With his superb thieving skills, he made a great name for himself. In the Northwest at that time, everyone knew him. He also had a hundred or so thieves under his command and became a king of thieves.

Although society was turbulent at the time, the nail that sticks out gets hammered down. Zuo Yidao was still targeted by the police, arrested, and sentenced to 10 years. By the time he was released, it was already the early 1970s.

The gang that Zuo Yidao founded before he went to prison had long since disappeared. Zuo Yidao, who did not want to leave Xi'an, inevitably clashed with the emerging forces in the area. His left hand was the one that was cut off. According to another gang leader, if you don't have your left hand, can you still be called Zuo Yidao?

After a disheartening escape from Xi'an, Zuo Yidao returned to Beijing, only to find himself with nowhere to go. Left with no other choice, he returned to his old ways and resumed his thieving ways.

What many people don't know is that Zuo Yidao's famous left-handed theft techniques are not his true trump card.

His real skill lies in his mouth. Zuo Yidao can hide five razor blades in his mouth at the same time, and can use the blades in his mouth to cut open the victim's clothes and wallet without anyone noticing, and steal the money inside.

To acquire this skill, Zuo Yidao suffered countless cuts and bled profusely in his mouth back then. As a result, after returning to Beijing, although he was illiterate and had no physical disabilities, he was still able to make a living and live a comfortable life.

However, once you've entered this line of work, you inevitably have to deal with your peers. After paying the price of losing two fingers on his right hand, Zuo Yidao successfully rose to the top and became a well-known thief king in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei-Shandong region.

Not only in Beijing, but even some big thieves who roam to Shandong and Hebei need to come to Beijing to pay homage to the local lord in order to make a living here. As for petty thieves who haven't paid homage to Zuo Yidao, if they are caught, their fingers will be cut off.

Zuo Yidao's opportunities to steal are becoming fewer and fewer. The tributes from his disciples and followers alone are enough for him to live on. This time, his reputation is even more renowned than it was in Xi'an back then.

For about five or six years, Zuo Yidao lived a very comfortable life. He not only bought several large houses, but also married a wife, had several children, and often took his wife and son out to restaurants. You have to understand that in those days, this was almost unimaginable.

However, his good fortune didn't last long. In the early 1980s, Zuo Yidao was arrested again because of his reputation. Although he hadn't committed many crimes in recent years, his reputation as the "King of Thieves" kept him in prison for another twenty years.

When Zuo Yidao emerged at the beginning of this century, he was already an old man nearing sixty.

There are still quite a few of Zuo Yidao's former disciples and followers. Some have already gone straight to the right path, while others are still engaging in shady dealings. Some even want to learn Zuo Yidao's unique skill of hiding a knife in his mouth and often try to offer him gifts. However, Zuo Yidao is too afraid of staying in prison and has refused all of them.

Fortunately, his son and daughter had grown up and did not despise him, so Zuo Yidao's later years were not too miserable.

For notorious thieves like Zuo Yidao, who are also the focus of the local police station's attention, the police often have heart-to-heart talks with the old man. Over time, Zuo Yidao, who had nothing better to do, actually started giving lessons to the Beijing anti-pickpocketing team.

Despite his advanced age, this old man is still incredibly nimble. Even seasoned anti-pickpocketing team members often fall victim to him during training sessions. That's why the task force specially invited him here to demonstrate his amazing pickpocketing skills once again.

Of course, Zuo Yidao's actions this time cannot be considered theft. It is illegal for an individual to take a gun and shoot someone, but it is law enforcement for a police officer to take a gun. The significance of these actions is naturally different.

"Miao government, look, can this old man walk now?"

Although he has been out of prison for several years and has been dealing with the police frequently in the past two years, he still can't shake the nickname "Left One-Sword".

Many people may not know that in prison, no matter what you want to do, you must first shout "Report!" and get approval before you can do it. Inmates usually address guards or armed police officers by adding their surname before their name and the word "government" after it.

For nearly twenty years, Zuo Yidao had lived like this, and he was afraid of anyone in uniform. So when he addressed Miao Feifei just now, he unconsciously used the prison term.

"Master Zuo, thank you for your help this time, but once you leave this place, please forget about it..."

The speaker was not Miao Feifei, but another middle-aged policeman. Although the starting point was righteous, the methods used were not exactly honorable, which is why he gave such an explanation.

"Absolutely, absolutely, please rest assured, government, I'll keep this matter to myself..."

After repeatedly assuring Zuo Yidao, he cautiously left the police station. His legs trembled at the thought of going to such a place.

Chapter 682 What a good person!

"Brother Zhuang... I'm fine now. I just got a few too many drinks from Brother Da Niu. Tell me what you want me to do. Oh, by the way, that guy surnamed Ren called again earlier, saying he wants to borrow some money. Should we lend it to him?"

After Zhuang Rui hung up on him, the monkey sobered up considerably. He ran to the bathroom, washed his face with cold water, and drank a lot of water. Feeling his tongue clear up, he finally dialed Zhuang Rui's number again.

"Borrow money?"

Zhuang Rui was stunned for a moment upon hearing this. It seemed that Yu Zhenping was really at his wit's end and had nowhere else to turn, actually asking to borrow money from someone he had only ever done antique trading with once.

Zhuang Rui thought for a moment and then asked, "Monkey, how much money do you have left?"

"Brother Zhuang, I just withdrew 2,000 yuan from the account. Should I go and get some more?"
Monkey replied.

"No need to get it. We don't have a deep relationship with him. Here's what we'll do: you give that person 1,000 yuan later. Don't say anything else, just tell him to think of you if he gets anything good..."

1,000 yuan is neither a lot nor a little. Even if Yu Laoba takes this money, it won't last long. In the end, he will still come to me for the transaction.

"I understand, Brother Zhuang. I'll call him right now. How can he even ask to borrow 1,000 yuan..."

Monkey agreed on the phone. After spending a few months in Beijing, Monkey's horizons had broadened. He didn't even realize that when he was swindling and cheating people at the Pengcheng antique market, he might not even earn 1,000 yuan a month.

...

"I'll fuck you!"

The Cantonese he learned from Yu Laoliu did nothing to alleviate Yu Zhenping's frustration at the moment. He had come to Beijing to sell antiques, risking his life.

But Yu Zhenping never expected that the money, which came quickly, would disappear even faster. In the blink of an eye, the 100,000 yuan was stolen by that old thief.

Yu Laoba's mind was blank. He felt like he was going crazy and wanted to take out his pistol and fire a few shots at the crowd. Damn it, do you think it's easy for me to make a living?

The thief was despicable, but he couldn't call the police. Looking at the uniformed security guards beside him, Yu Laoba still had to hide against the wall, feeling incredibly frustrated.

Left with no other choice, Yu Laoba remembered what the monkey had said before he left, so he took out his phone and called the monkey again.

Of course, such a shameful thing couldn't be talked about. Yu Laoba only said that he urgently needed the money and was a little short of cash, so he wanted to ask Monkey to lend him some money first.

Fortunately, after waiting for about 10 minutes, Monkey called again, telling him a location to pick up the money. Yu Laoba didn't care about anything else at this point and rushed to the restaurant Monkey had mentioned after receiving the call.

Yu Laoba had also suspected that this might be a trap set by the young man surnamed Zhuang, who might have traded the money to him first and then had someone steal it. However, after careful analysis, Yu Laoba dismissed this suspicion.

Firstly, Zhuang Rui has an extraordinary demeanor and doesn't seem like the type to do such trivial matters. Secondly, Zhuang Rui's shop in Panjiayuan is worth at least a million yuan, so he has no reason to hire a master-level thief to deal with him for a mere hundred thousand yuan.

After this incident, Yu Laoba could only swallow his anger and accept his bad luck. He blamed himself for holding onto his money so tightly, which made him a target for malicious people.

"Mr. Ren, come... come, sit down and have a few drinks..."

The monkey is quite adept at enjoying life now. When eating at a restaurant, it even knows to go to a private room. When it saw "Boss Ren" walk in, it stood up to greet him, even though it was disdainful in its heart.

However, if the monkey knew that "Ren" was filled with indignation and gripping the gun handle tightly, it would definitely be so scared that it would crawl under the table.

"Mr. Ren, did you borrow money from loan sharks and then disappear in no time? Hey, look at my mouth, pretend I didn't ask. Come on, let's drink..."

The monkey and the ox weren't drinking anything fancy, just 56-proof Beijing Erguotou. They picked up a teacup, poured themselves a full glass, and handed it to "Boss Ren."

"Brother Hou, you see... I have something to do later, so let's skip the wine..."

Looking at the wine offered by the monkey, Yu Zhenping's throat bobbed. People who frequently dig up graves are all heavy drinkers, and the underground is full of yin energy, so they need wine to embolden themselves and protect themselves.

Ever since escaping from Shaanxi, Yu Zhenping has lived in constant fear. Even in Zhengzhou, he kept switching between three houses where he hid his antiques, and he dared not turn on the lights at night, let alone drink alcohol.

Coupled with his lack of money, Yu Zhenping hadn't touched a drop of alcohol for more than half a year. Now, smelling the pungent aroma of alcohol, he was already a little dizzy.

"Hey Mr. Ren, that's not very nice of you. All that praising you to the boss earlier was for nothing. Come on... let's drink this down!"

After making the call to Zhuang Rui, Monkey drank a few more cups with Da Niu. He was already six or seven parts drunk. Once the alcohol hit him, he forgot what Zhuang Rui had told him. He grabbed "Boss Ren" and insisted that he drink this cup of wine.

Old Niu, standing to the side, joined in the jeering, since everyone knew his "boss" identity was fake anyway.

"Okay, I'll do it!"

Encouraged by the monkey, Yu Laoba's stomach was itching for more alcohol. He took the cup, tilted his head back, and gulped down nearly four ounces of liquor in a few loud "glug-glug" sounds.

"Good...good capacity for alcohol, Mr. Ren is a straightforward man. Here, have some food to calm down, and then have another drink..."

Anyone who has drunk too much alcohol likes to urge others to drink more, and Monkey was no exception. He immediately filled Yu Laoba's cup again and asked the waiter to add another bowl and chopsticks.

Although Yu Zhenping intended not to drink, he had been eating instant noodles for more than half a year. Now, seeing the table full of dishes, not only did his craving for alcohol flare up, but his stomach also began to rumble with hunger.

However, Yu Zhenping's alcohol tolerance was far superior to that of Monkey and Da Niu. After downing another glass, he turned around and offered the two of them a drink. He was fine, but the two of them were practically sliding off the table.

"Hey, Brother Hou, about that matter I mentioned, what do you think..."

Although he had just been robbed, Yu Zhenping still had his code of honor. He didn't want to take advantage of Monkey's drunkenness to grope his pockets. While Monkey was still somewhat conscious, he quickly brought up the matter of borrowing money.

"What's up? Want to have another drink? Come on, who's afraid of who?"

If Zhuang Rui saw the monkey's appearance right now, he would definitely slap it across the face. This guy had completely forgotten the things he had told him to do.

"No, Brother Hou, what about the money..."

Yu Zhenping was also anxious. At this moment, he wished he could return the food and drinks on the table, exchange them for money, and run away. Even if he were to make another transaction with the other party, he couldn't choose Beijing as the location. This was the capital city, and there were so many thieves here.

"money?"

The monkey glanced at Yu Zhenping through his drunken eyes and said, "By the way, Lao Ren, let's not beat around the bush. Tell me, do you have any other good stuff?"

Upon hearing the monkey's words, Yu Zhenping's heart stirred, and he asked, "Of course there are a few more good things, but I wonder what you're buying them for, Brother Hou? Are you keeping them for yourself or reselling them? Also, Brother Hou, isn't your boss a bit too stingy?"

"Hey, Lao...Lao Ren, don't...don't think we're such good friends. If you...if you say that again, I'll...I'll turn against you! My boss isn't petty. This...this business has to be done by the rules, you...you agree...right? Why don't you try selling to someone else and see what price they're offering..."

Upon hearing this, the monkey was displeased. Who was Zhuang Rui? Zhuang Rui was none other than his mentor, the one who brought him, this thoroughbred, out of Pengcheng. If anyone dared to speak ill of Zhuang Rui, the monkey would absolutely fight to the death.

Of course, this guy was really drunk; he was completely under the influence of alcohol, and you can see he couldn't even speak properly.

"I...I'm telling you, my boss is planning to open a museum, and antiques...this stuff, the more the better, Lao Ren...you...don't worry, my boss is definitely...a very discerning person, he won't shortchange you on the price. If you really have any, you...you have to tell me first, it'll also...it'll give me face in front of Brother Zhuang..."

To be honest, although Monkey's words were drunken ramblings, they did dispel the last trace of doubt in Yu Zhenping's mind. If Monkey could still act when he was this drunk, he could become an Oscar-winning actor in Hollywood.

"I do have the items. If your boss is interested, Brother Hou, we can get in touch again when I get back. Don't worry, if I'm selling, I'll definitely give you priority..."

This wine really does bring people closer together. At this moment, Yu Zhenping also found the monkey more agreeable and, unusually, spoke his mind. In their line of work, it's better to do business with familiar clients than strangers; it's more reassuring to do business with old customers.

"Alright, Lao...Lao Ren, you're really generous. I only have 2,000 yuan on me today, you...you can take it all. If...if it's not enough, just let me know, and I'll...I'll get you some more..."

Monkey's brain was practically mush from drinking. He probably wouldn't even hesitate if Yu Zhenping asked to borrow his wife right now. He readily pulled out the two thousand yuan from his pocket and slammed it heavily on the table.

"What a kind person!"

Yu Zhenping was deeply moved. Who says there's no true affection in the world? Yu Zhenping immediately put away the money, helped the monkey who had slid off the chair to the floor, and then turned and left the private room.

When he reached the door, Yu Zhenping asked about the price of the food and drinks on the table. Upon hearing that it cost more than 900 yuan, Yu Zhenping immediately abandoned his idea of paying for the monkey's meal, slipped out of the hotel, and disappeared without a trace.

Chapter 683-684 Double Happiness

"Zhuang... Brother Zhuang, I... I think I did something wrong..."

Zhuang Rui had just returned to the courtyard house from the real estate company when he received a call from Monkey. Ignoring his playful antics with the white lion that pounced on him, Zhuang Rui asked, "What happened? Did you not lend the money to that person?"

"No...no, Brother Zhuang, you said you only wanted to lend him 1,000 yuan, but I think I lent him 2,000..."

The monkey slept for over three hours in the restaurant and had just woken up. He checked his pockets and found he had no money. Still half-asleep, he vaguely remembered giving all his money to the man surnamed Ren.

If Da Niu hadn't had the 10,000 yuan Zhuang Rui had given him, Monkey wouldn't have been able to leave the restaurant today. After paying the bill, Monkey found an ATM, withdrew 2,000 yuan, gave it to Da Niu, and then dialed Zhuang Rui's number.

"2000 it is, Monkey. You can take the money from the shop and just tell Old Zhao. By the way, read more books during this time. When the museum opens, you might be transferred to work there..."

When Zhuang Rui heard that the monkey had given Yu Zhenping 2,000 yuan, he didn't pay much attention. These days, everything costs money, from eating and drinking to sleeping. Even if you're frugal, 2,000 yuan isn't enough to cover much of your time.

On the other hand, the police have been keeping an eye on Yu Laoba, and they might just track him down to his hideout without him having to make a second transaction.

Hearing that Zhuang Rui didn't blame him, Monkey felt relieved and said, "I understand, Brother Zhuang, don't worry, we're just like bricks in the revolution, ready to be moved wherever needed..."

"You brat, is that brick from the latrine?"

Zhuang Rui laughed upon hearing this, teased the monkey, and hung up the phone.

Although the monkey's role hasn't been fully demonstrated yet, Da Xiong has been a great help at Xuanrui Zhai. Even if Zhao Hanxuan leaves now, the business of the Four Treasures of the Study can continue.

Zhuang Rui and Bai Shi were playing around when they entered the courtyard. They saw their mother pruning the flowerbeds, and Zhang Ma and Li Sao picking vegetables at the kitchen door. They couldn't help but ask, "Mom, where are Xuan Bing and Sister-in-law?"

When Ouyang Wan saw her son come in, she stopped what she was doing and replied, "She said she was going to get some kind of beauty treatment and wanted me to come with her. I'm so old, what's the point of getting beauty treatments? Xiao Rui, your brother-in-law and the others will be arriving tonight, go pick them up at the station..."

Zhuang Rui said with a smile, "Mom, you're not old at all. If you dress up a little, people would believe you're my older sister..."

"This child is talking nonsense. Alright, it's almost time. Go pick up Guodong..."

Ouyang Wan smiled and patted Zhuang Rui. She was very satisfied with her current life. Every morning and evening, she would go for a stroll in the park with Zhang Ma and Li Sao. The only annoying thing was that there were quite a few retired and widowed old men.

Zhuang Rui drove to pick up Zhuang Min and the others from the station. By the time they returned to the courtyard, it was already dark. Ouyang Wan and Zhang Ma had prepared a table full of dishes and were waiting at home. Xu Qing and Qin Xuanbing had also returned.

When Peng Fei's younger sister, Ya Ya, heard that Nan Nan had come, she ran over from the front yard, and the courtyard became lively in an instant.

Zhuang Rui poured Zhao Guodong a glass of beer and asked, "Brother-in-law, how's the family business?"

"That's right, our 4S store opened early and has the best business in Pengcheng. Those auto repair shops are also doing well. Xiao Si and the others are all running the business now, so I've actually had to manage it less..."

Zhao Guodong took a sip of wine, his face full of smiles. More than a year ago, he never dreamed that he could live such a life. Not only did he own a house and a car, but everyone called him Boss Zhao when he went out, which made him very proud.

However, Zhao Guodong also knew that all of this was given by his brother-in-law. Although he had known Zhuang Rui for many years, Zhao Guodong had a feeling that he could see through Zhuang Rui more and more.

From having nothing to becoming a billionaire, and now even owning a private jet, all in just over a year, Zhuang Rui's rise to wealth seems almost too legendary, even considering the increasing youthfulness of the rich.

After hearing Zhao Guodong's words, Zhuang Rui thought for a moment and said, "Brother-in-law, if you're not too busy in Pengcheng, come and stay in Beijing. I'm opening a museum soon, and we're short-staffed right now..."

"Museums? Xiao Rui, I know absolutely nothing about those things..."

Zhao Guodong was taken aback when he heard this. He was fine with listening to the sound of an engine and dealing with cars, but asking him to manage a museum? That would be a bit of a stretch.

"Brother-in-law, we're just asking you to do management. There are people who understand the professional aspects. You and my sister can both come over, and it'll be more lively with the whole family living together..."

Zhuang Rui considered that Huangfu Yun, as his private lawyer, might be busy with other things in the future. This museum was his largest investment project, so Zhuang Rui naturally wanted to find someone he knew to look after it so he could feel at ease.

"this....."

Zhao Guodong hesitated upon hearing this. To be honest, he didn't really want to leave Pengcheng, because his whole family lived there. Whether he could adapt to life in Beijing was another matter.

"Xiao Rui, don't force your brother-in-law. It doesn't matter where he is. Beijing and Pengcheng aren't far apart. He can come over often..."

Although Ouyang Wan also wanted her daughter and son-in-law to move in, she knew that Zhao Guodong's parents were still alive and he had many siblings. If they lived close by, they could take better care of him. If they really came to Beijing, he might not be able to focus his attention here.

"Xiao Rui, let me think about this. Besides, something came up at the auto repair shop, and they need my help to make the decision. Let's talk about it later..."

Zhao Guodong thought for a moment, then said, "Nannan will be starting school in a year. Let her go to school in Beijing with her mother then, since the education here is better..."

"Oh, that's great! I can live with Grandma now! Sister Yaya, I want to go to the same school as you..." Nannan shouted happily after hearing her father's words.

"You ungrateful brat, your parents have spoiled you for nothing..."

Upon hearing her daughter's words, Zhuang Min tapped Nannan's head with her chopsticks in an annoyed tone, causing everyone at the table to burst into laughter.

"Hmm? Mom, I need to take this call. You guys eat first..."

Just as they were chatting and laughing, Zhuang Rui's phone suddenly rang. After glancing at the number, Zhuang Rui frowned.

"Why are there so many things to do when the family is having a meal together?" Ouyang Wan glanced at her son with dissatisfaction.

"Cough cough, almost done..."

Zhuang Rui walked out of the restaurant with his phone in his hand. He dared not ignore the call; if he hung up, Zhuang Rui was certain that Officer Miao would be at his house within five minutes.

As soon as the call connected, Miao Feifei's voice was accusatory and questioning: "Zhuang Rui, what's going on with Yu Zhenping meeting with your people this afternoon?!"

"What? What happened?"

Zhuang Rui pretended to be confused. He should have informed the police about the matter of Monkey lending Yu Zhenping 1,000 yuan, but he was busy looking at his museum at the time and forgot about it after hanging up with Monkey.

"Yu Zhenping hasn't returned to his rented place yet. Tell me quickly, what exactly did he do with Monkey this afternoon?" The voice on the phone sounded a little impatient.

"Hey, Officer Miao, didn't your police force have someone watching him?" Zhuang Rui asked, puzzled.

There was a moment of silence on the other end of the phone before someone reluctantly said, "I...I lost them..."

"Hey, Officer Miao, you guys are so capable of making him lose all his money, how come you can't even keep up with a person?"

Upon hearing this, Zhuang Rui immediately laughed gleefully. "I'm asking you something, and it's confidential. You guys are so capable, how come you can even lose track of a living person?"

Actually, you can't really blame the police. Yu Zhenping was such a small target, and when he left the restaurant, he deliberately lingered around the school gate again. It was right around school let out in the evening, and he blended into the crowd so easily that he was hard to spot.

Although there were seven or eight investigators following Yu Zhenping, the sudden appearance of hundreds of students made it impossible to pinpoint his location. The investigators who were stationed near Yu Zhenping's rented apartment waited for several hours without seeing him return, which led them to conclude that Yu Zhenping had likely left Beijing.

Having lost track of their target, Miao Feifei was already under immense pressure. Zhuang Rui's mockery triggered an outburst, and she retorted sharply, "Mr. Zhuang Rui, please answer my question, or you will receive a police summons. We have reason to suspect that you deliberately assisted Yu Zhenping in escaping our surveillance in order to secretly trade cultural relics with him..."

"Fine, you police have a lot of power, you can summon me. Alright, that's settled then..."

Upon hearing Miao Feifei's words, Zhuang Rui immediately flew into a rage. "Why is she taking her anger out on me when she's so incompetent? I'm not going to put up with this anymore!" With that, Zhuang Rui hung up the phone.

Just as he was about to go back for dinner, Zhuang Rui's phone rang again. He saw that it was Miao Feifei calling again, and Zhuang Rui immediately pressed the reject button. He may not be a big official, but he has a lot of power. I don't evade taxes or break the law, so what can you do to me?

"Zhuang Rui, I apologize for what I said earlier. I didn't mean to blame you, but we need to know what happened this afternoon that led to the suspect's disappearance. We hope you can cooperate..."

The phone didn't ring again, but Zhuang Rui received a text message. Based on his understanding of Miao Feifei, the somewhat stiff tone of the message meant that Miao Feifei was apologizing to him.

"Officer Miao, this afternoon Yu Zhenping called Monkey and said he was penniless and wanted to borrow some money. I felt it wouldn't be right to refuse him, so I asked Monkey to lend him 1,000 yuan. As for where he went, I really don't know..."

After thinking for a moment, Zhuang Rui made the call again. Of course, he didn't mention that he asked to borrow 1,000, but Monkey gave him 2,000 directly.

"You... why didn't you notify us about such an important situation?"

Upon hearing Zhuang Rui's words, Miao Feifei immediately became anxious again. If Yu Zhenping had money, he might continue to go undercover, and all the work the task force had done would be in vain.

"Hey, Officer Miao, I'm not a police officer. I'm usually so busy with other things. I'd forget about this little thing as soon as I mentioned it. Besides, I only have so much money. After buying a train ticket, I probably won't have much left. Do you think he won't come back to me?"

Zhuang Rui was oblivious to the consequences of his actions; he didn't know that the police could make such a blunder, which is why he spoke with such confidence.

“You... I have nothing more to say to you, Zhuang Rui. I'm telling you, if Yu Zhenping contacts you again, you must notify us immediately...”

Miao Feifei angrily hung up the phone. Although Zhuang Rui's words made some sense, with Yu Zhenping missing, the matter was no longer under the control of the police. If she had known it would turn out this way, she would have preferred to arrest him earlier.

Although they have set up checkpoints at major long-distance bus stations and train stations to arrest the person, the task force knows that the person has extremely strong counter-surveillance capabilities, and the hope of catching him is very slim.

They guessed correctly. At that moment, Yu Zhenping was sitting on a coal train, eating roast chicken and drinking baijiu. With his build and dark face, even if someone saw him, they would think he was a homeless child.

As time went by, apart from the beginning when Miao Feifei would frequently call Zhuang Rui to ask if Yu Zhenping had called, Miao Feifei continued to do so.

However, after more than two months, the task force was on the verge of being disbanded, and Yu Zhenping seemed to have vanished into thin air, leaving no trace.

Zhuang Rui didn't care and continued living his life as usual. Zhao Guodong couldn't bear to leave his relatives in Pengcheng and ultimately didn't stay in Beijing, but he left his daughter with Ouyang Wan, which brought the old man a lot of joy.

The renovation of Dingguang Museum is complete, except for a few special display cases that are not yet finished. It is estimated that the museum will be able to open in another half month. Zhuang Rui has been busy there these days, and the collections in the basement have been transported to the museum in batches.

Huangfu Yun arrived in Beijing more than a month ago, accompanied by Basguimi, the director of the Guimet Museum.

To express his sincerity, Basjime not only agreed to Zhuang Rui's conditions, including more than ten paintings and calligraphic works donated by Frey and the Western Han Dynasty "White Jade Tiger" proposed by Zhuang Rui as trade goods, but also gave Zhuang Rui an additional batch of Dunhuang cultural relics.

This collection of cultural relics includes more than 30 fragmented Buddhist statues from Dunhuang, more than 20 murals stolen from Dunhuang, and most importantly, 130 volumes of Buddhist scriptures that were lost at the time.

Huangfu Yun did not disappoint Zhuang Rui's trust and obtained so many precious cultural relics. The price he paid was seven Picasso sketches.

Everyone has their own preferences, so it's hard to say who benefited and who lost out in this transaction.

After receiving notification from Zhuang Rui, the Ministry of Culture published a special report on the matter. The report caused a stir in the national collecting, archaeological, and Buddhist communities. Countless collectors and eminent monks from all over the country rushed to Beijing to request the appreciation of those Buddhist scriptures.

Jin Pangzi's teacher, at the advanced age of ninety-three, personally went to Zhuang Rui's residence to examine the batch of Buddhist scriptures and ultimately confirmed that they were indeed scriptures lost from Dunhuang.

In addition to handing over a certificate of authenticity, the old man also volunteered to nominate a name for Zhuang Rui's museum. The old man, who had not written large characters in a long time, insisted on writing large characters directly to avoid Zhuang Rui having to enlarge them.

The old man spent more than three hours writing just a few simple names. Even in Zhuang Rui's living room with the air conditioning on full blast, the old man was still exhausted. If it weren't for Zhuang Rui's spiritual energy, he might have really gotten into serious trouble.

Several experts from the collecting and archaeology fields, as well as eminent monks from the Buddhist community, were also present at the time. As soon as the news spread, Zhuang Rui's museum became a

sensation in the entire antique collecting circle even before it opened. Many collectors also frequently invited Zhuang Rui to participate in their self-organized activities, keeping him extremely busy.

As for the museum's security, the outer perimeter was handled by a reputable security company in Beijing, while the internal monitoring and patrols were conducted by Hao Long's comrades, a total of twelve people, divided into three shifts for 24-hour patrols.

Hao Long's comrades-in-arms all came from special forces divisions. Their backgrounds were impeccable, their skills were exceptional, and they were very familiar with security work. They could operate and use the surveillance equipment that Zhuang Rui found so complex. Recruiting them cost Zhuang Rui a considerable amount of money.

"Hey...hey, you guys, be careful. Never mind, I'll do it myself..."

Huangfu Yun, the executive deputy curator, has been practically a porter these past few days. To outsiders, his precious swords are just scrap metal, so they don't pay much attention when handling them. But Huangfu Yun is heartbroken. He personally puts almost every sword on the shelf or in the glass case.

Zhuang Rui, amused by what he saw, said, "Brother Huangfu, this isn't porcelain, it's not that precious. Come, have some water..."

"Come on, these treasures of mine are more precious than porcelain. If the patterns on this sword get scratched, you'll polish them back for me?"

Huangfu Yun glared at him irritably, carefully placed the Shangfang sword, which was believed to be from the Ming Dynasty, on the shelf, and turned to take the bottled water that Zhuang Rui handed him.

"Brother Huangfu, how about it? Taking on the role of head of this museum isn't too much of a burden for you, is it..."

Watching the workers installing the display cases in an orderly manner under the guidance of the security guards, Zhuang Rui asked with pride.

Although the Dingguang Museum is not comparable to many large museums in Beijing in terms of land area, it is in no way inferior to, and may even be superior in, the quantity and quality of its collection.

The ceramics exhibition hall features a blue-and-white porcelain jar depicting Guiguzi descending the mountain and black pottery from the Longshan culture, complemented by porcelain from the five famous kilns of the Song Dynasty and official kilns of the Ming and Qing Dynasties. In addition, there are hundreds of pieces of Qing Dynasty porcelain. The quality of its collection is second to none in China.

The sword and knife exhibition hall, which features the "Dingguang Sword" as its signature piece, brings together stone axes from ancient civilizations to bronzes from the Shang and Zhou dynasties, and iron swords from the Han and Tang dynasties, showcasing a grand history of warfare.

Furthermore, the sword exhibition hall also features medieval waders, cross swords, two-handed swords, and large two-handed swords up to 4 meters in length used for slashing.

In addition, there are spears that continue the Roman style, scimitars in the Persian style, chainmail made of round, diamond or small square metal plates sewn onto leather or thick cloth, and shields that are firmly fixed together with iron bars and rivets. The cross patterns on the shields make their origins immediately apparent.

This was also the first time Zhuang Rui had seen Huangfu Yun's collection. What interested him most were the several strangely shaped helmets. Most of these helmets were round or conical, with a strip of iron extending down from the front edge to protect the nose.

One of them is said to be a 12th-century domed helmet, with a slit at the front for the eyes, covering the entire head and face, and many small holes were drilled into the panel for breathing.

Upon seeing these helmets and weapons, Zhuang Rui couldn't help but picture the classic character of Don Quixote.

This is also the only sword and knife exhibition hall in China. Although it is not open yet, many collectors from Shandong, Hebei, Tianjin and other places, as well as cold weapon enthusiasts who have heard the news, have already used their connections to ask Zhuang Rui to open it to them in advance. Even Fatty Jin has made several phone calls, wanting to be the first to see it.

Mr. Ma, who pioneered the concept of private museums in China, also called Zhuang Rui, expressing his willingness to share his insights on private museums with Zhuang Rui. Yesterday, Zhuang Rui, along with Huangfu Yun, had a meal with Mr. Ma and received much guidance, from which they benefited greatly.

The calligraphy and painting exhibition hall is also filled with famous artists. Not only are there a series of Qing court paintings, but after Song Jun heard that Zhuang Rui wanted to open a museum, he told his father. The old man not only returned Tang Bohu's "Li Duanduan Picture", but also sent several works by famous Ming and Qing masters, which greatly enriched the collection of the calligraphy and painting exhibition hall.

Moreover, Zhuang Rui has another trump card: the remaining thirteen Picasso drawings. Although domestic collectors have been bidding on oil paintings by some well-known foreign painters in recent years, Zhuang Rui's collection of works by top masters such as Van Gogh and Picasso is absolutely unprecedented and unique.

With these collections, and the fact that some departments intentionally or unintentionally mentioned the rarity of Zhuang Rui's collection during the exchange of collections between the Dingguang Museum and the Guimet Museum, the collection has become a hot topic on the Internet. Many collectors from all over the country have been calling to inquire about the opening date of Zhuang Rui's museum.

However, Zhuang Rui appeared here to say goodbye to Huangfu Yun, because he and Qin Xuanbing had agreed to take advantage of the ten or so days of free time before the museum opened to go to Hainan to take wedding photos.

Zhuang Rui has passed his graduate school interview and will begin his graduate studies in two months. Before that, Zhuang Rui decided to get married. Qin Xuanbing has been living in his house for almost half a year under the title of his fiancée, and Zhuang Rui feels bad about it.

The opening of the museum and the wedding night were both very important events in Zhuang Rui's life, representing that his career and love had reached a ripe and natural conclusion. In Ouyang Jun's words, this was called a double blessing.

Chapter 685-686: The Shadow Reappears

Zhuang Rui's current collection of cultural relics is still too small. Even including Huangfu Yun's swords and knives collection, it totals less than 1,500 pieces. Compared with those large museums that have tens of thousands of exquisite collections, its cultural heritage is far inferior.

In terms of size, Zhuang Rui's Dingguang Museum, although not as large as the newly built National Museum, is comparable to, and even surpasses, other national-level museums.

In the previous plan, Zhuang Rui planned to open a total of 6 exhibition halls according to the categories of antiques, namely the calligraphy and painting hall, ceramics hall, swords hall, bronzes hall, antique wood art hall and miscellaneous exhibition hall. However, judging from the current situation, it would be good if half of the exhibition halls could be open to the public.

Of the museum's more than 20,000 square meters of space, only a little over half is actually in use. According to Zhuang Rui's vision, the calligraphy and painting museum currently lacks antiques such as rubbings, inscriptions, and ink traces, and can only be considered to be barely operating. A large number of related items still need to be added.

While the ceramics museum boasts Yuan blue and white porcelain as its crown jewel, it has very few ceramic pieces from before the Yuan dynasty. For example, it doesn't even have a single piece of the famous Tang tri-color pottery, resulting in a significant gap in dating and a lack of Han and Tang dynasty ceramics.

The only place that can be considered to have a rich collection and be presentable is the sword and saber exhibition hall. However, it seems that only the "Dingguang Sword" belongs to Zhuang Rui, while the rest are all Huangfu Yun's collection.

As for the bronze ware exhibition hall, Zhuang Rui only had a three-legged bronze ding he bought from Jinan, which was a small and inconspicuous item. The Dingguang sword was a bronze ware, but according to its intended use, it had already been assigned to the swords and sabers exhibition hall.

The antique woodcraft hall and the miscellaneous items hall were completely empty, with only signs hanging on them. The few pieces of Ming and Qing dynasty gold and silver artifacts and jewelry that Zhuang Rui brought back from Myanmar were simply not enough to support the collection needed for an entire exhibition hall.

But there was no other way. Zhuang Rui planned to travel all over the country to antique markets when he had some free time, sifting through them all to find a batch of antiques that had been hidden away and scattered among the people, and then decorate his own museum.

Major domestic auction houses are also Zhuang Rui's main targets. Although with his current wealth, he is not yet able to compete with some of the big collectors, after a while, when his various investments start to pay off, Zhuang Rui will definitely be able to dominate the domestic auction market.

"Brother Huangfu, I'll leave the museum to you for the next few days. I heard there's an auction in Hanhai in a few days, go check it out. If you find anything good, bid on it, and try to get more of the cheaper little items..."

During his time back in Beijing, Zhuang Rui spent approximately 10 million RMB. He now only has a little over 20 million RMB left, and he still owes Huangfu Yun his wages.

What kind of items are you photographing? What price range?

Huangfu Yun quickly adapted to his new role. Since returning to China, he not only took charge of the museum's affairs but also reorganized all of Zhuang Rui's businesses.

However, Huangfuyun suggested that Zhuang Rui should try not to divert funds from Pengcheng's several industries and Qin Ruilin's funds, in order to prevent the cash flow from being cut off in case of unforeseen events.

This is also the main reason why Zhuang Rui has been short of money recently. Otherwise, with Qin Ruilin's gold-making ability, he should have made at least 20 to 30 million in the past few months.

"Let's mainly photograph modern calligraphy and paintings, as well as ceramics from the Han and Tang dynasties. Those other exhibition halls won't be open anytime soon, so let's supplement our coverage with the ones that are already open..."

Zhuang Rui paused here, thought for a moment, and then continued, "20 million, that's the most I can give you..."

After giving Huangfu Yun 20 million, Zhuang Rui probably only has three or four million RMB left. However, the second Myanmar jadeite auction this year is in full swing, and in about ten days, he will

receive his first profit from his jadeite mine. According to Hu Rong's estimate, it shouldn't be less than 300 million RMB.

If it weren't for the numerous domestic affairs he was tied up with, Zhuang Rui would have liked to participate in this auction again. To him, gambling on stones was tantamount to robbing people. However, Zhuang Rui didn't know that if he went again this time, it probably wouldn't be so easy.

Many people were eager to follow Zhuang Rui and take advantage of the situation, so he was sure to be surrounded by a bunch of swarms of flies. Zhuang Rui's absence from this auction was a huge disappointment to many.

With the money from Myanmar as a foundation, plus the jade mine output from Xinjiang next month, Zhuang Rui felt much more confident. He planned to dominate the domestic auction market in the next few years, aside from his studies.

The Dingguang Museum currently has a gap in its collection of calligraphy and paintings by some modern masters. If the calligraphy and paintings are not too large, the prices are not too high. Therefore, Zhuang Rui plans to have Huangfu Yun bid for some of them to enrich the museum's exhibits.

As for Han and Tang dynasty ceramics, they are relatively rougher in production compared to those from the Yuan, Song, Ming, and Qing dynasties. Apart from Tang tri-color ware, their prices are not very high. The reason for auctioning these kinds of antiques is simply that Zhuang Rui does not want the ceramics museum to have too obvious a gap in dating.

"Okay, I got it. But bro, you'd better pay me my wages later, I'm almost out of money to go out and pick up girls..."

Huangfu Yun nodded in agreement and jokingly told Zhuang Rui with a smile.

As the two were chatting, a patrol of four security guards walked towards Zhuang Rui. Unlike the uniformed security guards in China, they were all dressed in black suits and had wireless headsets hanging on their ears, looking exceptionally smart.

This was something Zhuang Rui learned from abroad: thieves who dare to steal from museums are definitely not deterred by a few security guard uniforms. Moreover, Zhuang Rui thought the uniforms were too ugly and would lower the level of his museum.

"Hello, Mr. Zhuang! Hello, Director Huangfu!"

As the leader in a black suit walked past Zhuang Rui, he nodded slightly to greet Zhuang Rui and Huangfu Yun, but his eyes remained fixed on the workers installing the display cases, displaying a very professional demeanor.

"Hey, Cris, don't be so nervous. Many artifacts haven't been put on display yet. How are you doing here? Are you getting used to working here?"

Zhuang Rui smiled and greeted the man in the lead. The man's Chinese name was Yang Jian and his English name was Cris. He was Hao Long's comrade-in-arms and also the security director of the Dingguang Museum.

Unlike Hao Long, Yang Jian was born into a martial arts family. As the saying goes, "the poor are scholars, the rich are martial artists," Yang Jian's family was much better off. After graduating from university, he joined the Special Forces Division, which was then commanded by Ouyang Lei. Because he knew English, he was sent abroad as a lieutenant in his third year to participate in China's peacekeeping forces stationed overseas.

Yang Jian's English name, Cris, was given to him abroad. Cris means short sword and dagger. Because of his superb knife skills, he was given this name by members of peacekeeping forces from another country, and it gradually became the name he was called.

Zhuang Rui started calling him by his English name after he overheard Yang Jian's foreign wife calling him by his English name.

While abroad, Yang Jian successfully prevented a refugee attack on a military camp and rescued a young female journalist from the United States, for which he was awarded the UN Peacekeeping Medal.

Logically speaking, Yang Jian's career development has always been perfect. After spending a few years abroad, he would definitely be a key talent cultivated by the military upon his return to China.

However, things gradually went off track. Perhaps it was due to a hero complex, or perhaps Yang Jian was just too handsome? The female reporter, whose looks were so pure and innocent that she could rival American star Jessica Chastain, began to pursue Yang Jian madly.

Yang Jian had been avoiding the female reporter, but his superiors, wanting to promote the image of the Chinese peacekeeping forces, encouraged him to interact with her more. Eventually, even this seemingly invincible man fell into the arms of a woman.

If this happened in other peacekeeping forces, it wouldn't be a big deal at all. It's a matter of mutual consent, so why should anyone else interfere?

However, in Chinese peacekeeping forces, such an act is a grave violation of discipline. In the words of the unit's leadership: "This comrade's ideology is not strong enough."

However, that leader completely forgot that it was he who had asked Yang Jian to have more contact with that female reporter in the first place.

The result was predictable: he was repatriated and forced to retire from the military. The only thing that made Yang Jian feel gratified was that the female reporter actually followed him from abroad to China and remained loyal to him.

However, after being discharged from the army, another problem arose. Yang Jian was from Shandong, and his family was quite traditional. They simply could not accept his foreign wife, which made it impossible for Yang Jian to stay at home. For nearly half a year, Yang Jian had no job and relied on his foreign wife to support him.

This old man must feel resentful being supported by a woman, so after receiving Hao Long's call, Yang Jian immediately took his wife to Beijing.

Yang Jian had received extremely professional security training and had also led troops, possessing rich management experience. His skills were also exceptional; he exchanged two blows with Peng Fei, and

both were evenly matched. Zhuang Rui immediately decided to appoint Yang Jian as the museum's security director, with a monthly salary of 30,000 yuan.

Yang Jian's wife went to work as a teacher at a university, and the two of them are temporarily living in a house provided by Zhuang Rui, so their lives have become stable.

Yang Jian was very satisfied with this job. In less than a month, he had managed to keep more than a dozen former special forces soldiers under his command, and he also made many suggestions to address the weaknesses in the museum's security, eliminating many potential hazards.

"It's a habit, thank you, Mr. Zhuang. Please give my regards to Hao Long; it's been almost half a month since I last saw that kid..."

People who practice martial arts are generally quite forthright. Yang Jian didn't feel restrained in front of Zhuang Rui, unlike Hao Long's other comrades who were a bit hesitant when they saw Zhuang Rui.

"You'll get used to it, Yang Jian. I'll be going out of town for a few days. If there's anything you need to discuss with Brother Huangfu, make sure to take safety precautions. It's okay to spend a little more money..."

After thinking for a moment, Zhuang Rui still gave Yang Jian a few instructions. His Guiguzi Yuan blue and white porcelain jar and Dingguang sword were unique in the country. Even if they were just scratched or bumped, Zhuang Rui would be heartbroken, let alone if they were stolen.

"Mr. Zhuang, don't worry, I'd feel guilty taking your money if I couldn't even handle something this simple..."

Yang Jian smiled, reassuring Zhuang Rui. And indeed, Zhuang Rui felt much more at ease after hearing this.

"I need to take this call, Yang Jian. You go ahead and get busy. Relax these next few days. Things will get serious when the exhibits are on display before the opening..."

Zhuang Rui's phone suddenly rang. He took it out, looked at the number, said a few words to Yang Jian, and then pressed the answer button.

"Monkey, have you memorized those scripts? If you mess things up on opening day, I won't let you off the hook..."

The call was from Monkey. A while ago, Zhuang Rui gave him a few books and told him to study them carefully so that in addition to working at "Xuanrui Zhai", he could also work as a tour guide at the museum in his spare time.

Zhuang Rui originally wanted to transfer the monkey over, but Huangfu Yun persuaded him against it. It would be better to find some younger girls to be the museum guides. If the monkey, with its majestic appearance, were to wear ancient costumes, it might be mistaken by tourists for the "Grand Eunuch".

Monkey himself felt that working at the museum was not as comfortable as working at Xuanrui Studio, so Zhuang Rui let him be. However, he still encouraged him to read more books and learn more, and asked Master Ge to take Monkey under his wing and teach him some seal carving techniques.

"Brother Zhuang, my role as a commentator is a backup; whether I'll even be needed is still uncertain..."

The monkey chuckled on the other end of the phone and continued, "Hey, I almost forgot the important thing. Brother Zhuang, that guy surnamed Ren called and said he has a few things to sell. I don't dare to make a decision, so I told him to call back later. What do you think?"

"Someone surnamed Ren? I don't know anyone surnamed Ren..."

Zhuang Rui was taken aback when he heard this. Apart from knowing that there was a Ren Woxing and a Ren Yingying in Jin Yong's novel "The Smiling, Proud Wanderer", he didn't actually have any friends with the surname Ren in real life.

"Hehe, Brother Zhuang, it's the guy who sold you the bronze goblet a few months ago, the short guy..."

The monkey reminded Zhuang Rui that, not to mention Zhuang Rui, even the monkey was stunned for a long time after receiving the call from "Boss Ren" before realizing who had called him.

"It's him?!"

Zhuang Rui suddenly shuddered. More than two months had passed since this incident, and Yu Zhenping had vanished without a trace, as if a stone had sunk into the sea. The special task force was now on the verge of being disbanded, but unexpectedly, Yu Zhenping had reappeared.

After thinking for a moment, Zhuang Rui said, word by word, "Monkey, listen carefully. If 'Boss Ren' calls again, give him my number and have him contact me. Tell him that as long as there's something, money is no problem..."

The guy on the other end of the phone nodded and said, "Brother Zhuang, I understand. That kid isn't very honest. He borrowed the money without saying a word. You'd better be careful..."

"Get lost, do you think I need you to teach me?" Zhuang Rui laughed and cursed, then hung up the phone and immediately searched for a phone number in his phone and dialed it.

"Team Leader Jiang? Hello, this is Zhuang Rui. I have news about Yu Zhenping. He handed the phone to one of my shop's staff members, and they might call me back in a bit. Is there anything you need to tell me?"

Miao Feifei withdrew from the task force a month ago. The phone number belonged to Jiang Hao, the head of the criminal investigation department of the Ministry of Public Security, who was also the leader of the task force.

"What?! Bang!"

A gasp came from the phone, followed by the sound of something being knocked over.

"Xiao Zhuang, are you... are you telling the truth? Are you sure that person is Yu Zhenping?"

Jiang Hao's voice was a little anxious. He had already lost hope in Yu Zhenping's reappearance, and the department was very dissatisfied with his work during this period. Team Leader Jiang was under a lot of pressure. Unexpectedly, news of Yu Zhenping suddenly came, which surprised and delighted Jiang Hao.

"It's him, there's no doubt about it, Team Leader Jiang. Could you give me some guidelines? Don't make me make a mistake again..."

The fact that Zhuang Rui gave Yu Zhenping 2,000 yuan last time greatly displeased the task force. If it weren't for Zhuang Rui's powerful background, he would probably have been invited to the station for questioning long ago.

"No, no..."

Even if Zhuang Rui points his finger at Jiang Hao and curses him, Jiang Hao will still give him a smile in return.

Jiang Hao thought for a moment and said, "Here's what we'll do, Xiao Zhuang. If Yu Zhenping calls you, don't ask where he is. Just say you want some important bronze artifacts, something valuable. Don't say anything else..."

Jiang Hao knew that Yu Zhenping was timid and suspicious, so he asked Zhuang Rui to say this because he didn't want to alert Yu Zhenping.

"Okay, I got it. I'm hanging up now. I wonder when that person will call back..."

Upon hearing Zhuang Rui about to hang up, Jiang Hao on the other end of the phone quickly said, "Wait, Zhuang, we need to monitor this call temporarily to find out where it came from. I hope you understand..."

If it were an ordinary person's phone call, Jiang Hao wouldn't have bothered to inform Zhuang Rui. However, although Zhuang Rui was just a self-employed individual, he was also a relative of a national leader. It wasn't like a mere section chief like him had the right to monitor his communication facilities.

"It's alright, Team Leader Jiang, please follow the regulations..."

Zhuang Rui agreed nonchalantly. This particular phone number was for work, while the one in his bag was for family and relatives; there was no conflict between the two.

"Zhuang Rui, what's going on? Why are you being so secretive?"

Seeing Zhuang Rui hang up the phone, Huangfu Yun came over.

"Nothing much. Well, it seems there won't be any peace and quiet today, Brother Huangfu. I'll head back now..."

Before Zhuang Rui could finish speaking, his phone rang again, and seeing that the number was unfamiliar, he quickly went outside.

"Hello, who is this?" Zhuang Rui pressed the answer button.

"Mr. Zhuang, my surname is Ren. We've met before. I haven't thanked you for the money you lent me last time..."

Yu Zhenping's voice is very deep, and almost everyone who hears it once can remember it, because the tone is completely inconsistent with his thin figure.

Zhuang Rui chuckled and said, "Boss Ren, hello. Monkey just called me. Let's not talk about that little thing anymore. None of us are short of money. It was just an emergency, nothing serious..."

However, Yu Zhenping, who was on the other end of the phone, almost jumped up when he heard Zhuang Rui's words. "Small change?" He had lived on those two thousand yuan for two whole months, enjoying wine and peanuts, which was much better than the previous six months.

After returning to Zhengzhou, Yu Zhenping felt uneasy. Prioritizing safety, he took the 2,000 yuan and went into hiding again, without rushing to contact Zhuang Rui to continue selling the cultural relics.

However, Yu Zhenping successfully sold two bronze jue (wine vessels) this time. Although the money was stolen by that old thief, Yu Zhenping felt that he had finally found his way in buying antiques in Beijing.

With one or two thousand tomb-raiding artifacts still in hand, Yu Zhenping felt much more confident, so he wasn't as frugal in his daily life. He spent 2,000 yuan for two months, which was considered quite thrifty.

Yu Zhenping was unaware that his low profile nearly cost many people in Beijing their official positions, and Chief Jiang had cursed Zhuang Rui behind his back countless times.

"Mr. Zhuang, I've been so busy lately that I haven't been able to contact you. I'm really sorry. I looked around at home and found a few artifacts from the Shang and Zhou dynasties. Would you be interested?"

Yu Zhenping is lying through his teeth right now. For the past year or so, he's been bored out of his mind every day. The few books he kept at the cultural relics storage site are practically worn out from reading them so much.

"Or small utensils?" Zhuang Rui asked.

Yu Zhenping replied, "Yes, there is still a set of six wine vessels and three pieces of patina-colored Han jade. If you need them, Mr. Zhuang, I will come to Beijing to find you..."

Yu Zhenping has a wide variety of bronze artifacts, including both important and small pieces. He plans to sell more pieces this time, and once he has the money, he intends to smuggle them out of the country. As for the remaining items at home, Yu Zhenping plans to find a way to retrieve them after establishing connections abroad.

"Small items? Forget about small items. To be honest, Mr. Ren, I'm currently preparing to open a museum, and what I need right now are important artifacts. I'm not in a hurry to acquire small items; let's talk about it in a few months..."

If Team Leader Jiang heard what Zhuang Rui was saying, he would definitely fight him to the death. It was so hard for the fish to surface again, and Zhuang Rui was just forcibly pushing it back down.

"Hey, Mr. Zhuang, this bronze artifact is not easy to explain..."

Upon hearing Zhuang Rui's words, Yu Zhenping became anxious. In a few more months? That guy would probably starve to death. Let alone a few months, even in just one week, Yu Zhenping would have to go to the vegetable market to pick up vegetable scraps.

"Hehe, Mr. Ren, it's no problem. If I can't handle this little thing, my museum won't be able to stay open anymore..."

Zhuang Rui's confident reply came through the phone, leaving Yu Zhenping silent.

Four or five minutes later, just when Zhuang Rui thought the other party had hung up, Yu Zhenping's voice suddenly rang out: "Boss Zhuang, I have three bronze tripods here, the largest of which weighs more than 300 kilograms, but we need to discuss the price first before we can see the goods!"

"Good heavens, a bronze cauldron weighing over 300 kilograms?"

Zhuang Rui was startled by Yu Zhenping's words. This was definitely a national treasure. Apart from the Simuwu Ding, which weighed more than 800 kilograms, Zhuang Rui had never heard of any museum having a ding weighing more than 300 kilograms.

Chapter 687 Taking the Bait

The Simuwu Ding weighs 875 kilograms, making it the heaviest ding (a type of ancient Chinese cooking vessel) in existence. Legend has it that Yu the Great "collected metal from the nine provinces to cast nine dings," suggesting that these nine dings should all be heavier than the Simuwu Ding. Unfortunately, all nine dings in the legend have been lost.

While bronze tripods are not common in China, Zhuang Rui has rarely heard of bronze tripods weighing over 300 kilograms, apart from the Simuwu Ding.

A large bronze ding (tripod cauldron) from the Qin Dynasty was unearthed from the burial pit of the acrobatic figurines at the Mausoleum of the First Qin Emperor. It is 61 centimeters tall and weighs 212 kilograms, making it the largest and heaviest ding vessel from the Qin Dynasty discovered to date.

When describing someone's great strength, the ancients often said that they were strong enough to lift a tripod.

Sima Qian mentioned in historical records that Xiang Yu, the King of Chu, was "over eight feet tall and strong enough to lift a tripod." In modern terms, this means that Xiang Yu was over 1.8 meters tall, very strong, and able to lift a very heavy tripod.

The ding mentioned in these historical records is certainly not the Simuwu Ding, which weighs over 800 kilograms, because the current world record for the clean and jerk in the weightlifting category of over 110 kilograms is 266 kilograms, which is the current human limit.

Sima Qian was a cautious and pragmatic person who used words carefully. He used the word "扛" (káng, to carry) instead of "举" (jǔ, to lift), which shows that the bronze tripod that Xiang Yu carried must have weighed between 100 and 200 kilograms.

Of the bronze tripods that have been unearthed, only a very few from the Shang and Zhou dynasties weigh over 300 kilograms.

Yu Zhenping immediately mentioned that he had a bronze ding weighing over 300 kilograms. If this bronze ding were to be unearthed, regardless of whether it was a Qin ding or a bronze ding from the Shang, Zhou, or Warring States periods, it would definitely cause a huge sensation in the archaeological and collecting communities.

"Mr. Ren... are you telling the truth?"

In his excitement, Zhuang Rui almost called out Yu Zhenping's name. After calming himself down, Zhuang Rui continued, "Mr. Ren, if your bronze cauldron is genuine, I can definitely give you a satisfactory price. However, I need to see it first..."

"Boss Zhuang, let's not beat around the bush. If this thing gets exposed, we'll both end up in jail. So let's talk about the price first and then look at the item..."

Yu Zhenping, of course, knew whether the thing was real or fake. At the time, they disguised themselves as a coal exploration team and rented a crane in the rural suburbs of Hubei. Of course, they didn't hire a crane operator; Boss Yu drove it himself.

It took more than two days to get the bronze ding from the Shang and Zhou tomb onto the vehicle. Because a crane was used, the bronze ding was preserved in excellent condition; even the animal rings on the four walls did not fall off.

"Mr. Ren, please name your price, but it has to be within my budget. You know, if I don't grease some palms, this bronze tripod won't be able to be displayed in my museum..."

Zhuang Rui said half-jokingly, but to be honest, he really wanted to steal this bronze cauldron. If this thing were displayed in a museum, the archaeology students and teachers from various universities would probably wear out the doorsteps of their museums.

"Free admission?"

No way! My buddy runs a private museum. Make sure you read that right, it's "private." He'll make a killing just from the ticket sales.

Zhuang Rui was so happy that a smile crept onto his face. He stood in front of his car and grinned foolishly, which puzzled the security guards outside the museum. "This rich guy has some weird quirks. Why does he look like he's drooling over a phone call?"

When Zhuang Rui asked him to make a bid, Yu Zhenping was stunned. He had only just started thinking about selling the bronze tripod, so how could he know what price to offer?

Moreover, there are three or four hundred other antique artifacts hidden in the place where this precious cauldron is hidden. If Zhuang Rui is taken there to see the goods, the place will definitely be exposed. Yu Zhenping does not have the ability to move all these items. If the price is too low, wouldn't it be a waste to give Zhuang Rui a good deal?

"Mr. Zhuang, I need to think about it. Let's contact each other again later..."

Yu Zhenping wasn't suspicious; he knew about Zhuang Rui's recent exchange of collections with overseas museums. In Yu Zhenping's mind, Zhuang Rui was the best trading partner. He wouldn't choose anyone else unless absolutely necessary—it's human nature to stick with familiar things.

Zhuang Rui insisted on buying that bronze tripod, which put Yu Zhenping in a dilemma. He was reluctant to part with so many antiques and cultural relics, but he was also facing the prospect of running out of food. His mind was in a mess, so he simply hung up the phone.

"Hey...hey, Mr. Ren, name your price..."

After shouting for a long time, Zhuang Rui only heard a busy tone from the other end. When he dialed back, the other party's phone was already switched off.

"Damn, isn't this just teasing our buddies?"

Zhuang Rui kicked the car tire in anger, took out his keys, opened the car door, and drove home. But he had only driven 200 meters when Jiang Hao called.

Zhuang Rui pressed the answer button and said, "Team Leader Jiang, Yu Zhenping just called. I asked him to give me a quote, and he said he'd think about it and get back to me. By the way, have you monitored his residence?"

"Not yet, Xiao Zhuang. Make sure your phone stays on. Keep in touch with Yu Zhenping. Let me know immediately if anything happens. That's all for now, just in case he calls..."

After saying a few words, Team Leader Jiang hung up the phone, but he was extremely frustrated. It turned out that Zhuang Rui, as the "relevant department," was really all-powerful.

Listening to wireless calls requires a certain range, and in such a short time, Jiang Hao's report hadn't even been approved by his superiors yet.

"Mom, where's Xuanbing?"

After returning to the courtyard, Zhuang Rui went to the side room in the middle courtyard. Beijing in July was a bit hot and dry, and Ouyang Wan's outdoor activities had gradually decreased. At this moment, she was staying in the air-conditioned room.

The white lion lying on the ground was even more unaccustomed to this kind of weather. When it saw Zhuang Rui come in, it only opened its eyes weakly and glanced at him before closing them again and pretending to sleep.

"Xuanbing and your sister-in-law went to choose a wedding dress. You, in this sweltering weather, didn't you even offer to go with them? All you do is busy with your museum all day long..."

Although Ouyang Wan never interfered in Zhuang Rui's business, she still grumbled a few words. Xu Qing was pregnant, already seven or eight months along. If something happened to her, she would have no face to see her brother.

Zhuang Rui made a face upon hearing this and laughed, "Mom, it's okay. Peng Fei went with me. I'll have some free time once I'm done with this busy period..."

Zhuang Rui originally planned to bring all the wedding dresses from that photography studio, but Qin Xuanbing insisted on trying them on first. They were going to Hainan tomorrow, and Zhuang Rui had to go to the museum today to give them some instructions, so he asked Peng Fei to accompany her.

"Xuanbing is your wife!"

Ouyang Wan glanced at her son helplessly and said, "There's mung bean soup in the fridge. Go drink some to cool down. Isn't it better to stay home in this weather? Why do you have to go out? What kind of scenery doesn't Beijing have? You even want to go to Hainan to take wedding photos..."

Zhuang Rui grinned and said, "Mom, Hainan has the sea! When you find a partner, I'll send you to Hainan to take your wedding photos..."

"What nonsense are you talking about, child? Do you see that Mom can't hit you anymore?"

Ouyang Wan couldn't stand Zhuang Rui's constant refrain of telling her to find a husband, so she picked up a feather duster from the table and pretended to hit Zhuang Rui. The white lion on the ground heard the noise, stood up, glanced at him, and then, without any sense of loyalty, lay down again.

"Mom, I need to take this call. We'll talk later, it's important..."

Just as his mother was joking, another unfamiliar phone call came in. Zhuang Rui guessed it was most likely Yu Zhenping again, so he quickly rushed out of the house and sat down in the pavilion near the pond.

Who is it?

"Boss Zhuang, it's me..."

Sure enough, it was Yu Zhenping who called again. Zhuang Rui could afford to wait, but he couldn't. After thinking it over, he decided to give up on that room full of antiques and cultural relics. Anyway, there were two other places where the relics were hidden. As long as he could go abroad, he would have a chance to unearth them in the future.

"Boss Zhuang, I'm not going to beat around the bush with you. I'll tell you the truth: where the bronze tripod is kept, there are more than four hundred bronze artifacts from the Shang, Zhou, Qin, and Han dynasties..."

"I can give you all of these artifacts, but you need to prepare 500,000 RMB and 500,000 USD in cash, plus a 5 million Euro bearer Swiss bank draft. If you can get these ready within three days, I will notify you of the time and place to inspect the goods..."

Yu Zhenping had figured out that he could only carry a maximum of 1 million yuan in banknotes, which would almost fill a backpack. As for Swiss bank drafts, he had heard Boss Yu mention them, but he had never seen them before. With the thought that it's better to take advantage of a bargain than not to, he brought them up.

"More than 400 bronze artifacts?"

Upon hearing this, Zhuang Rui gasped on the phone. After hearing Yu Zhenping's offer, Zhuang Rui wished he could kick the police aside and make the deal with this "Boss Ren" alone.

It's worth noting that a special auction of Chinese bronzes was held in Macau recently. All 49 bronze pieces sold out, achieving a 100% sell-through rate and a record-breaking HK\$120 million. And this was achieved by just 49 bronze pieces.

If what Yu Zhenping said is true, and he has more than 400 bronze artifacts, then his bronze artifact exhibition hall can open for business immediately. Of course, Zhuang Rui could only mutter this to himself.

Zhuang Rui composed himself and said, "Boss Ren, money is not a problem. I can get it done tomorrow, in less than three days. However, I need to inspect the goods before I can pay you..."

"Of course, in that case, I'll call Boss Zhuang tomorrow night..."

Yu Zhenping wasn't afraid of Zhuang Rui double-crossing him; the gun in his hand wasn't just for show either. He was just a worthless man, and Yu Zhenping didn't believe Zhuang Rui would dare to gamble his life with him.

Chapter 688-689 Greed

A vast collection of Taiwanese novels available for easy reading.

"Team Leader Jiang, here's the situation: we need you to provide the \$500,000 and \$500,000 in cash for the transaction. Also, please try to find a way to get the Swiss bank draft..."

After hanging up with Yu Zhenping, Zhuang Rui immediately called Jiang Hao using another phone.

Whether these items can be displayed in his own museum after they are recovered is still uncertain. Zhuang Rui is naturally unwilling to pay for them himself, and he can't come up with 5 million euros right now.

According to general practice, smuggled and looted cultural relics unearthed or seized in various places are placed in state-owned museums in those places for tourists to visit. If these cultural relics are in Beijing now, it's fine, but if they are in other provinces, Zhuang Rui will most likely have wasted his time.

"Xiao...Xiao Zhuang, this...this time is too tight! We need to have the money ready by tomorrow, there's simply no time..."

Upon hearing Zhuang Rui's words, Jiang Hao's mouth dropped open in astonishment. What a joke! Preparing so much money in a single day? He simply didn't have that authority.

Although it was a case directly supervised by the Ministry of Public Security, the procedures still had to be followed. Given the efficiency of some office-based officials, it would be considered good if it could be approved in a week, let alone a day.

"Team Leader Jiang, well... I have no choice. I'm just cooperating with the police operation. I can't possibly pay for things for the country myself, can I?"

Zhuang Rui almost blurted out, "Even the landlord's family has no surplus grain," but he had already made his meaning very clear: if you want the horse to run but don't feed it, you should at least offer some food.

"You...you..."

Team Leader Jiang was speechless, choked by Zhuang Rui's words.

"By the way, Team Leader Jiang, I've met Yu Zhenping. Judging from his appearance, he doesn't seem like someone who knows Swiss bank drafts. You could make a fake one..." Zhuang Rui kindly suggested to Jiang Hao.

According to the information provided by the police, the Yu family was originally from Henan and were landlords who later became farmers. Even if you gave them a bank draft, they wouldn't know how to check it. Besides, Swiss banks don't have Mandarin-speaking operators.

"Alright, I'll get back to you tomorrow..."

Jiang Hao hung up the phone somewhat annoyed. After filling out a stack of forms, he thought for a moment, then took out his phone and made a call.

"Wife, you're back! Hey, sister-in-law, let me feel your belly..."

After making the call, Zhuang Rui had just stood up from the pavilion when he saw Qin Xuanbing and Xu Qing walk into the central courtyard. Xu Qing's belly was already quite prominent, and she was having difficulty walking. Zhuang Rui couldn't understand where she got so much energy to go with Qin Xuanbing to try on wedding dresses.

"Go away...go away, get out of here! How dare you touch my wife like that? I'll beat you up!"

Ouyang Jun emerged from behind Xu Qing, slapped away Zhuang Rui's hand that was reaching for her, and took his own hand as if it were his right, saying, "If anyone's going to touch someone, it'll be me. You won't get this kind of treatment until your wife gets pregnant..."

Qin Xuanbing, standing to the side, blushed at Ouyang Jun's words and glared at Zhuang Rui embarrassedly. Her husband had also gone astray, daring to touch other women in front of her.

"You look like a jerk..."

Looking at her husband, who was acting like a complete clown, Xu Qing couldn't help but laugh and cry. Plus, she had been out for half a day and wasn't feeling well, so with Ouyang Jun's help, she went back to her room to rest.

Zhuang Rui leaned close to Qin Xuanbing's ear and whispered, "Hehe, honey, let's go back and make a baby..."

"All you ever do is think..."

Qin Xuanbing stamped her foot, then changed the subject, saying, "I've been staying in the air-conditioned room for a while, and I want to get some fresh air. Let's sit here for a bit..."

The old locust tree by the pond has lush foliage, and there is a set of stone tables and chairs under the tree. It is not too hot to sit on it, and listening to the cicadas chirping from all over the garden, it has a unique charm.

"Zhuang Rui, Sister Xu Qing wore a wedding dress today too, she looks so beautiful..."

"In my heart, you are the most beautiful..." Zhuang Rui rarely said such sweet words.

"You're such a pain, not even going to try on wedding dresses. The photography studio is going to have to bring all your clothes tomorrow, it's such a hassle..." Qin Xuanbing slapped Zhuang Rui's chest in dissatisfaction.

"tomorrow?"

"Ouch!" Zhuang Rui slapped himself hard on the forehead.

He suddenly remembered that he was waiting for Yu Zhenping's call tomorrow, and Jiang Hao had also told him to be on standby at any time and not to run around. How could he have forgotten about that?

Qin Xuanbing grabbed Zhuang Rui's hand, who was still trying to struggle with his head, and asked, "What's wrong? Zhuang Rui?"

"Xuanbing, I'm sorry, I can't go to Hainan for the next couple of days. There's an urgent matter at the museum. I want to buy a batch of cultural relics, and I'm waiting for news..."

Zhuang Rui shook his head in regret. He blamed himself for being so blinded by Yu Zhenping's talk of 400 bronze artifacts that he'd completely forgotten about their trip to Hainan the next day.

Qin Xuanbing knew Zhuang Rui had been incredibly busy lately, and said understandingly, "It's alright, work is important. Besides, the weather's so hot, I don't want to go out and cause any trouble. But we need to inform the photo studio; they've already booked their plane tickets..."

"Oh, it's all my fault, Xuanbing. Don't worry, I'll definitely give you a grand wedding..."

Zhuang Rui felt really guilty. Girls all have a longing and yearning for taking wedding photos. Qin Xuanbing had been looking forward to it for a long time, but she didn't expect that it would not be possible to go this time.

"Didn't I say the wedding would be simple, just a few family members? Okay, it's not like we won't take the photos a few days later, there's nothing to apologize for. Let's go, I'm going back to my room to make a call..."

Qin Xuanbing's personality was far more open-minded than Zhuang Rui had imagined, and she comforted Zhuang Rui with a few words.

They got their marriage certificate some time ago, and legally they are now husband and wife. Qin Xuanbing is rather indifferent and doesn't really have much of an idea about a wedding.

However, when Ouyang Wan found out about this that evening, she gave Zhuang Rui a severe scolding. The whole dinner was like a denunciation meeting for Zhuang Rui. Even the little girl made faces and flicked his nose at Zhuang Rui, making him suffer terribly.

The next morning around 8 a.m., Zhuang Rui, who had been working hard all night and was fast asleep, was woken up by his phone.

"Xiao Zhuang, we can handle the bank draft and the 500,000 RMB, but as for the 500,000 USD, do you think you can come up with a solution?"

Jiang Hao was really desperate. He begged and pleaded until he scraped together 500,000 RMB, and then pulled out a forger from the police station overnight to make a bank draft that was so realistic it was indistinguishable from a real one.

However, Jiang Hao couldn't get his hands on US dollars anytime soon, since the police weren't paid in US dollars.

"Why should I? I was just looking for you, Team Leader Jiang. I can't handle this. We were supposed to go to Hainan to take wedding photos today, but this has ruined everything. And you want me to pay you back? No way!"

Upon hearing Jiang Hao's words, Zhuang Rui's anger flared up immediately, and he vented all the anger he had suffered at his mother's place yesterday on Team Leader Jiang.

Once Miao Feifei left the task force, no one mentioned providing Zhuang Rui's museum with a batch of seized cultural relics as exhibits anymore. Even the two bronze jue (wine vessels) were confiscated by them. It was a typical case of crossing the river and then burning the bridge. Zhuang Rui was seething with anger.

Upon hearing Zhuang Rui's words, Jiang Hao's expression turned serious, and he said, "Xiao Zhuang, this is all for work. I hope you can understand and cooperate with our work..."

"I'm sorry, Team Leader Jiang, that's your job, it has nothing to do with me. Citizens are not obligated to pay for your work. Besides, don't you think you owe me money?"

Before Jiang Hao could finish speaking, Zhuang Rui interrupted him. The two bronze wine vessels had been taken away by the task force, but the police had not yet refunded him the 100,000 yuan he had spent. They said it was still in the process of processing, and who knows, maybe 100,000 yuan of Jiang Hao's 500,000 yuan was his own.

"This...this...Xiao Zhuang, don't worry, the money will be returned to you immediately once the case is closed. Would the government embezzle your private money?"

Jiang Hao was speechless after Zhuang Rui's words. They were in the wrong. They were supposed to return the money, but a leader from a certain department said that because Zhuang Rui had acted without authorization and lent money to the suspect, it had affected the progress of the case, and therefore the money had to be withheld.

It's not that the money won't be given to Zhuang Rui, it's just that it's being withheld temporarily. This withholding has lasted for more than two months, and Jiang Hao has forgotten about it for a while.

"Team Leader Jiang, I'm not trying to be mean, but this is really unfair of you. I risked my life to help you, and you failed to keep an eye on the suspect, and now you're blaming me for getting lost. You're withholding my money, and now you want me to pay you back. Tell me, is this any of a fair argument?"

Zhuang Rui was not one to back down, and more importantly, he had his own agenda. His friend hadn't even gone to take wedding photos, so he had to give him some explanation.

"this....."

Jiang Hao was incredibly frustrated. If anyone else had spoken to him like that, he would have already issued a summons and taken them to the police station. But since it was Zhuang Rui who said it, he really couldn't do anything about it.

Police officers investigate cases based on who they are targeting. This is true even in a small county town, let alone Beijing. Arresting an ordinary citizen is easy; they might not even need an arrest warrant.

However, if you want to arrest some committee member or representative, the police generally don't have that authority. Although many people may be unhappy to hear this, it is indeed a real fact.

Zhuang Rui himself is nothing special, just a little money. But the background he has is so powerful that there are very few people in this land of over nine million square kilometers who dare to touch him. Just yesterday's report on monitoring Zhuang Rui's phone was personally approved by the Minister.

Zhengzhou, the capital of Henan Province, is an important inland open city and a famous historical and cultural city in China. Located in the heart of the Central Plains, Zhengzhou is a vital transportation, communication and energy hub in China.

Zhengzhou is bordered by the Yellow River to the north, Mount Song to the south, Luoyang, the ancient capital of thirteen dynasties, to the west, Kaifeng, the ancient capital of seven dynasties, to the south, and Xuchang, the former capital of Cao Wei during the Three Kingdoms period. Zhengzhou itself is also one of China's eight ancient capitals.

With such a long history, Zhengzhou boasts abundant tourism resources.

The birthplace of the Yellow Emperor, the Peiligang Cultural Site, the Dahecun Site, the Xia Dynasty Yangcheng Site, the Yellow River Scenic Area, the Dacun Site, and the Song Dynasty tombs in Gongyi City, along with China's unique cultural tourism clusters and the Songshan Scenic Area, centered around the Shaolin Temple and Songshan National Forest Park, all add immeasurable charm to Zhengzhou.

Unlike the feeling of being in Beijing, the capital city, Zhuang Rui felt a profound Central Plains culture as soon as he arrived in Zhengzhou. This place, which has a history of more than 8,000 years of civilization, has nurtured nearly a hundred great figures throughout history, including Bai Juyi, Du Fu, and Li Shangyin, and has its own unique regional civilization and culture.

Of course, Zhuang Rui did not come here to study the Central Plains culture, nor was he here for sightseeing. The reason he took a flight to Zhengzhou overnight was simply because of a phone call from Yu Zhenping.

This phone call not only prompted Zhuang Rui to fly to Zhengzhou overnight on his private jet, but also kept the ministry's special task force in a frenzy, with everyone rushing to the ancient city of Zhengzhou using various modes of transportation.

For the sake of secrecy, the task force only notified the Criminal Investigation Corps of Henan Province and did not alert the local police force, in order to avoid alerting the suspects.

Although it's been basically determined that Yu Zhenping is within Zhengzhou, Zhengzhou is such a large and chaotic place that finding a single person is like searching for a needle in a haystack. Furthermore, if Yu Zhenping is alerted and he flees to other provinces or cities, it will be even more difficult to catch him.

"Team Leader Jiang, Yu Zhenping just called and said he won't have time until the day after tomorrow. What does that mean?"

Just after checking into the Zhengzhou Yuda International Trade Hotel, Zhuang Rui received a call from Yu Zhenping. After telling him which hotel he was staying at, Yu Zhenping told Zhuang Rui that he had something to do the next day and could only take Zhuang Rui to see the goods the day after tomorrow.

Yu Zhenping always turns off his phone immediately after making a call, leaving Zhuang Rui with no choice but to report it to Jiang Hao.

After a moment of silence on the other end of the phone, a voice came through and said, "Our analysis suggests that Yu Zhenping is very likely to follow you tomorrow to check for any danger."

"In that case, we won't have anyone follow you, but Xiao Zhuang, you must keep that tracker with you. Contact us immediately if anything happens..."

Jiang Hao and his buddies were currently holed up in the police guesthouse. Although the Henan police had done a good job in receiving them, they dared not relax at all. They had declined the banquet hosted by the Criminal Investigation Department and were urging the Henan police to arrange a car with Henan license plates.

After hearing Jiang Hao's words, Zhuang Rui said, "Okay, then I'll take a stroll around Zhengzhou tomorrow..."

There's a reason why Zhuang Rui is so easy to talk to.

Yesterday, because of the \$500,000 issue, Zhuang Rui secured tangible benefits for himself. After the case was solved, Zhuang Rui will receive one-third of the seized cultural relics. Of course, he only has the right to exhibit them, not ownership, and the state can take them back at any time.

According to Jiang Hao, this was a promise made personally by a leader in the ministry, and Zhuang Rui wasn't worried about them reneging on the agreement, since he had recorded all the phone calls.

If the police change their minds, Zhuang Rui plans to have Ouyang Si Ge (Brother Ouyang) handle it. Back in the day, Ouyang Jun made his fortune by obtaining permits and has a knack for dealing with government departments. Zhuang Rui is not afraid of not getting the item back.

"Alright, Peng Fei, time for bed. We'll go shopping on Taobao tomorrow..."

Zhuang Rui only told Peng Fei the purpose of his trip to Zhengzhou.

In his view, given Yu Zhenping's thin arms and legs, Peng Fei could handle him on his own. Why bother sending so many police officers from Beijing? It was a pure waste of taxpayers' money.

Yuda International Trade Hotel is located in the Zhongyuan District of Zhengzhou City, which can be considered the city center. After getting up the next morning, Zhuang Rui asked around and took a taxi with Peng Fei straight to Zhengzhou Antique City.

As one of China's eight ancient capitals, Zhengzhou's history can be traced back 8,000 years. Countless emperors and generals have been buried in its vicinity, and countless precious cultural relics have been unearthed from ancient times to the present. Naturally, the antique market in such a place is exceptionally developed.

In terms of quantity, Zhengzhou has six large antique markets, each with an area of over 20,000 square meters, a scale that is rare in the whole country.

In particular, the Zhengzhou Antique City is a large four-story shopping mall that offers a wide variety of products including antiques, arts and crafts, and collectibles. It is not only the first antique market in Zhengzhou, but also ranks second in the country in terms of scale, making it the "leader in the Zhengzhou antique industry".

After arriving at the antique market by taxi, Zhuang Rui looked at the buildings and couldn't help but say, "As expected of the ancient capital of eight dynasties, its cultural heritage is truly exceptional..."

"Brother Zhuang, any place in Beijing is just as good as this, right?"

Peng Fei looked at the three-story yellow building in front of him, curled his lip, and said dismissively, "People who grew up in the capital have always believed that Beijing's historical and cultural heritage is the most profound."

"What do you know? This antique market was built on the site of the Sunset Tower..."

Seeing Peng Fei's bewildered expression, Zhuang Rui, ever the know-it-all, explained to him: "Xiyang Tower is a building from the Tang Dynasty. Like Yellow Crane Tower, Yueyang Tower, Misty Rain Tower, and Stork Tower, it is one of the eight famous towers of the Tang Dynasty."

When Li Shangyin was living in Zhengzhou, he wrote the famous lines "Ascending the Sunset Tower": "Willows dark and flowers bright, sorrow surrounds me; I climb to the top of the city walls and then ascend the tower again. I want to ask the lone wild goose where it is going, but I know not where my own life is going."

According to ancient records, the Sunset Tower was built on the foundation of a three-story brick building. With its flying eaves, brackets, carved beams and painted pillars, it soared into the clouds and was a magnificent sight. When the sun set, the afterglow gilded the top of the tower with a layer of gorgeous gold. Climbing the tower and looking out, one could see the sunset glow reflecting on the western mountains and colorful clouds swirling around the village, which was truly a wonderful sight.

However, with the passage of time and the changing of the world, the ancient Sunset Tower and the literary figures who left behind timeless verses about it have long since been lost to the long river of history.

"Hey, Zhuang, after all that talk, it's all been built later, how boring..."

Peng Fei disapproved of Zhuang Rui's mournful manner, and not wanting to be caught by Zhuang Rui during class, he immediately walked into the antique market.

The first floor of the antique market is a jade and wooden handicraft area, with stalls packed tightly together. It's bustling with people, as if they don't need to go to work and just come here to find bargains and make money.

Since CCTV launched its treasure appraisal program in 2002, people's understanding of antiques has been increasing, especially in some ancient cities with a long history, where every household is rummaging through their belongings to see what valuable items they can find.

In an era where everyone is collecting antiques, the business of antique markets has naturally improved. The fact that Zhengzhou went from having two antique markets to six in one go is the best proof of this.

Although the first floor is large, it is relatively quiet. The customers coming and going are quietly observing the items they like. Only a few stall owners are chatting together, talking about interesting things in the antique business.

Zhuang Rui had nothing to do today, so he just came to browse around in his spare time. In this kind of large, open-air antique market, the chances of finding a bargain are very small, so he was in a good mood.

After looking at several stalls, just as Zhuang Rui had expected, what was displayed outside were all new jade imitations of antique items. These days, nobody is stupid, and the kind of thing that used to be done by selling treasures as junk is becoming increasingly rare.

"Old Li, you made a fortune the other day, didn't you? You got so many jade pieces, but you didn't even share some with us guys..."

"Yeah, Old Li, you're really unfair. You have such a good connection, and you don't even bother to introduce it to us. You can't just keep it all to yourself..."

"Are you guys trying to embarrass me? Damn it, you all know I got ripped off. I brought them all today, who wants them? 50 yuan each..."

The man called Old Li looked as if his ancestral graves had been dug up, his face contorted with rage. Without a doubt, this guy had been moved by some story and then readily paid his tuition.

Old Li's stall was right next to Zhuang Rui's, and his shout did attract Zhuang Rui's attention.

"The stuff is all here, take whatever you want. Damn it, I spent 20,000 yuan and all I got was this garbage..."

Old Li pulled a black handbag from under his counter, dumped its contents onto the glass counter with a "whoosh," and looked furious.

Old Li's actions immediately attracted the attention of many people in the antique market. Within minutes, his counter was surrounded by layers of people, making it impossible for Zhuang Rui, who was inside, to get out.

"That old Li was too greedy. If he had known this would happen, he wouldn't have done it in the first place..."

"Yes, if farmers could dig up treasures while farming these days, who would bother going out to work? They'd all be farming all along..."

Zhuang Rui listened to the discussions of the people around him and thus understood what had happened.

A few days ago, a man dressed as a farmer came to the Zhengzhou Antique City with a piece of jade covered in mud. Old Li happened to see it and discovered that it was actually an ancient jade from the Yin and Shang Dynasties. He immediately asked about the origin of the jade.

According to the farmer, he dug these jade stones out of the ground while he was hoeing the fields. There were about seventy or eighty pieces scattered around. He didn't know if they were valuable, so he took them to the antique market to have someone take a look.

Zhengzhou's history goes back even further than the Shang Dynasty. There are many ancient tombs from the Shang Dynasty in the surrounding areas of Zhengzhou. Although most of them have been looted or excavated, it is not uncommon to hear news of cultural relics being unearthed in some rural areas.

Old Li has been collecting jade for over twenty years, and he could tell at a glance that the jade fish was indeed an ancient jade from the Shang Dynasty, and it was also a high-quality Hetian jade. If he sold it to his old customers, it would definitely fetch thirty to fifty thousand yuan.

Old Li immediately stopped the "farmer" and very warmly invited him to a meal, saying he wanted to see what the farmer had dug up, and if it was good, he would buy it all for 20,000 yuan.

The "farmer" was so drunk by Lao Li that he was completely disoriented. When he heard that he could sell it for 20,000 yuan, he was extremely excited. After watching Lao Li withdraw 20,000 yuan from the ATM, he immediately took Lao Li to his small hotel to look at the items.

In that private little hotel that cost 20 yuan a night, Old Li saw a large pile of various ancient jade pieces covered in mud, whether the light bulbs had been replaced by the "farmer" or were originally that dark.

Identifying jade is quite difficult, but because the "farmer" was a good actor and the first piece of antique jade he showed was genuine, Old Li was initially convinced and, after a quick look, decided to buy them all.

Old Li brought home a large plastic bag full of ancient jade. He locked the door, and then blocked the entrance with two stools. He went to the bathroom alone to clean it. This was an unearthed cultural relic, and if the relevant departments found out, it would be confiscated.

However, as the jade artifacts were cleaned out, Old Li's expression gradually turned grim, because he discovered that these so-called ancient jade artifacts from the Yin-Shang period were all transparent. Back then, jadeite had not yet circulated in China.

Sensing something was wrong, Old Li immediately pulled out the jade fish from his pocket. Upon closer inspection, he was so angry he almost spat blood. This jade fish had been replaced by the "farmer" at some point; it turned out to be just a plastic thing, not even glass.

About forty or fifty "ancient jade" items were cleaned out, but they were almost all glass or plastic products. There were a few pieces of jade, but they were of such poor quality that they were unbearable to look at.

At this point, Old Li realized that he had fallen into a trap and been tricked. Fortunately, the loss was not significant, only 20,000 yuan, which Old Li could afford.

Feeling depressed, Old Li pulled a friend aside, had a few drinks, and confided in him about the incident. Little did he expect that when he came to the antique market today, all the acquaintances on the first floor knew about it, leaving Old Li extremely frustrated.

After hearing the story, Zhuang Rui couldn't help but laugh. This "farmer" was quite skilled at deceiving people who made a living by playing with jade.

Firstly, the man showed a genuine jade from the start, which lowered Lao Li's guard. Secondly, the price he asked for was not high; 20,000 yuan is not much these days. Plus, with the genuine jade from the beginning, even if the rest were fake, Lao Li wouldn't lose money. Combining these points, Lao Li was lured into a trap and made to suffer a loss.

"Peng Fei, let's go upstairs and take a look around..."

After Zhuang Rui understood what had happened, he smiled and shook his head. He casually glanced at the stall filled with colorful jade stones, and his body, which had already turned halfway, suddenly froze.

Chapter 690 Stargazing

As the saying goes, rivals are enemies. The stall owners in this antique market, though usually all smiles and laughter, were all secretly hoping the other would make a mistake and suffer a loss. So, Old Li's story spread throughout the entire antique market overnight.

At that moment, quite a few antique dealers who usually didn't get along with Lao Li were spreading the story of Lao Li "collecting jade".

Originally, Lao Li planned to sell those jade stones as handicrafts. Even if they were only a few yuan each, he could still make three to five hundred yuan. Every little bit counts. However, after being provoked by the crowd, Lao Li's blood boiled and he did something shameful again.

"Mr. Li, these are all regular customers, you're being a bit impolite..." The person who said this was a local who frequently visits the antique market.

"Yeah, it's not even worth five yuan, and you're selling it for fifty? That's not fair..."

"Don't say that. Boss Li misjudged the situation and paid his dues, so he should at least make up for it a little bit..."

"Bullshit, isn't it just that he was greedy, got scammed by others, and then came back to scam us?"

Everyone knows that most of his "antique jade" items are actually glass or plastic products. Old Li even quoted a price of fifty yuan per piece, which angered the tourists watching and they all cursed Old Li for being greedy.

"Brother Zhuang, weren't you leaving? Why are you still here?"

Peng Fei had just heard Zhuang Rui say he was going to the second floor, so he squeezed out of the crowd. But when he looked back and didn't see Zhuang Rui, he probably squeezed back in.

"No rush, let's take another look..."

Zhuang Rui smiled and waved his hand, but his eyes remained fixed on the counter filled with "ancient jade" of various colors.

"If you...you don't want them, fine. I'll just sell them for fifty-one. Take it or leave it. I'm not selling them anymore..."

Old Li was first bullied by his peers, and then he was verbally abused by these onlookers. His forehead veins bulged and his eyes were bloodshot. "Don't you bastards have any sympathy? I'm the victim!"

"Only a fool would buy that. Does such jade even exist?"

"Yeah, hurry up and put it away, don't embarrass yourself..."

"Old Li, forget it, it's just 20,000 yuan. Next time I go to the countryside, I'll find a good item and make it back..."

The stalls were packed with people, disrupting other vendors' business. Some stall owners tried to comfort Old Li, saying that everyone in the antique market has been fooled and learned their lesson; it's really nothing.

"Mr. Li, right? These things are really fifty yuan each? I'll buy two to play with..."

Suddenly, a voice rang out from the crowd, and all eyes immediately turned to Zhuang Rui. Was this young man crazy? He had already said it was a fake, yet he was still willing to spend money to buy it? Glassware like these cost five yuan each and were readily available everywhere.

Old Li, angered by the insults, didn't even raise his head and said, "50 yuan each, not a penny less!"

Old Li was stuck in a rut, stubbornly clinging to his position. He still thought the voice asking to buy jade was just him joking.

"Okay, here's 100 yuan, I'll buy two..."

On the counter in front of Old Li, a pink banknote appeared. The crisp sound of the money hitting the counter made everyone realize that this was no joke.

"You are...you look kind of familiar."

Old Li raised his head and glanced at Zhuang Rui, but for a moment he couldn't remember where he had seen him before.

Zhuang Rui glanced at the jade pieces on the counter and said, "Mr. Li, what about this?"

"Pick whatever you like, whatever you want. I, Old Li, have never gone back on my word..."

When Zhuang Rui mentioned these "ancient jades," Old Li became furious. He had already prepared himself to throw these junks into the moat as soon as he got back.

Zhuang Rui, without hesitation, stepped forward and pushed aside the cleaned glass and plastic pieces, rummaging through the piles of "jade" that resembled clods of dirt, occasionally wiping them with his hand.

"This young man actually came here to pick up bargains..."

"This soil looks like it was made by mixing mud together and then drying it. What's so interesting about it?"

"Yeah, that 100 yuan was wasted..."

The onlookers shook their heads. It's understandable to want to take advantage, but they had never heard of anyone being able to do so in such a place, in front of so many people.

"I'll take this one..."

After picking through the pieces for a while, Zhuang Rui picked up a piece of jade that was about three or four centimeters thick and eight or nine centimeters long. However, the jade was covered in mud, so it was impossible to tell what shape it was, although it was quite large.

"Young man, you've already taken 100 yuan, can you pick another one?"

Old Li's seemingly kind words drew boos from those around him. Even if he gave them all 100 yuan worth of these things, probably no one would buy them.

"No need, I've already bought two. Everyone, please make way, let me out for a moment..."

Zhuang Rui smiled and shook his head, greeted Peng Fei, and then slipped out of the crowd.

Aside from Zhuang Rui himself, among all these people, probably only Peng Fei knows whether Zhuang Rui actually suffered a loss or gained an advantage. Having followed Zhuang Rui for so long, Peng Fei has never seen Zhuang Rui make a mistake when it comes to antiques.

"Hey, why does that young man look so familiar?"

"Yes, I wouldn't have remembered if you hadn't mentioned it, but it does look somewhat familiar..."

"Isn't that Teacher Zhuang from the Spring Festival treasure appraisal show? They look about the same age and appearance..."

"Yes...yes, it's him, it must be him, their accents are the same..."

"Hey, Teacher Zhuang, don't go..."

"Those behind, stop him! Stop him!"

Zhuang Rui hadn't even squeezed out of the crowd when he was recognized, and the antique market was in an uproar.

Whether it's the stall owners in the antique market or collectors and tourists from all over the country, they've only ever seen experts on TV or in the news. Having such an expert right in front of them, and having just bought something from him, is bound to pique their curiosity.

It was a bit like young people chasing after celebrities. Zhuang Rui was immediately surrounded by an enthusiastic crowd. Some people were even pulling at Zhuang Rui's clothes. Zhuang Rui felt that if he hadn't held on tightly, the jade in his hand might have been snatched away.

"Excuse me, everyone, make way! If you don't make me call security..."

Zhuang Rui shouted angrily, "Damn it, I'm not a woman! What was that guy doing grabbing my chest like that?"

"Make way, make way, I'm talking to you..."

Fortunately, just as Zhuang Rui finished speaking, four or five security guards from the antique market rushed in with rubber batons, and they managed to rescue him.

"Damn, I bet seven or eight out of ten fans are just after celebrities, right?"

After being surrounded by several security guards, Zhuang Rui quickly checked his belongings. Fortunately, nothing was missing, and the tracking device that Jiang Hao had given him, which looked like a key ring, was still hanging on his jeans.

"Sir, have you lost anything?"

Henan is known for its tough and fierce people, and many of them practice martial arts. With these tall and burly security guards standing there, no one dared to rush forward anymore.

"No, no, thank you, thank you all..."

Zhuang Rui gave Peng Fei a wink, intending to leave the antique market under the protection of security guards.

"Teacher Zhuang, we didn't do anything to you, why are you in such a hurry to leave..."

"Yes, tell me, is the item you bought real or fake?"

Although they dared not step forward, they still had to speak, and everyone asked questions all at once.

If someone were to say that Zhuang Rui had lost his mind and bought fake jade, probably few people present would believe it. In their minds, how could an expert make a mistake?

One of the shop owners, who knew the security guards, spoke up, "Captain Liu, we don't mean to offend this guest. He's an expert in the antique world, and we'd like to ask him a few questions..."

Seeing that he couldn't avoid it, Zhuang Rui simply pushed aside the security guards in front of him and said loudly, "Everyone, please be quiet. I am Zhuang Rui, but I am not an expert. You don't need to be so

formal. I am just like you all, a collector who is very fond of collecting. I am still learning and exploring on this path..."

"See how humble Teacher Zhuang is when he speaks..."

"Yes, the more learned a person is, the more humble they are when they speak..."

"Old Qi, stop bragging about being a jade expert all the time. Compared to Teacher Zhuang, you're miles behind..."

"Hey, hey, how did this get dragged into this? I didn't call them experts; they were the ones who authenticated the objects..."

Old Qi was a man in his fifties who seemed to be an expert in the field. As he spoke, he glanced at the "ancient jade" in Zhuang Rui's hand, clearly showing some resentment.

There are all sorts of strange and unusual stories in the antique trade, but to find a treasure among the items sold by a con artist who sets up a fake is unheard of. Old Qi simply didn't believe that Zhuang Rui had an ancient jade piece.

After hearing what Lao Qi said, everyone quieted down. That made sense. Although Zhuang Rui on TV was an expert and you could see him calmly appraising objects, it could still be faked. Who knew if it was pre-recorded or rehearsed?

If we're talking about which trade is most prone to counterfeiting, the antique trade is definitely number one. Old Qi's words also raised doubts among the crowd, and their gazes toward Zhuang Rui were no longer so fervent.

"Teacher Zhuang, tell us about the jade you bought. Let us learn something new..."

"yes....."

"Yes, tell me..."

One person in the crowd raised a question, and others immediately chimed in, saying that the proof is in the pudding.

"If I'm going to be out there picking up bargains in the future, looks like I'll have to learn makeup from Xu Qing first..."

Zhuang Rui was a little annoyed, but he still raised the jade in his hand high and broke it in the middle. What was originally a lump of dirt was instantly split into two pieces.