

Golden 701

Chapter 702 Confusing Detective

Despite Yu Zhenping's feigned familiarity with Zhuang Rui, he remained vigilant. The gun, previously tucked into his baggy trouser pocket, was now tucked into his lower back, ready to fire at any moment.

However, Yu Zhenping finally breathed a sigh of relief after hearing that Zhuang Rui was willing to pay.

"Mr. Zhuang, please come in..."

After waiting outside for more than ten minutes, Yu Zhenping went into the house first and turned on the lights.

The main room of the small building was simply furnished with a sofa and a coffee table. When Yu Laoda used to live here, he would eat at farmhouses and wander around the foot of the mountain. There was not much in the house.

"Mr. Ren... there's nothing here..."

Zhuang Rui looked around and found that the only old thing he could find was the tin kettle behind the sofa, which was over 20 years old. There was nothing else that looked old.

"Hehe, Mr. Zhuang, the items are all in those two rooms. You can go and see for yourself..."

Yu Zhenping smiled, tossed a bunch of keys to Zhuang Rui, and said, "There are three rooms upstairs that can be used. We can't leave tonight, so let's stay upstairs..."

"Alright, I'll follow Boss Ren's arrangements. If you find anything good in the future, please remember me..."

After Zhuang Rui took the key, he gave Peng Fei a wink, signaling him to hand the backpack containing the money to Yu Zhenping, and then he took the key and opened a door.

After opening the door, Zhuang Rui didn't rush in. Instead, he reached out and touched the wall next to the door to turn on the light in the room.

"I... ***, these...these are all antiques?"

Even though he had mentally prepared himself, Zhuang Rui couldn't help but swear upon entering the room filled with antiques. Perhaps it was because he hadn't been to many museum storerooms, but the sheer number of bronze artifacts in the room was incredibly overwhelming.

On the floor directly opposite the door, there were more than a dozen bronze chimes of varying sizes. The largest was more than half a meter tall, while the smallest was only the size of a fist. They were engraved with various patterns and were exceptionally exquisite.

"Damn it, the archaeology department should just start offering a course on tomb raiding..."

Looking at the bronze chime bells, which were comparable to the bronze tripod he had just seen, Zhuang Rui was speechless. Whether from an academic perspective or in terms of the chime bells themselves, the value of these items was definitely no less than that bronze tripod.

The discovery of the chime bells from the Tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng shocked the world's archaeological community, as such exquisite musical instruments and such a magnificent orchestra, dating back more than two thousand years, are extremely rare in the history of world culture.

Although more chime bells have been unearthed since then, they are all relatively small and incomplete. The ones in front of Zhuang Rui, however, will likely cause a great sensation once they are unveiled.

After shifting his gaze from the chime bells, Zhuang Rui looked elsewhere. On the ground near the entrance, there were many bronze weapons, including halberds, spears, axes, swords, and daggers. Many of these weapons were ones Zhuang Rui had never seen before. Although they were covered in rust, Zhuang Rui knew that these things were deadly weapons thousands of years ago.

Other scattered items were bronze ritual vessels, such as the bronze jue (wine vessel) that Yu Zhenping had previously sold to Zhuang Rui. There were fifteen or sixteen of them on the ground, lying there like trash.

There were also many dowry items from the marriages of slave-owning nobles, which were casually placed on the ground. Yu Zhenping and others were so hungry that they didn't care what they had, and they even took bronze coins (cloth coins, knife coins), bronze hoes and other farm tools, stuffing the whole room full.

Zhuang Rui stood at the door and estimated that there were no fewer than two hundred artifacts in the room, mostly bronzes, with only a few pottery pieces, but the workmanship was rather rough, so Zhuang Rui didn't pay much attention to them.

Taking a deep breath, Zhuang Rui calmed his excitement at seeing so many objects. Feeling that the stale air in the room had dissipated, Zhuang Rui stepped into the room.

"Huh? What's going on?"

The house must have been closed for a long time, but Zhuang Rui didn't feel any stuffiness. The moment he stepped inside, the spiritual energy in his eyes stirred and automatically left his body.

Through the spiritual energy, one could see that the room was filled with an almost golden spiritual energy, so thick it was like liquid. When the spiritual energy entered Zhuang Rui's eyes, it was like a fish in water, constantly swimming around inside.

Zhuang Rui could feel that his originally purple spiritual energy was gradually changing color, with wisps of gold seeping into it, making the somewhat dim purple brighter.

After about four or five minutes, the spiritual energy in Zhuang Rui's eyes seemed to have been satiated and returned to his eyes. Without bothering to check the things in the room, Zhuang Rui closed his eyes slightly and began to sense the changes in the spiritual energy.

The original purple color has now turned into a purplish-gold color. Although he enjoyed the comfort of spiritual energy entering his body again, Zhuang Rui had no way of knowing exactly what kind of change had occurred for the time being.

Opening his eyes, Zhuang Rui looked outside. Spiritual energy pierced through the walls, and he saw the dirt road in the village outside. Looking further ahead, it seemed as if a camera was zooming in, stretching endlessly along the dirt road.

"Holy crap, no way?"

Zhuang Rui discovered that the distance at which he could see objects with spiritual energy seemed to have increased again. From Yu Zhenping's small building to the Hope Primary School at the village entrance, there was a distance of three or four hundred meters, but Zhuang Rui could see it clearly, and it seemed as if he still had energy left.

"When I have time in the future, I must go and travel around Mount Li in Shaanxi and the grasslands of Inner Mongolia. Even if the Qin Shi Huang Mausoleum and Genghis Khan's Tomb are buried deep, they can't possibly go three or four hundred meters underground, right?"

After discovering the eye mutation, Zhuang Rui immediately had this thought in his mind: he must persuade Professor Meng to excavate the Qin Shi Huang Mausoleum. This is my only specialty, wouldn't it be a waste not to use it?

Zhuang Rui had given up on studying his eyes. Although he could control the spiritual energy, its upgrades were completely random. The changes that occurred to him in the Jokhang Temple, in Myanmar, in England, and in this relatively small room were all inexplicable.

Zhuang Rui guessed that it might be related to the room's airtightness. He thought that when he had time in the future, he would definitely take Jin Pangzi to the Palace Museum's antique storage room to take a look.

"Huh? We've finally arrived?"

Just as Zhuang Rui was about to look further into the distance, several people dressed in camouflage appeared at the village entrance, hidden in the darkness. Without a doubt, this was Jiang Hao's arrest team.

They hadn't entered the village yet; they had probably just arrived. Jiang Hao was talking quietly to someone, fiddling with his phone in his hand.

Just then, Zhuang Rui's phone vibrated in his pocket. He took a few steps into the house, avoiding Yu Zhenping's gaze who was counting money outside, and then took out his phone.

Have you received the goods?

A text message appeared on the phone screen. It was from Jiang Hao. Although this place was poor and didn't even have a telephone, Zhuang Rui should still thank China Mobile for actually setting up a wireless base on the mountain.

"Boss Zhuang, have you finished reading?"

Zhuang Rui glanced towards the door and was about to reply to the text message when Yu Zhenping's voice suddenly came through, startling him so much that he almost threw his phone away.

"No...not yet. Is it alright to move all this stuff out?"

Zhuang Rui quickly stuffed his phone back into his pocket, pretending to examine the bronze artifacts. At that moment, Yu Zhenping appeared at the doorway.

"It's alright, I just need to give Secretary Li a heads-up..."

Yu Zhenping seemed to have something to discuss with Zhuang Rui. He took a step into the room and continued, "Mr. Zhuang, if you are satisfied with this place, I have another business opportunity I'd like to discuss with you..."

"Oh? Let's talk outside then..." Zhuang Rui was a little helpless. He couldn't possibly make a phone call in front of Yu Zhenping, could he?

"Boss Zhuang, please have some water. This is well water from our own well; it's very clean and thirst-quenching..."

The room was a bit stuffy, so Yu Zhenping invited Zhuang Rui and Peng Fei to sit in the courtyard. He found two tea mugs from somewhere and filled them with well water that he had just drawn up.

"If only we had some watermelon to eat..."

Zhuang Rui had drunk plenty of cold water since he was a child, and after looking at those objects, his mouth was already parched. He picked up his teacup and took a sip, and immediately felt a cool breeze enter his chest and lungs, making the hot weather seem to cool down in an instant.

"It's too late today. Tomorrow I'll have someone pick some watermelons and soak them in the well. That will taste so much better..."

Yu Zhenping answered casually, then added, "Boss Zhuang, I'd like to make a deal with you..."

"Tell me, I'm not afraid of having a lot of things..."

"I can tell that you are a person of high status, Mr. Zhuang. I would like to ask you for a favor. Could you please help me get out of the country?"

Although Yu Zhenping is now rich, he used to only be responsible for digging graves and didn't care about anything else. If you asked him to smuggle himself out of the country, he really couldn't find any way, so he turned to Zhuang Rui for help.

Zhuang Rui chuckled bitterly to himself upon hearing this: "Get you out of the country? Then I'll end up in jail..."

Seeing Zhuang Rui hesitate in silence, Yu Zhenping quickly said, "As long as Boss Zhuang can help with this, I, Ren, will definitely reward you. I have hundreds of similar old items, which I can give to you..."

"What?! You have more? Those 1000-plus items aren't all here?"

Zhuang Rui was taken aback upon hearing this. So, this place was just one of the many hiding spots a cunning rabbit could hide in?

Zhuang Rui was shocked, but he didn't realize that he had let something slip. Yu Zhenping had never told him how much stuff he had.

"Boss Zhuang, how did you know my background?"

Zhuang Rui didn't notice, but Yu Zhenping heard it clearly. His face instantly turned gloomy, his eyes fixed on Zhuang Rui, while his right hand quietly reached behind his waist.

Chapter 703 Case Closed

"What...what exactly is going on?"

Upon receiving Zhuang Rui's call, Team Leader Jiang Hao rushed over and, seeing Yu Zhenping bound and gagged on the ground, asked in surprise.

Yu Zhenping was tied up in an interesting way. His hands were behind his back, and his legs were bent backward and tied tightly with a shoelace, making him look like a circus performer. His mouth was also stuffed with a rag, but his eyes were fixed on Zhuang Rui, filled with resentment.

Meanwhile, a commotion arose outside as dozens of police officers and armed police entered the village, causing a stir in the small village. Township-level leaders who followed were trying to calm the villagers down.

However, since this place is far from the reach of the central government, the villagers didn't really listen to reason. More and more people from outside gathered. If it weren't for the police tape cordon in

front of the house and more than a dozen armed police officers with live ammunition standing there, the villagers probably would have rushed in long ago.

"It's nothing. He somehow found out who I am and tried to shoot me, but my friend subdued him. By the way, did you guys fail to ambush me properly and he discovered us?"

Zhuang Rui shrugged innocently. He wouldn't reveal what he had let slip, otherwise these police officers might turn their backs on him and deny what they had promised him.

Moreover, it was indeed very dangerous just now. If Peng Fei hadn't been quick-witted and swiftly stabbed Yu Zhenping's wrist with his knife just as Yu Zhenping raised his gun, it would have been like an adult bullying a child.

However, this time it was obviously not as thrilling as last time, because from the time Yu Zhenping drew his gun to the time Peng Fei subdued him, less than two minutes had passed. Before Zhuang Rui could even react, Peng Fei had already untied Yu Zhenping's shoelaces and tied him up.

Moreover, after Peng Fei looked at the gun, he curled his lip. The safety wasn't even off, what's the point of taking it out?

"Cuff him first, and protect the scene..."

Jiang Hao also noticed the pistol on the ground and quickly had it put into a plastic bag. He was quite frightened; Team Leader Jiang knew Zhuang Rui's background, and if he were really injured by Yu Laoba, even if the case was solved, he probably wouldn't benefit.

To be honest, Jiang Hao was really relieved to have caught Yu Zhenping, because this guy was as slippery as an eel and could easily escape.

This place is surrounded by mountains and dense forests. Even if thousands of people were to sneak in, they wouldn't be able to be detected. If Yu Zhenping were to actually get in, even if all the police in Zhengzhou were mobilized, it would be to no avail.

Yu Zhenping knew he was doomed, so he didn't resist. Even after the rag was removed from his mouth, he didn't say a word, but his eyes were still fixed on Zhuang Rui.

"Why are you looking at me like that? I'm just cooperating with the police investigation..."

Zhuang Rui felt a little uneasy under Yu Zhenping's gaze, and quickly turned his face away, saying, "Team Leader Jiang, my mission is complete. I won't take too many of the artifacts you seized this time, just two pieces will suffice..."

Fearing that Jiang Hao might betray him after using him, Zhuang Rui quickly reminded him that last time in Shaanxi, his friend had done a good deed but didn't get any benefits; instead, his car was burned and he was given a fright. This time, he couldn't go back empty-handed.

"Two pieces? Didn't you say you needed one-third?"

Jiang Hao was taken aback. This was not like Zhuang Rui who had bargained with him before they came. However, Jiang Hao did not care about these things. According to him, giving Zhuang Rui more would also earn him a favor.

"Alright, one-third it is then. Team Leader Jiang, you'd better keep your word..."

Zhuang Rui was delighted to hear this. He had originally worried that the two items he wanted to choose were too expensive, so he changed his terms. Since Team Leader Jiang insisted, he would handle any pressure from Jiang.

"By the way, Team Leader Jiang, these Yu brothers once donated money to build a school in the village and are very popular with the villagers. I think you should take them out of here as soon as possible..."

Hearing the commotion outside, Zhuang Rui kindly reminded Jiang Hao that these villagers didn't understand the law. If you explained the law to them, they would only talk about personal connections. If you talked about personal connections, well... they didn't understand the law either.

"Okay, I'll arrange it right away. Are you going back now, or are you going to cooperate with the cultural relics experts we've invited to clean up these looted artifacts?"

Jiang Hao readily agreed. He knew that in these remote areas, some things were unreasonable, so he quickly used his walkie-talkie to call the police stationed at the village entrance to come and take the people away.

Zhuang Rui thought for a moment and said, "I'll go back now, tonight. Team Leader Jiang, I was originally in Hainan taking wedding photos, but this matter has delayed me. I'm saying, the bronze tripod and bronze chime bells from this batch of cultural relics must be left to my museum..."

"Okay, Mr. Zhuang, don't worry. After the stolen artifacts are inventoried, we will discuss with the cultural relics department to temporarily display the bronzes you mentioned in your museum..."

Jiang Hao nodded in agreement. This matter was not difficult. With over a thousand antiques, lending a few to Zhuang Rui Museum was not a big deal. After all, the ownership still belonged to the state, and placing them in any museum was for the service of the people.

Not long after, the sound of car brakes was heard at the entrance. Two armed police officers escorted Yu Zhenping into a police car. When the villagers saw Yu Zhenping come out in handcuffs, they immediately erupted in chaos. Some of the young men were about to rush forward to snatch him away.

"Bang! Bang bang!"

Three sharp gunshots stunned the crowd. Jiang Hao stood at the door and shouted, "Fellow villagers, this man has broken the law! Don't interfere..."

Perhaps the villagers couldn't understand Jiang Hao's Beijing-accented Mandarin, but the pistol was real. Yu Zhenping wasn't their village's Er Gouzi or their benefactor, Boss Yu. Immediately, the young men who had rushed to the front all retreated.

Although these people's ancestors rose to power through rebellion and killing officials, the color TV that Boss Yu bought for them made them realize that this was a new society, not an era where ancient spears and broadswords were still popular.

Seeing the villagers gradually disperse under the reassurance of the township leaders, Jiang Hao breathed a sigh of relief. "Mr. Zhuang, you two should also go in this car. I need to stay here with these cultural relics experts today; I can only go back tomorrow..."

Jiang Hao had carried out a mission to rescue trafficked women in the past. He was beaten by some ignorant villagers and was bedridden for a whole week. So when he saw things were not going well, Jiang Hao immediately fired a warning shot.

"Hey, Team Leader Jiang, couldn't you arrange another car?"

To be honest, Zhuang Rui really didn't want to ride in the same car as Yu Zhenping. The way this guy looked at him was like a wolf cub, with that cold and arrogant look. Zhuang Rui had no doubt that he would pounce on him and bite him.

Jiang Hao thought for a moment, nodded, and said, "Okay, then I'll arrange another car..."

Because of the fierce local customs, the township leaders who came with him are not going back today. Jiang Hao arranged for a local criminal police officer to drive his colleague and Zhuang Rui back to Zhengzhou. Although he couldn't leave, he still had to conduct a surprise interrogation of Yu Zhenping.

...

"***, isn't this kid trying to make things difficult for me?"

Jiang Hao, who had been up all night watching the experts inventory the cultural relics, couldn't help but swear. After a night of learning about cultural relics, he finally understood the value of the two bronze artifacts and why Zhuang Rui had specifically requested them yesterday.

After figuring out the value of the two items, Jiang Hao didn't dare to make a decision on his own. He submitted a report to his department and asked them to handle the matter, while he himself took a car back to Zhengzhou.

Because the number of cultural relics counted did not match what Yu Laoqi had told him, Jiang Hao had to pry open Yu Zhenping's mouth and find out the location of the remaining cultural relics.

For some reason, Yu Zhenping, whom Yu Laoqi described as a tough nut to crack, confessed the details of the remaining two cultural relic hiding places before Team Leader Jiang even arrived, and also revealed all the tombs he had looted over the past ten years.

It wasn't until Yu Zhenping revealed that his physique was stunted due to drugs administered by Boss Yu when he was young that Jiang Hao suddenly understood something.

The sky in Hainan is very blue, and the seawater along the beach is crystal clear, but there aren't many tourists at this time of year.

Going to Hainan in July or August is pure torture. In temperatures of over 30 degrees Celsius, you have to wear a suit and pose for photos. Zhuang Rui was driven crazy. He had to shoot the sunrise in the morning and the sunset in the evening. Zhuang Rui almost asked the photographer if they should also film him having sex with his wife at night.

After returning to *** from Zhengzhou, Zhuang Rui took Qin Xuanbing and Peng Fei and his wife to Hainan. However, after arriving, he realized he had made a mistake. Although the sea view was beautiful, the weather made it difficult to keep his clothes dry.

After a long day, Zhuang Rui felt even more exhausted than when he was outwitting Yu Zhenping in Zhengzhou.

"Kid, don't laugh at me, it'll be your turn to film this tomorrow..."

The hotel where Zhuang Rui was staying was not far from a port. Standing on the hotel balcony, he could clearly see the lights on the ships.

This time, Zhuang Rui and Qin Xuanbing took wedding photos, and they also let Peng Fei and his wife take photos together. Otherwise, Zhuang Rui's task would have been completed today. He would have waited until Peng Fei finished his photos tomorrow before going back to *** together.

"Shoot that thing..."

Peng Fei pursed his lips, and before he could finish speaking, he saw his girlfriend, who had been clinging to him like a little bird, glare at him. He immediately lowered his body and continued, "You have to take a picture, you absolutely have to take a picture!" Peng Fei's action made everyone laugh.

Chapter 704 Museum Opening (Part 1)

People living near a newly built residential complex on the East Third Ring Road in *** City are wondering why it's suddenly so lively today, since the groundbreaking ceremony for the complex was already held.

And those high-rise buildings that haven't even been topped out yet don't look like they're finished.

Curious people went over for a look and realized that it wasn't the completion of a building project, but rather the opening of a private museum next to the residential complex.

At the grand entrance of the museum, dozens of flower baskets were already placed, some bearing private names and others public ones, such as flower baskets bearing the names of cultural relics offices from various provinces.

In addition, flower baskets from certain travel agencies and museums also occupy a lot of space. If you look closely, you can even spot flower baskets in certain parts of the room.

However, this is quite normal in *** City, and it doesn't scare the onlookers. Nowadays, there are people in the capital who specialize in this kind of thing. As long as you want, you can get anyone's flower basket, and they will even acknowledge it. You have to admit that these people are incredibly resourceful.

Of course, Zhuang Rui didn't need these people to come and support him. With Ouyang Jun's influence, he wasn't worried about not being able to invite anyone.

Dozens of cars were parked in the parking lot on one side of the museum. They were all driven by guests who came to attend the museum's opening. Most of the early arrivals were young people who were chatting at the entrance.

Zhuang Rui has been back from Hainan for more than 10 days. During this time, he has been preparing for the opening of the museum, which has kept him extremely busy. He has basically not been able to stay at the courtyard house. When he is tired, he just makes do with sleeping on the sofa in the curator's office.

Jiang Hao was a man of his word. It's unclear how he negotiated with the local cultural relics department, but a week after the Yu family's major tomb raiding case was closed, he delivered the bronze tripod and bronze chime bells that Zhuang Rui wanted to the ***.

Along with the artifacts arrived over two hundred pieces of bronze, which immediately kept Zhuang Rui busy. He hired several bronze appraisal experts from Beijing at high salaries, and they worked several sleepless nights to complete the classification and description of these cultural relics.

Zhuang Rui also had to work on designing the display cases and setting up the bronze ware exhibition hall. Even with Huangfu Yun's help, it took Zhuang Rui several days to get any sleep.

Huangfu Yun was also busy during this time. Zhuang Rui forced him to eat and drink with Ouyang Jun everywhere, visiting all the travel agencies in the capital. He put in a lot of effort and finally managed to include the museum in the itineraries of major travel agencies.

You see, if Zhuang Rui doesn't follow Mr. Ma's membership system, he'll have to deal with these travel agencies; otherwise, the museum's monthly expenses alone would make him lose a fortune.

The museum's staffing is now basically complete. Zhuang Rui is naturally chosen as the director, and there are two executive deputy directors: one is Huangfu Yun, and the other is a researcher invited from the Palace Museum who has extensive experience in museum management.

Huangfuyun also poached more than a dozen recent graduates majoring in museum studies from Peking University, practically luring all the students graduating this year to come. He believed that under the leadership of that deputy curator, they would quickly mature.

With the addition of the security guards previously hired, as well as more than a dozen young and beautiful female guides, Zhuang Rui now has dozens of employees. As a result, the museum's monthly expenses are quite substantial.

The salaries of dozens of people amount to hundreds of thousands of yuan per month. This does not include the cost of museum renovations and the maintenance of various cultural relics. If these are included, it would take more than a million yuan per month.

It's not that Zhuang Rui can't afford the money, but if it's entirely supported by private funds, it would be better to donate the museum to the state. Only when income and expenditure are balanced can private museums develop in the right direction.

Don't underestimate those travel agencies. Countless attractions in *** City rely on them for their livelihood. Although they get a commission for each group of people they bring in, it's still better than empty-handed business with no profit, right?

Zhuang Rui's current pricing for travel agencies is: 50 RMB for domestic adult tickets, *** for children under 1.2 meters, 10 RMB for children under 1.5 meters, *** for seniors over 60, and half price for those with discharge certificates or active duty military ID.

For foreigners, it's 100 yuan a ticket. It's not that Zhuang Rui is greedy; he's doing this to align with international standards.

Zhuang Rui had seen foreigners selling tickets this way when he was at the Guimet Museum in Paris a few months ago. A ticket for foreign tourists cost 10 euros, which is about 100 RMB.

The biggest attraction of Zhuang Rui's museum for foreigners is the Picasso art section. You can see that Picasso's portrait now occupies an entire wall outside the museum.

Zhuang Rui's understanding of this matter is that it's about opening a museum for Chinese people to make money from foreigners!

Following Huangfu Yun's suggestion, Zhuang Rui sent invitations not only to major museums in the capital, but also to three or four hundred private museums across the country. Since they were all private museums, they could exchange experiences.

Meanwhile, some well-known collectors and appraisal experts from various provinces across the country also received invitations from Zhuang Rui. This was an idea suggested by another deputy curator. These

people have a high reputation in the art world, and if you get along well with them, you won't have to worry about no one coming to "exchange" your collection in the future.

"Brother Jin, you've arrived. Please come in and have a seat..."

Zhuang Rui looked even more like a groom today than on his engagement day. Of course, today he was wearing an old-fashioned long robe with a front opening, instead of the suit he wore at his engagement.

People who received invitations started arriving one after another from eight o'clock in the morning. By this time, Zhuang Rui no longer had time to sit inside and entertain the guests. Instead, he and Huangfu Yun went to the door to welcome the friends who had come to support them today.

"Brother, congratulations, congratulations! This is a congratulatory gift from my teacher and me..."

Fatty Jin handed a thick envelope to the person writing the congratulatory gift on the table behind Zhuang Rui, then stepped forward and hugged Zhuang Rui, whispering in his ear, "The teacher said he won't join in the fun, but he wants to come and see your collection this afternoon..."

The name of this museum was personally inscribed by the master. Zhuang Rui originally wanted the master to attend the ribbon-cutting ceremony as a guest, but the old man was of a simple and unassuming nature and sent his young apprentice instead.

"I'm going to pick up the master this afternoon, Brother Jin. You should rest inside for now. We'll have a good drink together after the ribbon-cutting ceremony at noon..."

Zhuang Rui felt a little regretful. If a master like him, a titan in the world of antiques, could have appeared at the opening ceremony, his museum would have gained even more prestige.

"Brother Zhuang, you go ahead with your work, I'll go in by myself..."

Seeing that Zhuang Rui was covered in sweat, Fatty Jin had someone put down the flower basket and then went to chat with an old friend.

On a small scale, today is a gathering of the Beijing pro-democracy community; on a larger scale, it is a grand event for the entire national pro-democracy community.

Zhuang Rui spent a huge amount of money on this opening ceremony. All the out-of-province guests who received invitations and confirmed their attendance had their airfare and accommodation covered. Zhuang Rui spent several million yuan on this alone.

"Oh, Mr. Ma, please come in, please come in for tea. I reckon you'll be waiting a while..."

No sooner had we seen off Fatty Jin than the top dog in Beijing's entertainment industry arrived, followed by several people carrying flower baskets. It's the trend now, and there are even companies that specialize in recycling them. Once the business is done, they just tear off the banners from the flower baskets and put them back in the shop to sell.

"Brother Zhuang, today is a grand gathering for our *** community. I've been wanting to get friends from all over the country together for a long time, but I haven't been able to do it. I didn't expect you to make it happen. This is just a small congratulatory gift, nothing more..."

Scholars have the most etiquette. In ancient times, they would send a travel gift for a long journey, and they would send a congratulatory gift for weddings, funerals, business openings, etc. Mr. Ma's congratulatory gift was also quite generous, a full 20,000 RMB.

"Mr. Ma, you've gone to so much trouble, I can't accept this..." Zhuang Rui quickly said a few polite words.

"Hey, Teacher Zhuang, we're here..."

While Zhuang Rui was exchanging pleasantries with Mr. Ma, a group of people carrying five or six flower baskets arrived at the museum entrance. The person at the front greeted Zhuang Rui loudly as soon as he saw him.

"Hey, it's Manager Zhang! Look, you've come all this way, no need to be so polite..."

Zhuang Rui took a look and saw that it was Manager Zhang Li from Zhengzhou Antique City, followed by Lao Qi and others. It seemed that all the prominent figures in Zhengzhou's antique industry had come.

"Look at what you're saying, how could we not come and support your museum opening?"

After Zhang Li directed the people to put down the flower basket, he walked up the steps of the museum, shook hands with Zhuang Rui, turned around and saw Mr. Ma, and was taken aback for a moment before saying, "You must be Teacher Ma?"

Upon seeing Mr. Ma nod, Manager Zhang couldn't help but get excited. This man was a leading figure in folk treasure appraisal, and he was still relatively young. Apart from the older generation of experts, he was one of the most outstanding.

Zhang Li's museum struggled to find renowned experts to oversee its appraisals. He came to the opening of Zhuang Rui Museum hoping to meet more experts. Unexpectedly, before even entering, he met a highly respected expert and immediately went up to chat with Mr. Ma.

"Monkey, please invite these gentlemen inside for some tea..."

Today, not only the monkey, but also Da Xiong and his wife Xiao Jing, as well as Manager Zhao, have come to help. The museum is opening, and "Xuanrui Zhai" will be closed for the day.

"This is really tiring..."

Zhuang Rui glanced at his watch; it was only 10 a.m., while the museum's opening ceremony was scheduled for 11:30 a.m. Most people hadn't arrived yet, and he still had things to do.

Xiao Jing, who was keeping track of the congratulatory gifts behind Zhuang Rui, noticed that no guests had arrived yet and quietly said to Zhuang Rui, "Brother Zhuang, do you know how much money we received?"

Chapter 705 Museum Opening (Part 2)

"How much money did you receive?"

Zhuang Rui asked casually, "He's so busy right now, like a rabbit's father. How could he have time to check the money coming in?"

On the other hand, Zhuang Rui was prepared to lose money on this opening ceremony. Over three hundred well-known collectors and experts from across the country confirmed their attendance, and with the red envelopes from various news media outlets, it wouldn't be any less than five million yuan.

"Brother Zhuang, we've collected a total of 1.38 million..."

Xiao Jing couldn't hide her excitement. Although she and Da Xiong's salaries were not low, they had never seen so much money before. The two cardboard boxes under her were already piled high with money.

"What? There are over a million?"

Zhuang Rui was also taken aback when he heard this. He felt that two or three hundred thousand was already a lot, but he did not expect that with only seventy or eighty people, the gift money was more than one million. If all the people came, he would probably make up for his five million expenses.

However, Zhuang Rui was a little puzzled. He had been standing here the whole time, and it seemed like there wasn't that much cash here.

"Yes, it's over a million, Brother Zhuang. These guys all gave us cash checks..."

Xiao Jing pointed to several names in the book. Zhuang Rui glanced at them and saw that the gift money for people like Bai Feng was 50,000, while the gift money for several people from Hong Kong, such as the Bai siblings and Mr. Zheng, was 200,000. This was in line with the national conditions in China. Otherwise, giving three to five million would not be much to them.

Zhuang Rui couldn't help but smile bitterly to himself. These were all favors. It seemed that he would have to find a housekeeper or assistant in the future to help him manage these miscellaneous matters.

Chinese people value face the most. If you forget someone else's wedding, funeral, or shop opening in the future, you will offend them terribly.

Thinking that he had received over a million yuan in wedding gifts in just two or three hours, Zhuang Rui was secretly astonished. He remembered when he was young, giving 5 or 10 yuan to a neighbor's wedding was considered generous. Only a little over ten years had passed, but the amount of money given had increased thousands of times.

"Wu'er, do you want to go inside and rest for a while? I'll keep an eye on things for you."

Today is the opening day of Zhuang Rui's museum, and Ouyang Jun is considered one of the hosts. He was inside talking to some people, but he's not from the antique circle. Apart from chatting with Bai Feng, he didn't have much in common with the others, so he left after a while.

"No need, Fourth Brother. Just let them know when the leaders come over..."

Zhuang Rui was really exhausted. It was almost noon, and the sun was blazing down on him. Even his silk robe, which was warm in winter and cool in summer, was soaked with sweat and clung to his body.

"Which leader do you want me to receive?"

Ouyang Jun curled his lip and said dismissively, "Although I'm not involved in officialdom, there are very few people in *** City who would come to the museum opening today and whom I would deign to greet."

"Alright, Fourth Brother, you can go cool off inside. I have to get back to work..."

When Zhuang Rui saw another group of people carrying five or six flower baskets approaching from afar, he quickly went down the steps to greet them. Zhuang Rui didn't care about class distinctions; everyone who came was a guest, and they were all giving him face. He didn't show any favoritism. Basically, he personally went up to greet each person who came.

"Boss Zhuang, congratulations! You didn't post an invitation, so I've come uninvited..."

Zhuang Rui was familiar with this group of people. It turned out that they were led by Yang Bo, the young master from Beijing. Several of them had caused trouble at his jewelry store before, and they were all full of congratulations when they saw Zhuang Rui.

"Hehe, Young Master Yang, what are you saying? I was just worried you'd be too busy. Come on, guys, let's all go inside and have a seat..."

Zhuang Rui didn't have a particularly good impression of these people, but he didn't dislike them either. Over the past six months, this group of spoiled young masters from Beijing had patronized a considerable number of jewelry stores, amounting to at least tens of millions of yuan.

"Mr. Zhuang, let me introduce you. This is my mother..."

After hearing Zhuang Rui's words, Yang Bo did not move, but stepped aside, and a stylishly dressed middle-aged woman appeared in front of Zhuang Rui.

"Oh, it's Ms. Zhao. We're opening a small shop, and we're sorry to have bothered you..."

Zhuang Rui knew that the woman in front of him, who looked elegant and probably only in her thirties, was actually over fifty years old. More than ten years ago, she had developed a small restaurant into the current food and beverage group, and was a figure not to be underestimated.

"Mr. Zhuang, you're too kind. My son was rude last time, and I've been saying I wanted to apologize to you in person..."

Ms. Zhao adopted a humble attitude and spoke as if she were treating Zhuang Rui as an equal. She was just a businesswoman and did not have the clout to act like an elder in front of Zhuang Rui.

In ancient times, there was a social hierarchy of scholars, farmers, artisans, and merchants. Merchants were the lowest and least prestigious profession. For example, Fan Li, who assisted Goujian in destroying Wu, made great contributions, but because he later went into business and eventually resigned from his official post to pursue commerce, he was unable to be recorded in history alongside other famous figures.

Of course, in modern society, farming is considered the least promising career path, and whether a person can make money has almost become the sole measure of their ability.

However, at certain levels of society, officials still rank first, while businessmen, no matter how big their businesses are, still have to be humble and subservient in front of certain people.

"Ms. Zhao, you're too kind. Please come in..."

Aside from girls under ten years old like Nannan, Zhuang Rui really wasn't good at dealing with women. After a polite greeting, he stepped aside and invited the group to sit down inside.

When Zhuang Rui first started renovating the museum, he left a conference room that could accommodate more than 500 people for future academic exchanges. Fortunately, the museum's conference room was big enough, otherwise most of the people would probably have to stay outside in the sun with him today.

"This must be... Mr. Ouyang?"

As she approached the museum entrance, Ms. Zhao stopped in her tracks, for she recognized Ouyang Jun. In Beijing, among those who had built up a certain level of business, there were few who didn't know Ouyang Jun.

Moreover, Ms. Zhao works in the catering industry. Some time ago, she heard that Ouyang Jun wanted to sell the club and had been trying to find someone to make the connection and talk to him. Her purpose in coming here today was to see if she could meet Ouyang Jun. She didn't expect to run into him before she even entered the door.

"Fourth Brother, could you please attend to Ms. Zhao?"

When Zhuang Rui saw that someone else had come in, he quickly apologized and, without caring whether Ouyang Jun was willing or not, assigned him a task.

The people who arrived later were mostly from government departments, including leaders from the Beijing Museum and officials from the Industry and Commerce and Taxation Bureau. Apart from recognizing the former district office director who had been promoted to ***, Zhuang Rui didn't recognize any of them.

These people were naturally left to Huangfu Yun to entertain. Although some of them were not high-ranking officials, they wielded considerable power. As the saying goes, a local official is more powerful than a distant one. These people had to be treated with care. Of course, none of the officials in the capital would dare to undermine Zhuang Rui.

As the opening date drew closer, more and more people came. People in the antique circle were fine; whether they knew each other or not, they could talk. But those from travel agencies and leaders at all levels all needed someone to accompany them. Not to mention Zhuang Rui, even Liu Chuan and Zhao Guodong, who came all the way from Pengcheng, were extremely busy.

Apart from Ouyang Jun, the Ouyang brothers, including Ouyang Lei, also sent flower baskets, though they didn't come. The area around the museum entrance, a couple hundred meters long, was filled with various congratulatory flower baskets, causing passersby to stop and look.

"Brother Zhuang, the teacher is here! Come quickly and greet him..."

Just as Zhuang Rui was so busy he could barely breathe, Fatty Jin suddenly ran out from inside. He was wearing very little summer clothing, and the two fat bulges on his chest swayed up and down like a woman's... well, you know.

"Didn't the master say he would come in the afternoon?"

Zhuang Rui was stunned for a moment upon hearing this, but he still followed Fatty Jin toward the parking lot. Before they even reached the parking lot, they saw the master sitting in a wheelchair being pushed over by his nephew.

"Sir, how could I trouble you to come on such a hot day..."

Zhuang Rui grabbed an umbrella and ran to the wheelchair, quickly shielding the master from the sun. Compared to the last time he saw the old man, his complexion was much better. It seemed that his spiritual energy was quite effective in helping the old man recover his physical functions.

"Young Zhuang, if you want to revitalize traditional culture, this old man doesn't have much to give you, so I can only come and support you..."

The old man was very humorous, but his eyes kept darting to the wall behind the flower basket. The wall was covered with exquisitely painted murals of various exhibition halls in the museum.

The old man looked very carefully, and would occasionally look up and ask Zhuang Rui a few questions. He was in such good spirits that he didn't look like a man in his nineties at all.

The antique dealers, who were originally chatting in the conference room, couldn't sit still any longer when they heard that the master was coming, and they all rushed out of the door.

This also reveals everyone's status in the antique trade: Mr. Ma leads the way, followed by several of the master's students, then experts and professors from various museums, and finally, the more famous connoisseurs.

People like Manager Zhang from Zhengzhou could only stand outside the circle and watch from afar.

When the master arrived, Zhuang Rui had to stay by his side, because the old man was really too old, and if anything happened, he could provide timely treatment.

As Zhuang Rui entered the conference room, he released a wisp of spiritual energy, which then entered the master's body. The sudden coolness as he entered the air-conditioned room from the outside did not attract the master's attention.

"Secretary Wang? What does he want on the phone?"

Zhuang Rui was chatting with the elderly man, showing him museum brochures, when his phone suddenly lit up. He glanced at the screen and was puzzled.

Chapter 706 Museum Opening (Part 2)

The caller was Wang Peng, Zhuang Rui's uncle's secretary. However, Zhuang Rui had never had much dealings with him before, so he was somewhat suspicious.

When Ouyang Zhenwu visited Zhuang Rui's courtyard house, he never had his secretary accompany him. Zhuang Rui and Wang Peng had only met at Ouyang Zhenwu's villa and exchanged business cards, but they had never spoken on the phone.

Although Wang Peng was Ouyang Zhenwu's secretary, he also held the position of deputy director in the General Office of the ministry, making him a true deputy director-level official. If he were to be transferred to a provincial or local level, he would be a high-ranking official in that region.

"Secretary Wang, hello, I'm Zhuang Rui..."

Some time ago, Zhuang Rui had heard Ouyang Jun mention that Wang Da, the chief secretary, personally helped with the paperwork for his museum. Even though it was Ouyang Zhenwu's influence, Zhuang Rui still had to accept the favor.

"Xiao Zhuang, get ready, the boss is about to go to the opening ceremony of your museum..."

Wang Da Mi's voice wasn't loud, so he must have been in the car. But what he said startled Zhuang Rui. He hadn't heard his uncle mention coming before.

"Secretary Wang, how much longer until you arrive?"

As Zhuang Rui spoke, he stood up. Even if it wasn't Minister Ouyang who had come, he was still his elder, so it was only right and proper for him to go out and greet him.

"I've already seen your property development, I'll be there soon..."

After Secretary Wang finished speaking, he hung up the phone and turned to Ouyang Zhenwu, who was sitting in the back seat of the car, saying, "Boss, Zhuang Rui has been notified..."

"Um....."

Ouyang Zhenwu nodded, looking at Wang Peng's puzzled expression, and said with a smile, "Little Wang, although Zhuang Rui is my nephew, that's not why I went there."

Currently, there aren't many private museums in China. Compared to other countries, they lag behind in both government support and market regulation. Most museums also have very limited collections.

However, Zhuang Rui's museum is different. His vision is exceptionally high, and he has pioneered a path no one has taken before: exchanging artifacts with foreign museums. This enriches his own collection while simultaneously bringing national treasures back to China. This is a very meaningful endeavor and deserves our attention and support..."

"It's not that those who came before didn't want to walk that path, but rather that they didn't have Picasso's works..."

Upon hearing his boss's words, Wang Da Mi couldn't help but mutter to himself, "If Picasso's works were everywhere, would they be worth such a high price?"

Wang Peng often accompanied his boss to academic exchanges abroad, and he knew the nature of those museums very well. If Zhuang Rui didn't have Picasso's works, who would bother with Zhuang Rui?

Without Picasso's works, let alone exchanging collections, Zhuang Rui probably wouldn't even be able to get into the office of a foreign museum director. Therefore, Zhuang Rui's approach is not replicable at all.

"Boss, you're right. We can have the museum issue a notice promoting Zhuang Rui's approach..."

Wang Da Mi knew what Ouyang Zhenwu meant; he was afraid that Zhuang Rui wouldn't be able to control the old hands in the antique business, so he stepped in to support Zhuang Rui.

Upon hearing this, Ouyang Zhenwu shook his head and said, "There's no need for a formal notification, but we could organize cultural relics departments at all levels to visit and exchange ideas at Zhuang Rui's museum..."

Wang Peng guessed correctly. Although Ouyang Zhenwu was upright, he was not pedantic. The matter of the Zhuang Rui Museum was ordered by his superiors, which is why he openly supported his nephew, clearly showing that he was not afraid of being criticized.

"I understand, I will pass on your instructions..."

After hearing her boss's words, Secretary Wang nodded and lowered her head, thinking to herself, "The boss is truly going all out to support Zhuang Rui..."

Although the Ministry of Culture does not have vertical management over the cultural relics departments at the provincial and municipal levels and cannot appoint or dismiss relevant cadres, the ministry's documents are still taken seriously by the provinces and cities, and they will certainly organize visits and learning opportunities for their respective departments.

It is important to know that there are more than 1,600 counties (including autonomous counties, banners, autonomous banners, special zones and forest areas), more than 300 county-level cities, and more than 200 prefecture-level cities in the country.

Zhuang Rui's museum isn't state-owned, so people naturally have to pay tuition to learn from it. If three to five people from each of these cities come, it would be a considerable income for Zhuang Rui's museum.

"Secretary Wang, hello, Uncle, why didn't you give me any advance notice before you came?"

Without notifying anyone, Zhuang Rui quietly went to the parking lot. As soon as he arrived, he saw Ouyang Zhenwu getting out of the car and quickly went to greet him.

"What? You're not welcome? Then I'll leave..."

Ouyang Zhenwu's words left Secretary Wang and his driver, who had worked for him for many years, speechless. They had never seen their boss speak to anyone in such a joking tone before.

"No way, Uncle, it's so hard to get you to come and support me..."

Zhuang Rui chuckled and pulled Ouyang Zhenwu aside. Among his uncles, he was closest to his youngest uncle, and among his cousins, he had the best relationship with Ouyang Jun. Therefore, he was usually a bit disrespectful to his elders.

Ouyang Zhenwu chuckled and patted Zhuang Rui's head, saying, "Well, don't call me 'little uncle' later, or people will say I'm abusing my power..."

"Hehe, I understand, Minister Ouyang..."

"Hmm, your museum is very unique, and you've even made use of the exterior walls..."

Ouyang Zhenwu followed behind Zhuang Rui, looked at the museum's exterior, and nodded in praise.

"Hey, Uncle, that's all money! I used my own wall as a makeshift toilet, and some government departments still come to my door to charge me. What kind of logic is that..."

It would be better if this matter weren't mentioned, because Zhuang Rui gets furious just thinking about it. When he first put up the graffiti on the wall, the relevant departments immediately came knocking on his door, saying that it was an outdoor graffiti and that they would charge some kind of urban space fee. This almost made Zhuang Rui lose his temper.

"Ahem, you kid, this is specifically for the daily management of outdoor GG facilities and for comprehensive urban environmental improvement. Why are you the only one complaining?"

Ouyang Zhenwu glared at Zhuang Rui with displeasure. National policies and government regulations are not to be commented on casually. Ouyang Zhenwu was thinking about whether he should give Zhuang Rui a warning, otherwise, if he really used the privileges of his brothers, that would be something that would give others leverage against him.

"I was just saying, Uncle. We're law-abiding citizens, we don't do anything crooked..."

As they spoke, the three arrived at the conference room door. Zhuang Rui opened the door, letting Ouyang Zhenwu enter first. Then, he clapped his hands and said loudly, "Minister Ouyang, despite your busy schedule, have come to attend the opening ceremony of my museum. Everyone, please welcome him..."

Zhuang Rui's words immediately silenced the conference room. To be honest, the number of people in the room who knew about the relationship between Zhuang Rui and Ouyang Zhenwu could be counted on one hand.

Most of the people present were from the antique circle and were familiar with Ouyang Zhenwu. Some government officials from other units were even more aware of the power of the Ouyang family. It can be said that Ouyang Zhenwu's arrival made many people start to re-examine Zhuang Rui and his museum.

I doubt that even for the opening ceremony of the Capital Museum, the Ministry of Culture would only send a vice minister. Zhuang Rui, with just a private museum, managed to invite a minister, and the head of the department directly under the museum, no less. What kind of connections and background does that require?

The arrogant local department leader, who had been thinking about how to get some benefits from the museum in the future, suddenly started trembling when he saw Ouyang Zhenwu attending the opening ceremony. He figured that the reason others hadn't bothered him before was because they were magnanimous and had connections with the Ouyang family. Killing him would be as easy as squashing a bug.

After a brief silence, applause suddenly erupted, but in everyone's minds, the applause was probably mostly for the seemingly mysterious young man.

"Sir, you've come too. Young Master Zhuang certainly has quite the influence..."

Ouyang Zhenwu spotted the master in the wheelchair and rushed over. In terms of status, he was the most distinguished person present, but in terms of age and seniority, he was a junior in front of the master.

"Young people are energetic and capable; they deserve our support!"

The master smiled and said, though his words were few, they were firm and showed the importance Zhuang Rui held in his heart.

Some experts who had come out of politeness after receiving the invitation were even more impressed with Zhuang Rui after hearing the old man's evaluation of him.

Everyone knows that masters are never afraid of the powerful and influential. Minister Ouyang's arrival only shows that this young man has a powerful background, but the old man's words have established Zhuang Rui's status in the antique industry and made his colleagues look at him with new eyes.

"Alright, it's about time. Shall we begin the ribbon-cutting ceremony?"

After Ouyang Zhenwu and the master chatted for a while, Zhuang Rui checked the time and it was almost time, so he asked the emcee to start making arrangements. The people in the conference room, led by the museum staff, gathered at the entrance of the museum.

As the professional band invited by Huangfuyun began to play music, several guides who were temporarily acting as hostesses led Ouyang Zhenwu and his entourage to the main entrance of the museum. The scissors, trays, red flowers, and other items used for the ribbon-cutting were all prepared.

The positions of the people were also very particular. The master and Minister Ouyang stood on the left and right sides in the middle. Mr. Ma stood next to the master, while Zhuang Rui, the host of the event, stood next to Ouyang Zhenwu.

"Friends and guests, it is a great pleasure for you all to attend the opening ceremony of my museum. Here, I would like to extend my sincere greetings to Minister Ouyang, who has taken time out of his busy schedule to attend the ceremony, and also..."

As required by the ceremony, Zhuang Rui, as the host, took the microphone and briefly introduced the ribbon-cutting guests who came to participate in the opening ceremony. Of course, even if he didn't introduce them, others would already be familiar with the guests on the stage.

Chapter 707 Collection (Part 1)

After Zhuang Rui said a few words, he handed the microphone to Minister Ouyang. No one wanted to stay outside for long on such a hot day. After Minister Ouyang said a few words of blessing and encouragement, the ribbon-cutting ceremony officially began.

With the sound of a band playing and firecrackers going off, the scissors fell, and four large red flowers landed in the plate, marking the completion of Zhuang Rui's opening ceremony.

After handing the scissors to the emcee, Zhuang Rui raised his head, grabbed a thin rope dangling from the plaque, and gently pulled it. The large red silk cloth that had been covering the plaque fell down, revealing the seven powerful characters of "China Dingguang Museum" to the crowd.

"It's an inscription by a master calligrapher..."

"That's right, it seems this young man has a close relationship with the master..."

"Hey, you guys don't know, do you? These two are close friends despite their age difference. The signboard for Zhuang Rui's shop in Panjiayuan was also inscribed by Mr. 【Name】 ..."

Upon seeing the plaque of Zhuang Rui Museum, the crowd seemed to understand why the master had come in person today. Some who had heard rumors were even extolling the relationship between Zhuang Rui and the master to prove their extensive knowledge. The stories in the antique trade are probably far more numerous than those in the entertainment industry.

Actually, Zhuang Rui had originally invited Grandpa Gu and Jade Prince of *** to attend the opening ceremony today, but unfortunately, Grandpa Gu is currently in *** enjoying the summer heat.

Upon hearing Zhuang Rui's words, the old man wanted to come over, but Zhuang Rui persuaded him not to. It was a hot day, and he didn't want the two of them to go through all that trouble. Anyway, there would be plenty of opportunities in the future.

Hu Rong, who was in Myanmar, was unable to attend due to the upcoming second phase of jade mining. However, he sent a valuable gift, along with the jade tree he had previously carved, which surprised and delighted Zhuang Rui.

"Xiao Zhuang, I won't join in the fun. I have a meeting this afternoon, so I'll be going now..."

Ouyang Zhenwu had achieved his goal. Given his status, his visit to the museum was for inspection purposes, and this chaotic setting was inappropriate for him to linger. He then took his leave with his chief secretary, Wang.

Some people who came just to give face to Ouyang Jun also said their goodbyes and left after offering a few words of blessing to Zhuang Rui. Those who remained at the museum entrance were mostly collectors and industry professionals from various provinces and cities.

Yang Bo's group didn't leave, and Ms. Zhao stayed close to Ouyang Jun. This woman was quite capable; she managed to get the usually aloof Ouyang Jun to smile and talk to her.

According to the schedule, after the ribbon-cutting ceremony, the group was to go to the hotel for dinner. However, the staff who had been arranged in advance encountered a problem because when they were leading these experts and collectors from all over the country to the bus, not a single one of them was willing to leave.

"Professor Zhuang, we came here to see your collection of masterpieces. We can have dinner after we've seen them..."

Manager Zhang from Zhengzhou spoke the minds of everyone, eliciting a chorus of agreement from the audience. Some impatient people were already preparing to enter the exhibition hall.

Seeing everyone's eagerness to enter the exhibition hall, Zhuang Rui quickly grabbed the microphone and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, I have prepared a banquet for you all at noon. Shall we have lunch first, and then come back to visit the museum?"

Zhuang Rui rented seven or eight luxury buses to transport the people attending the opening ceremony to the hotel. The buses were already parked in the museum's parking lot, waiting for the people to board.

"Mr. Zhuang, can we wait a little longer for dinner...?"

"Yes, let's go through it first, and then take a closer look later..."

"Brother Zhuang, you've kept this museum a secret from me all this time. Can we finally see it today?"

Before Zhuang Rui could finish speaking, he was interrupted by the crowd. Before today, Zhuang Rui had not opened the various exhibition halls to anyone outside the museum. However, his publicity had already made many experts in the fields of science and archaeology eager to learn more.

As the first private museum in China to possess Picasso's works, it has the legendary "Dingguang Sword" that has been proven to exist, Shang and Zhou dynasty artifacts that surpass the Chunhua Ding, Longshan black pottery with thousands of years of culture, and a blue and white porcelain jar with the image of Guiguzi descending the mountain. These treasures are rare even in national museums, making everyone look forward to it. Who cares about a meal?

Seeing the crowd's agitated state, Zhuang Rui had no choice but to inform the hotel to start the banquet later. He then personally pushed the master's wheelchair into the museum.

Upon entering the museum, the conference room is on the left, while the main exhibition hall is on the right after passing through a short corridor.

About three meters directly opposite the main entrance of the exhibition hall, there is an exceptionally exquisite display case. The case is about 1.5 meters high, with the bottom one meter made of the finest Dalbergia odorifera, and the top covered by a sealed bulletproof glass cover.

Inside the display case, at different angles, there are several spotlights aimed at the object, which is Zhuang Rui's prized possession, the "Dingguang Sword"!

The Dingguang Sword was displayed in a glass case with its blade facing upwards. Under the light, the intricate and beautiful patterns on the blade and the gleaming, cold light of its edge were fully revealed to everyone.

Inside the glass case, there is a sign that introduces the origin of the Dingguang Sword. It is the first legendary Shang and Zhou dynasty sword recorded in Chinese history to be seen in any book.

"Really? A sword from the Shang and Zhou dynasties, still so well preserved?" The person asking this question was clearly not an expert; there are plenty of bronze artifacts from the Shang and Zhou dynasties that have survived.

"Of course it's true. I heard that when this sword was first unveiled, it caused a lot of controversy, but it has been verified by many experts..."

"Who would dare put a fake one here? That would be incredibly embarrassing..."

"Yes, if even the Longquan swords from the Warring States period can be preserved to this day, it's not impossible for a Shang and Zhou bronze sword to be in such good condition..."

"It truly lives up to its reputation! Look at these patterns; even modern techniques couldn't replicate them. This trip was definitely worthwhile..."

"Hey everyone, let me tell you, this sword can cut through anything, it can slice through eight copper coins in one go..."

At this moment, the display case for the Dingguang Sword was already surrounded by people in three or four layers.

The last person to speak was clearly the monkey. Zhuang Rui shook his head as he listened. He had been asked to do the commentary, but the kid just started bragging. However, what he said was true.

"Sir, let's go to the art gallery..."

There was no room to even step in the space. Zhuang Rui pushed the master, followed by several of his disciples and some experts and scholars who specialize in appreciating calligraphy and painting. They walked around the display case of the Dingguang Sword and into the glass door of the calligraphy and painting gallery.

The Dingguang Sword is the crown jewel of Zhuang Rui's museum, so it is naturally placed in the most prominent position. The other exhibition halls are all behind the Dingguang Sword. Each exhibition hall is interconnected, but they can also be entered separately from the outside.

"stop!"

As soon as he entered the calligraphy and painting exhibition hall, the master raised his hand and stared intently at a wall that was more than ten meters long and faced the glass door.

This wall does not belong to the museum itself, but was built by Zhuang Rui. The wall is about two meters high and only the thickness of a brick. It is covered with a thick and clear glass, through which the huge painting, which has been carefully framed and set in the glass case, can be clearly seen.

It is called a giant painting because the entire painting is nearly 70 centimeters high, and the horizontal scroll reaches an astonishing 25 meters. On the opposite side of this wall is the same painting. The reason it is displayed on both sides is because the painting is just too long.

"This...this is the second volume of 'Kangxi's Southern Inspection Tour'?"

The old man, supporting himself with his hand on his wheelchair, actually stood up shakily. Zhuang Rui quickly helped him up and walked to the "Kangxi's Southern Inspection Tour" painting. At the same time, a wisp of spiritual energy separated from Zhuang Rui's eyes and disappeared into the old man's legs.

"It really is the second volume, no doubt about it, it's Wang Shigu's art style..."

This painting depicts the scene of Emperor Kangxi leaving the capital during his southern tour and entering Tianjin Prefecture, which was then under the jurisdiction of Hebei Province, standing in the city and receiving the reverence of the people.

The scene unfolds layer by layer with Emperor Kangxi at its center. In the distance, the gates of Tianjin Prefecture are wide open, and shops and streets are everywhere. Scholars, farmers, artisans and merchants are all doing their jobs, presenting a picture of national peace and prosperity and the people's wealth.

The painting features numerous figures and a complex and delicate composition. Even the stone lions placed at the entrances of some houses are depicted with lifelike detail. The Tianjin River flows through the painting, making it resemble the Qingming Scroll.

"I never expected to see Volume Two here. Xiao Zhuang, you're not simple, you really are..."

The old man asked for a magnifying glass and, with Zhuang Rui's help, slowly walked around the painting. Although he seemed a little tired, his face was full of excitement.

After Jin Pangzi and Zhuang Rui helped the old man into his wheelchair, Jin Pangzi said, "Teacher, our Palace Museum also has a masterpiece of this painting..."

"Yes, there are twelve scrolls in total of the Kangxi Emperor's Southern Inspection Tour scrolls, but only six scrolls—volumes one, three, nine, ten, eleven, and twelve—are currently in China. The others are in the hands of some museums or private individuals abroad..."

I've seen a few other volumes in museums in the US and Canada, but I never knew where this second volume was hidden. I never expected to find it here. Xiao Zhuang, you did a great job keeping it a secret..."

In a good mood, the old man joked with Zhuang Rui. Little did he know that after accepting Frey's donation, the Guimet Museum had stored this masterpiece in its storeroom. If Zhuang Rui hadn't exchanged it for a Picasso work, it's unknown how many years it would have taken for the second scroll of "Kangxi's Southern Inspection Tour" to see the light of day again.

"Let me look at other things. I'll take my time to look at this painting later..."

The old man was delighted with his first piece and looked forward to seeing more of the works.

Chapter 708 Collection (Part 2)

Besides the huge painting at the entrance, in the center of the hall, there is a glass display case about seven or eight meters long and two meters wide, containing the Buddhist scriptures that Zhuang Rui exchanged from the Guimet Museum.

Also in this display case is the scroll of "Xiangzu Notes" handwritten by Wang Shizhen, which Zhuang Rui found on his first Taobao bargain.

Although this manuscript is not as valuable as those Buddhist scriptures, it was Zhuang Rui's first bargain find, and it also carries Zhuang Rui's memories of that snowy afternoon, so it was placed in the most prominent place in the display case.

When the master arrived at the central display case of the calligraphy and painting exhibition hall in his wheelchair, he pointed to the yellowed Buddhist scriptures and said to Zhuang Rui, "Young Zhuang, these Buddhist scriptures must be kept safe. It is extremely difficult to recover things that were lost back then..."

When these Buddhist scriptures first arrived in ***, the Master himself condescended to visit Zhuang Rui's courtyard house to personally authenticate them. On the title page of each volume of the scriptures, there is a small seal of the Master for his appreciation.

Upon hearing the master's words, Zhuang Rui quickly nodded and said, "Sir, please rest assured, these scriptures will not be damaged in any way while they are with me..."

"Yes, Xiao Zhuang, I have two more paintings by Xu Wei and Qiu Ying. I'll have someone bring them to you when I have time..."

Zhuang Rui was taken aback for a moment, then quickly waved his hand and said, "Sir, that won't do, this is your treasured possession..."

Xu Wei and Qiu Ying were both famous painters in the Ming Dynasty. Xu Wei, in particular, only began to learn to paint in his middle age. He was good at painting flowers and birds, and was also skilled in

landscapes, figures, and freehand ink painting. His paintings reflected his personality, with a bold and unrestrained style. Many people in later generations copied his works.

Based on current market prices, paintings by Xu Wei and Qiu Ying would cost at least a million. If it were a donation from an entrepreneur, Zhuang Rui would definitely agree without hesitation. However, for a master who is not wealthy, Zhuang Rui is unwilling to accept it.

"Xiao Zhuang, your uncle gave it to you, so just accept it. I'll bring it over in a few days..."

The old man's nephew interrupted Zhuang Rui, his face showing no sign of reluctance. Having followed the master for decades, he had likely seen hundreds of items donated by the master; the nephew was long accustomed to it.

"Thank you, sir, thank you, Uncle Zhang..."

Zhuang Rui was moved by the affection between the uncle and nephew. He knew that the old man's nephew had retired and was now living on a meager pension each month, but he was willing to donate millions of dollars worth of things without hesitation, which showed his character. He knew that if the master passed away, all these things would belong to him.

"Wait a minute, stop..."

When they reached a painting by Giuseppe Castiglione titled "Emperor Qianlong Hunting," the old man stopped Zhuang Rui again. In the painting, Emperor Qianlong was a young man, full of vigor and ambition. Beside him were many princes and ministers, one of whom looked like Qianlong. The old man's eyes were on this person.

Zhuang Rui knew that this person was the old man's ancestor. Although the master never publicized his surname, he still couldn't help but stop and look at the portrait of his ancestor for a while.

"Let's go. I don't know what these people are arguing about..."

The old man chuckled self-deprecatingly, looking somewhat disappointed. However, after seeing Tang Bohu's "Li Duanduan," he became enthusiastic again, arguing with Zhuang Rui and several of his apprentices about which Ming Dynasty painter was the most respected.

Twenty minutes later, the old man was a little tired and declined Zhuang Rui's invitation to dinner, asking Jin Pangzi to take him back to his residence. However, the old man repeatedly said that he must come and visit Zhuang Rui's museum properly when there are fewer people.

As Zhuang Rui helped the elderly man onto the bus, he infused him with a surge of spiritual energy. Zhuang Rui genuinely hoped that the elderly man, with his noble character and willingness to mentor younger generations, would live a long and healthy life.

When Zhuang Rui returned to the museum, the area around the display case of the Dingguang Sword was still bustling with people, but the flow of people had dispersed considerably. Some had already gone to the adjacent exhibition halls, leaving mostly bronze experts and collectors behind.

Zhuang Rui smiled and greeted some people before wandering over to Huangfu Yun's sword exhibition hall, which also attracted a large number of collectors and experts. Although the era of cold weapons has passed, people have an innate and unusual love for weapons of mass destruction.

Huangfu Yun's sword exhibition hall has everything from stone axes and knives from the Stone Age to bronze swords and halberds from the Shang and Zhou Dynasties, and various cold weapons from the Qin, Han and Tang Dynasties. Even items that are rumored to be from the martial arts world, such as axes, hooks, forks, whips, maces, lances, crutches, and meteor hammers, are all on display.

"This sword, which was once worn by Emperor Qianlong, was purchased from England..."

"Professor Huangfu, do you have any collectibles here that are on par with the Dingguang Sword at the entrance?"

"Ahem, that thing... there really isn't one. There's probably only one in the whole country..."

As soon as Zhuang Rui entered the exhibition hall, he saw a group of people surrounding Huangfu Yun, listening to him talk nonsense. However, it was obvious that Huangfu Yun had been discouraged.

Zhuang Rui didn't go over to join the fun; instead, he started observing Huangfu Yun's collection from the entrance.

To be honest, this was the first time Zhuang Rui had seriously viewed the exhibition hall since Huangfu Yun set it up. From the stone axe at the entrance to the Qing Dynasty swords at the end of the hall, Zhuang Rui had a strange feeling, as if he had experienced hundreds of battles from the medieval era.

"Hey bro, I'm so busy, and you're just wandering around like this..."

Just as Zhuang Rui was about to leave the sword exhibition hall, he was spotted by Huangfu Yun, who was enthusiastically introducing his collection to the guests. Upon seeing Zhuang Rui, Huangfu Yun quickly grabbed him.

"Hehe, Brother Huangfu, the capable should do more, right everyone?" Zhuang Rui chuckled and egged them on. Some of the acquaintances following behind Huangfu Yun also laughed.

"No, Director, why don't you take some people to visit the ceramics exhibition hall? It's been almost half an hour, let's hurry up and finish, then go to the hotel for dinner..."

The guests who came were full of curiosity about Zhuang Rui's museum, but it held no appeal for Huangfu Yun at all. He had personally arranged and decorated almost all of the exhibition hall's layout and decoration.

"Alright, friends who are interested in ceramics and jade, come with me..."

Before they knew it, at least 200 of the three or four hundred guests were listening to Huangfu Yun explain the swords and knives pavilion. When Zhuang Rui called out, a large portion of the people immediately dispersed and followed behind him.

After leading everyone out of the swords and knives hall, the entrance to the ceramics exhibition hall is right in front of them. This is the most eye-catching place for tourists, apart from the bronze exhibition hall, because only eight pieces of Yuan blue and white porcelain with figures are displayed in this hall. However, due to its location, there are not many people inside at the moment.

"Teacher Zhuang, this...this isn't carved from jade, is it?"

At the entrance of the ceramics museum, there are two exquisitely crafted crystal display cases. One is about 1.5 meters high, and inside it is an object that looks like a bonsai.

This is a bonsai tree, about 30 centimeters tall. On its emerald green trunk, there are several branches, and on these branches, which are about the thickness of a little finger, are blooming red and yellow flowers the size of a fingernail.

Under the special light, the entire sapling resembled a celestial tree, with mist rising from it, perfectly embodying the phrase "red jade and green emerald," and radiating dazzling brilliance.

"Hehe, Sister Qizhu, don't be so polite. Just call me Xiao Zhuang. I can't accept you calling me teacher..."

The person who asked Zhuang Rui was Qi Zhu. Zhuang Rui still owed her a favor back in Changhua. He smiled and waved his hands repeatedly, saying, "That's right, this is a jade tree. I found it at the Myanmar jade auction at the beginning of the year. It was personally designed and carved by Mr. Hu Rong, an internationally renowned jade designer..."

"My God, it really is a jade tree! How much does it cost?"

"I've never heard of Professor Zhuang ever unearthing such a top-quality jadeite before?"

"Hey, don't you know you shouldn't flaunt your wealth? Who would shout about solving something good all over the world?"

"Yes, Teacher Zhuang is already the Jade King of the North, he doesn't need this to save face..."

Upon hearing Zhuang Rui's words, the crowd behind him swarmed around the display case. Although this jade tree wasn't an antique, its market value was probably not much lower than that of the Dingguang Sword.

"Zhuang Rui, this is probably carved from nephrite jade, isn't it?"

Qi Zhu has always loved jade and has a good eye for it. After seeing the jade fruit plate that was returned by Old Master Ouyang, she immediately recognized its jade quality.

The variety of colors in this jade fruit platter surpasses even that of the jade tree, encompassing almost every color. Moreover, thanks to the master craftsman's skillful carving, each fruit is rendered with lifelike detail. Unless one examines it closely, it would be difficult to detect that it is fake.

Zhuang Rui nodded and said, "Yes, this is a piece carved from Hetian jade. It's an extremely rare multi-colored Hetian jade, and it was personally carved by Grandpa Gu Tianfeng..."

Upon hearing Zhuang Rui's words, the person who was standing next to the jade fruit plate realized that another priceless treasure had appeared before their eyes.

The most ridiculous thing is that many people didn't notice this thing just now and thought it was a museum decoration. But they didn't think that an ordinary fruit plate should be paired with such a display case that costs tens of thousands of yuan.

Many people in the room may not have heard of Hu Rong, but whether or not they are jade enthusiasts, they are familiar with the name Gu Tianfeng. Not to mention this precious jade, even ordinary materials would increase in value after passing through the hands of Master Gu.

"Zhuang Rui, every single item you take out here is so extraordinary..."

Qi Zhu sighed with emotion, realizing that all the collections in her father's house combined probably didn't compare to the significance of just one item in Zhuang Rui's collection.

Chapter 709 Collection (Part 2)

Hearing Qi Zhu's words, Zhuang Rui smiled but didn't say much. However, a confident look appeared on his face. Although his museum's collection wasn't large, every piece was a masterpiece. Zhuang Rui believed it was comparable to even those of state-owned museums.

Of course, we don't need to mention the Palace Museum and the like. Although it has suffered several calamities, it is still a giant, far beyond what Zhuang Rui can compare to.

Seeing that everyone was still looking at the two jade carvings, Zhuang Rui said, "Let's take a look at the ceramics gallery first. It's already past 12 o'clock, and we'll have to go eat after we've finished looking around..."

The display cases for those two jade carvings are detachable. Zhuang Rui temporarily placed them outside the ceramics exhibition hall to attract attention. Once the jade and miscellaneous items hall is open for business, these two jade carvings, along with the Western Han Dynasty white jade tiger obtained from the Guimet Museum, will become the hall's prized possessions.

"Ladies and gentlemen, this Yuan blue-and-white porcelain jar depicting Guiguzi descending the mountain is the only Yuan blue-and-white porcelain piece with a figure in our country..."

The Yuan Dynasty blue-and-white porcelain jar depicting Guiguzi descending the mountain naturally deserves to be placed in the most prominent spot in the ceramics exhibition hall. The exquisite glass display case and the hollowed-out crystal base all serve to highlight the preciousness of this porcelain piece.

The main image on the porcelain jar depicts the story of Guiguzi, Sun Bin's teacher, agreeing to descend the mountain to rescue Sun Bin and Dugu Chen, famous generals of Qi, who were trapped in the Yan state, at the repeated request of Su Dai, an envoy from Qi.

On the porcelain jar, Guiguzi sits upright in a chariot pulled by a tiger and a leopard, his body slightly leaning forward, his expression calm and serene, like an immortal, displaying the demeanor of someone who can strategize and win battles from afar. Two foot soldiers in front of the chariot are clearing the way with long spears.

A young general, full of vigor, rode forward on horseback, holding a battle flag inscribed with the words "Guigu" (Ghost Valley). Su Dai brought up the rear on horseback. The group, along with the surrounding mountains, trees, and rocks, created a magnificent and beautiful landscape painting.

The entire blue and white porcelain decoration is rich and vibrant in color, with a full and balanced composition, clear distinction between primary and secondary elements, and a harmonious whole. The figures are depicted smoothly and naturally, full of spirit, while the rocks are rendered with unrestrained and skillful brushstrokes, making it a truly perfect piece.

Although there are not many figures on the porcelain jar, each person's expression is rich and delicate. Even in later Ming and Qing dynasty porcelain, such exquisite porcelain is rare. Most of the people in the room are experts and naturally know the rarity and preciousness of this porcelain.

Moreover, just last month, at an auction held in London, England, a Yuan blue-and-white porcelain piece depicting figures fetched a staggering price of over £14 million, equivalent to more than 230 million RMB, shocking the world's porcelain industry.

Although that porcelain piece was also a Yuan blue-and-white porcelain with figures, its shape and storytelling were far inferior to this Guiguzi Descending the Mountain porcelain jar. After seeing this porcelain jar, everyone in the exhibition hall was speechless. If it were based on international auction prices, this Guiguzi Yuan blue-and-white porcelain would probably be worth more than 300 million RMB.

First came the Dingguang Sword, then the rare jade carvings, and now this Yuan blue-and-white porcelain jar that can absolutely be called a priceless treasure. People have already formed a perception of Zhuang Rui's museum: it is definitely taking the route of exquisite and high-end products.

Based on the exhibitions I've visited, the second volume of "Kangxi's Southern Inspection Tour" is magnificent and extensive. Even in major city museums like Nanjing or Shanghai, it would be a prized possession. However, in Zhuang Rui's museum, it probably wouldn't even rank in the top 10, which shows how exquisite Zhuang Rui's collection is.

The ceramics exhibition hall is arguably the most valuable in Zhuangrui's collection. The "Guiguzi Descending the Mountain" and the fish-patterned blue-and-white porcelain jar alone are worth around 400 million yuan, not to mention the complete collection of porcelain from the five famous kilns, as the saying goes, "Even with a fortune of ten thousand pieces of gold, it's not as good as a single piece of Jun porcelain."

Before Zhuang Rui's museum opened, Mr. Qian from the Kyoto Auction House brought an appraiser who valued the ceramics exhibition hall at over 800 million RMB, and that was a conservative estimate

Of course, this valuation was made after the London auction.

Because in the two months that followed, the world auction scene changed dramatically, and the prices of Chinese artworks, especially ceramics, soared. The more than two hundred pieces of porcelain from

the mid-to-late Qing Dynasty that Ezkena gave to Zhuang Rui were valued at more than 100 million yuan.

Zhuang Rui did send an invitation to Ezkena, but Ezkena did not attend Zhuang Rui's opening ceremony, citing illness.

"Unwell? Perhaps he's angry with himself?" This was the question Huangfu Yun uttered when he heard that Ezkena hadn't come.

Zhuang Rui could imagine that Ezkena was probably regretting his purchase right now. In terms of value, those ten or so Picasso sketches couldn't compare to the porcelain he had traded. Although Ezkena still had many fine porcelain pieces, Zhuang Rui had completely plundered the Yuan blue and white porcelain and the porcelain from the five great kilns of the Song Dynasty.

As for Zhuang Rui's other exhibition halls, President Qian also gave them an assessment. Although the bronze sword cannot be traded domestically, if it were smuggled abroad, its price would be at least 200 million.

Excluding the bronzes that Zhuang Rui "temporarily borrowed" from the country, just Zhuang Rui's own collection, including two jade carvings, was valued at 2.2 billion yuan by Mr. Qian. Adding the value of the land and building of the museum itself, the total price of this private museum should be around 2.5 billion yuan.

To be honest, even Zhuang Rui was taken aback when the valuation was completed. You have to understand, with a net worth of 2.5 billion RMB, he could easily be ranked in the top 10 of the Forbes China Rich List in 2004.

However, the Forbes ranking takes into account many factors, such as personal influence. Zhuang Rui himself has virtually no influence, and his international influence is limited to the art world, and he is the kind of person who is promoted by auction houses.

As for his leading position in the private economy, Zhuang Rui is even less likely to be included. If his museum can be considered a private enterprise, then Zhuang Rui only spends money and does not generate much benefit for the country, let alone be a leader.

However, Zhuang Rui can barely be considered as having a strategic position in his industry according to Forbes. In terms of the value of his collection, his museum is definitely one of the best private museums in China.

As for the number of jobs he creates, Zhuang Rui is nowhere near as successful as those listed billionaires. He currently only has a few dozen actual employees, including those from "Qin Ruilin" and "Xuan Ruizhai".

There are many people like Zhuang Rui in China. The media has given this type of person a name: the hidden billionaire. They have a lot of assets but keep a low profile, or they are only famous in a certain industry.

However, if Zhuang Rui's investments were leaked, he could probably secure a place on the Forbes rich list, because the jade mine in Myanmar alone could bring him at least 2 billion RMB in returns over the next few years.

The jade mine in *** has been mined out for more than half of its length. Zhuang Rui has already received more than 300 million in dividends from it. Once the mining is completed, it should reach 500 million, which is about the same as the Jade King's expectations.

In addition, there's the property development where Zhuang Rui is currently located. The pre-sale units alone have already generated 700 to 800 million yuan in revenue. Once all the properties are sold, Zhuang Rui's 300 million yuan investment will at least increase four to five times.

This is why so many people in China like to invest in real estate. This kind of business is absolutely profitable, not to mention that many people get something for nothing. They take money from the bank with one hand and then return it with the other, without having to spend a single penny of their own money.

After visiting the two exhibition halls, these collectors and experts from all over the country couldn't help but feel a sense of awe towards Zhuang Rui. Money may not be able to measure a person's status, but it can definitely measure a person's ability!

In the antique trade, a person's success is measured by the quantity and quality of their collection. Although Zhuang Rui's current collection cannot compare with Mr. Ma's in terms of quantity, in terms of

total value, it is estimated that only Ms. Chen, who specializes in collecting sandalwood, can compare with Zhuang Rui.

After this opening ceremony, Zhuang Rui, who had been in the business for less than two years, had already reached a status in the domestic antique world that was comparable to Mr. Ma's. For a long time afterward, invitations to various forums, lectures, and appraisal activities came to Zhuang Rui like snowflakes. Of course, these are all stories for later.

"Alright, everyone, let's go check out the bronze ware exhibition hall one more time, then we'll head over for lunch..."

Zhuang Rui clapped his hands to attract everyone's attention, then led the way out of the ceramics exhibition hall. Suddenly, he saw Peng Fei walking towards him and was taken aback.

"Peng Fei, where's Uncle De? Didn't you invite him?"

Uncle De's youngest daughter-in-law is due to give birth these days. As her father-in-law, Uncle De also wants to see his big, fat grandson as soon as possible. So after receiving Zhuang Rui's invitation, he has been staying in Zhonghai and has not come over.

Zhuang Rui respected Uncle De as a father figure, and he would definitely feel regret if Uncle De didn't come to the opening of his museum.

Therefore, Zhuang Rui had Peng Fei and the crew wait in Zhonghai. As soon as Uncle De's daughter-in-law gave birth and Uncle De saw his grandson, he was to be invited to the *** immediately.

"Brother Zhuang, Uncle De has arrived, but he went straight into that exhibition hall as soon as he got here..."

Peng Fei pointed to an exhibition hall behind him, which was the bronze exhibition hall closest to the main entrance, the one Zhuang Rui was leading his people to.

Because there are many domestic bronze ware trades, relatively few collectors have started to enter the bronze ware exhibition hall. Most of them are experts who study bronze ware, and they are studying the Shang and Zhou Dynasty bronze ding.

Chapter 710 Old but Still Strong

"Uncle De, congratulations on having another big, healthy grandson! Haha, Teacher Meng, we couldn't find you during the ribbon-cutting ceremony. Look at how well this was done..."

Upon arriving at the bronze ware exhibition hall, Zhuang Rui saw a crowd gathered around a display case. Squeezing in, he saw Professor Meng and Uncle De pointing out and commenting on the artifacts.

Zhuang Rui passed the graduate school interview in June, which means that he will be a student at Peking University in September.

Zhuang Rui also informed Professor Meng about the museum's opening, but there were too many people today, so Professor Meng had his brother-in-law Zhao Guodong help with the reception. During the ribbon-cutting ceremony, Zhuang Rui was indeed thinking of his mentor, but when he asked Zhao Guodong, he didn't know where Professor Meng had gone.

"I'm just an old geezer, not good enough for this kind of thing. Little Zhuang, your museum is truly remarkable. Among all the museums in Beijing, apart from the Palace Museum and the Capital Museum, probably no other museum has a collection that can compare to yours..."

Professor Meng is a very pure scholar. Apart from doing research and textual research, he rarely participates in social activities. CCTV's "Hundred Schools Forum" invited him several times, but he declined each time. He also deliberately avoided the ribbon-cutting ceremony just now.

"Teacher Meng, I'm still young, I don't deserve such praise..."

Zhuang Rui had known Professor Meng for almost a year and knew that this teacher, whom Uncle De described as having a somewhat strange temper, was actually a very sentimental person. If he liked you, he would never get angry no matter how you joked with him; if he didn't like you, he wouldn't say a word.

"You two, stop being so mushy..."

Uncle De's relationship with Zhuang Rui is self-evident. He pulled Zhuang Rui over, pointed to the collection in the display case, and said, "Alright, brat, come here and tell me, how did you get this item?"

Upon hearing Uncle De's words, Zhuang Rui glanced at the glass display case against the wall and immediately laughed. It turned out to be the bronze mirror he'd found in the storeroom of the antique shop in Paris.

This item should ideally be in the miscellaneous items section, but since there are too few items in the miscellaneous items section, it is temporarily displayed in the bronze ware exhibition hall.

To highlight the unusual nature of this bronze mirror, Zhuang Rui specially modified the display case. The bronze mirror was placed sideways to face outwards, while inside the display case, a beam of red light shone on the mirror at a 45-degree angle.

In this way, an image of a Bodhisattva sitting on a lotus throne is reflected on the white wall on the inside. The Bodhisattva Guanyin, with her hair tied up in a high bun and her robes flowing, holds a vase, her eyes are slightly closed, and her face is kind and compassionate.

Although the reflected pattern on this Bodhisattva statue is clear, it is rather faint. It is difficult to observe without standing up close and examining it carefully. Hundreds of guests came today, and not a single person could see it. However, Uncle De and Professor Meng discovered it.

Zhuang Rui has yet to verify the origin of this bronze mirror. He can only conclude that it dates to the Sui and Tang Dynasties based on the color and strength of the spiritual energy within it. This is because Buddhism was prevalent and the area was exceptionally wealthy during that era, and it is likely that only monks of that time would have bothered to create such exquisite Buddhist artifacts.

"Uncle De, Professor Meng, I acquired this item in Paris. It came from the same person as those Picasso works..."

Zhuang Rui has always been proud of this. Finding bargains on Taobao in China is like profiting from one's own people, but when he finds treasures abroad, everyone will give him a thumbs up and say "amazing."

"Teacher Zhuang, is what you're saying true? It feels like I'm listening to a story."

"Of course it's true, can't you see everything's laid out here..."

"Are there really so many treasures abroad? I'll go travel around sometime too..."

"There are fewer good items from abroad now, unless you go to some people's homes, it's not as simple as you think..."

Upon hearing Zhuang Rui's words, everyone became excited. Little did they know that most things abroad were actually made in China, making it just as difficult to find bargains on Taobao as it was domestically.

"Ladies and gentlemen, my friends, I was just lucky. Everything I saw in the art shop at first was a replica. It was only later, when I went to the warehouse, that I found this bronze mirror and Picasso's drawing. In my opinion, finding treasures abroad isn't necessarily easier than finding them in China..."

Seeing that everyone was eager to go abroad to find treasures, Zhuang Rui quickly offered some words of advice, saying that although many items were looted from abroad, most of them had already been collected by others.

Instead of going abroad, it's better to search among the people. After all, China has thousands of years of heritage, and there are countless good things being unearthed from the ground.

Of course, whether others will listen to Zhuang Rui's words is anyone's guess. It's said that Chinese people love to follow trends, and there's no guarantee that a few people will get jealous and go abroad to show off their antique appraisal skills.

"Uncle De, could you please take a look at this? I can only tell it's from the Sui or Tang Dynasty, but I have no idea about its exact origin..."

After returning to China, Zhuang Rui searched through many books on bronze artifacts, hoping to see if the bronze mirror had been passed down through generations. However, to his disappointment, there was no identical or similar artifact in history.

"Take it out and let us see..."

Uncle De was also very curious about the bronze mirror, but he couldn't touch it to examine it because of the glass. He couldn't just make assumptions out of thin air, could he?

Zhuang Rui nodded, took out his phone and called Yang Jian, the museum's security director, and also notified Huangfu Yun that, according to the museum's security regulations, each display case must be signed by three people before it can be opened.

In addition, each of the three people needs a key to open these display cases at the same time. Zhuang Rui spent more than 2 million RMB just to install this security system. This is also the most common anti-theft setting abroad. All three people must be present to open these display cases.

"President Zhuang, Director Huangfu, please sign your names first..."

Yang Jian arrived a little late. As soon as he arrived, he instructed the security guards who had accompanied him to draw a circle with a radius of about three meters around Zhuang Rui, thus isolating the collectors and experts.

Yang Jian held a form in his hand. After Zhuang Rui and Huangfu Yun signed it and marked the display case number to be opened, he took out his own key and inserted it into a keyhole at the bottom of the display case.

This key is a specially made magnetic key, which opens the display case based on the strength of the magnetism. After all three people inserted the key, the specially made bulletproof glass slowly rose up.

"Uncle De, what do you think..."

Zhuang Rui reached out and took the mirror down, and the projection of Guanyin Bodhisattva on the white wall immediately disappeared. This made some people who had doubted that Zhuang Rui was putting on a show completely believe in the magic of the bronze mirror.

Some self-proclaimed experts in miscellaneous bronze artifacts look at bronze mirrors with eager eyes, wishing they were the ones handling the mirrors.

When Zhuang Rui took out the bronze mirror, Uncle De put on a pair of white gloves, took the bronze mirror and a magnifying glass handed to him by someone, and began to examine it carefully.

After watching for about three or four minutes, Uncle De frowned slightly, took off his gloves, and gently rubbed the mirror with his index finger, looking thoughtful.

"Xiao Rui, the patterns on the back of this bronze mirror, although not very clear, you can barely make out some outlines. However, they should be Buddhist flying apsaras, and specifically, Central Plains style flying apsaras. In other words, your judgment of the era is basically correct..."

The flying apsaras paintings mentioned by Uncle De originated in Dunhuang. However, during the Northern Wei Dynasty, the flying apsaras paintings in Dunhuang were heavily influenced by Indian and Western Region flying apsaras paintings. They were generally Western Region flying apsaras paintings with many Western cultural characteristics.

The Central Plains style of flying apsaras paintings flourished from the Western Wei to the Sui Dynasty, and were mostly depicted as Buddhist celestial beings and Taoist immortals. Uncle De made this judgment because a Taoist hat could be barely found on the back of the bronze mirror.

Uncle De paused for a moment, then continued, "As for the allegorical effect of this bronze mirror, according to my observation, it should be closely related to the patterns formed during the polishing of the mirror. It is through these fine lines that are difficult to see with the naked eye that the shape of this Bodhisattva is outlined..."

As for the specific era, I think it should be the Sui Dynasty, because most Guanyin statues from the Sui Dynasty are seated, with dignified and compassionate appearances, vivid and fluid overall forms, and flowing, elegant clothing, which perfectly matches the depicted patterns..."

"Uncle De, you're truly amazing. The reflection effect of this Guanyin statue is indeed, as you said, caused by the mirror-like patterns. However, I've always hesitated to draw a conclusion about its dating. Well, I can add the date to the label later..."

As soon as Uncle De finished speaking, Zhuang Rui gave him a thumbs up. He was truly convinced, because with an ordinary magnifying glass, it was impossible to find the lines on the surface of the bronze mirror, while Uncle De made an accurate judgment simply by feeling it with his finger.

Compared to Zhuang Rui, who had to use his spiritual energy to see the clues, Uncle De was undoubtedly much more skilled. Although he hadn't been appraising objects for others much in the past two years, he was still as sharp as ever, and the knowledge he possessed was enough for Zhuang Rui to study for several years.

Through Uncle De's explanation, Zhuang Rui learned another trick. He hadn't noticed before that the Guanyin pattern he was referring to was the most common style in the Sui Dynasty. Could it really be used to date an object? It seems that when it comes to identifying objects, every little detail is important.

"Alright, everyone, let's all gather at the entrance. We have an academic exchange this afternoon after we finish eating..."

After putting the bronze mirror back in the display case, Zhuang Rui instructed Yang Jian to lead the security guards to clear the area.

Strictly speaking, the museum will officially open in the afternoon, when several travel agencies will organize tours for visitors.