

Golden 781

Chapter 781 Lecture

"Oh, is this Mr. Li? I'm sorry, the sound from this phone is a bit distorted, I didn't recognize you just now..."

To be fair, Zhuang Rui has a pretty good alcohol tolerance; he drank about 1.5 jin (750ml) of 53-proof Moutai today. After hearing Li Dali's second sentence, he immediately realized what was going on.

They had just arrived at their doorstep. Zhuang Rui looked at the two stone lions in front of the main gate, which appeared even more majestic and ferocious in the night.

The front door of Zhuang Rui's house is located in an alley running east to west. It was windy at night, and Zhuang Rui was feeling a bit hot after drinking, so he simply sat down on the steps and started talking on the phone.

"Mr. Zhuang, I've taken care of that matter for you. We've scheduled it for this Saturday. Are you free then?"

Li Dali was a little uneasy. He had originally wanted that person to come to *** to see Zhuang Rui, but the small boss of the ceramics factory had recently encountered some business difficulties and couldn't leave at all, which made Li Dali feel that he had lost face in handling the matter.

Zhuang Rui rubbed his aching temples with his right hand and asked, "Which city in Hebei is this Mr. Xu from?"

"Mr. Zhuang, that person is from Shijiazhuang. I'll be staying in *** until Saturday, then we'll go together..."

Mr. Li had a very enlightening experience at that club yesterday. Compared to the clubs in his own city, it was like heaven and earth. Moreover, Mr. Li also met a rising star in the film industry and is now preparing to develop a romantic relationship with her.

Of course, Xiao Li was sent home. Mr. Li couldn't bring himself to do something like his father and son being associated with the same celebrity.

"Okay, Saturday then. We'll get back to you then..."

Zhuang Rui nodded in agreement. It would only take two or three hours to get from *** to Shijiazhuang via the highway, and he could make a round trip in a day without missing his school time.

"Hey boss, what are you doing sitting here?"

Just as Zhuang Rui hung up the phone, the door creaked open. Hao Long, seeing Zhuang Rui's appearance, couldn't help but laugh. Zhuang Rui had always acted quite composed in front of them; this drunken state was quite unusual.

Zhuang Rui peeked furtively into the room and whispered, "It's cool in here. Are my mom and the others asleep yet?"

"They're all enjoying the cool air in the yard. What time is it now?"

In the summer, people go to bed late, usually after 11 pm. In addition, there are many people living in courtyard houses now, and they chat until very late every day before going to sleep.

"Alright, I'll just go around to the backyard from the garage..."

Zhuang Rui knew his mother didn't like him drinking, and that he would definitely get scolded if he went to the Intermediate People's Court like this.

But just as he was about to run away, the chirping of the golden feather and the low growl of the white lion rang out at the same time. He was the only one in Zhuang Rui's courtyard who could enjoy this treatment.

"Hey, you brat, you left your wife at home and went off to party all night. You have no conscience, you don't even know to call your brother when you're drinking..."

As soon as Zhuang Rui entered the central courtyard, before he even reached the group of people chatting, Ouyang Jun smelled the strong odor of alcohol on him. However, this guy wasn't a good person either, and he let slip the last sentence.

"Get out of my way, or I'll kiss your son right now..."

Zhuang Rui threatened Ouyang Jun, then looked at Ouyang Wan and said, "Mom, a few of my senior brothers insisted on taking me out to dinner, and we drank a little tonight..."

"Alright, Xuanbing told me. Hurry up and go back to your room to wash up. Change your clothes and bring them over. Xuanbing is pregnant and can't stand this smell..."

Now that her son was older, she could no longer discipline him in front of everyone like she did when he was a child. Ouyang Wan gave Zhuang Rui face, and Zhuang Rui agreed and slunk back to his room.

However, Zhuang Rui still slept on the sofa in the living room tonight. Although the courtyard house has many rooms, his wife said she was scared, so Zhuang Rui slept in the living room to comfort her, becoming a sofa man all night.

The advantage of pursuing a master's degree is that you don't have to undergo military training like undergraduates upon enrollment. Master's students are also more independent; you can report anything to your supervisor. As for general courses, no one will take attendance if you don't attend.

Over the next three years, as long as Zhuang Rui earns enough credits, he will naturally be able to graduate. English, which many people find daunting, is not an obstacle for Zhuang Rui.

The next day, after Zhuang Rui got up, he thought that since the students had just started school, there shouldn't be any classes yet, so he didn't go to school. He spent the morning at home with Qin Xuanbing, and in the afternoon he went to the museum to find Huangfu Yun. Since Director Xie had expressed his willingness to lend the museum the artifacts for exhibition, Zhuang Rui naturally wouldn't refuse someone's kindness.

...

"Damn, I definitely need to get an electronic map of Peking University on my phone next time..."

Zhuang Rui got lost again while walking on the campus of Peking University. There was a public lecture this morning called "General Introduction to Chinese Archaeology". Although it was a course for second-year undergraduate students, Zhuang Rui had no background in archaeology, so he wanted to come and listen.

The main courses in archaeology include General History of China, Ancient History of the World, History of Chinese Archaeology, Introduction to Archaeology, Paleolithic Archaeology, Neolithic Archaeology, Xia, Shang and Zhou Archaeology, Warring States, Qin and Han Archaeology, Three Kingdoms, Jin and Northern and Southern Dynasties Archaeology, Sui and Tang Archaeology, Song, Yuan and Ming Archaeology, and Field Archaeology.

What Zhuang Rui learned in school was mostly basic theory, which is something he lacked. If he could learn all of these courses, it would be extremely beneficial for him to appraise and date antiques.

However, archaeological projects are enormous, and the archaeological research of each era can consume a person's entire life's energy.

Many archaeology students, including professors, have a special focus. Among the many archaeological eras, they choose one that they like and dedicate their lives to its study in order to achieve significant progress and breakthroughs.

Professor Meng holds an unshakeable position in the domestic archaeological community because of his extremely solid basic knowledge and theory, and his thorough understanding of various dynasties and periods.

Even when he goes to an unfamiliar excavation site, Professor Meng doesn't need to look through books or examine the unearthed artifacts. He can tell you the characteristics of a certain era just from the shape of the tomb. In the archaeological community, Professor Meng is known as a living encyclopedia of archaeological excavation.

After reviewing the major courses for archaeology, Zhuang Rui focused on the following disciplines: Xia, Shang and Zhou archaeology, Warring States, Qin and Han archaeology, Three Kingdoms, Jin and Northern and Southern Dynasties archaeology, Sui and Tang archaeology, Song, Yuan and Ming archaeology, and field archaeology.

The reason is simple: although artifacts unearthed before the Neolithic period have extremely high research value, their market value is generally low. Zhuang Rui studied archaeology only to better appraise antiques, not to actually become an expert or scholar.

Because he didn't have a vehicle access pass, Zhuang Rui had to park his car, which he had driven back from Zuixianlou, in a parking lot at Carrefour in Zhongguancun. It took him more than 20 minutes to walk into Peking University. But to his dismay, after entering Peking University through another gate, Zhuang Rui ended up in the teaching building area of the medical university.

In 2000, Kyoto University merged with Kyoto Medical University and moved to a new campus, which was much larger than the original one. Zhuang Rui wandered around and somehow ended up at the Basic Medical College of the Medical School.

Zhuang Rui felt too embarrassed to call Professor Meng again. He had gotten lost twice in the two times he had come in. Although Professor Meng wouldn't say anything, Zhuang Rui still felt a little ashamed.

The entrance to the Basic College building was bustling with activity. Perhaps because it was the first day of school, many students were rushing into the building, some walking and some running.

Zhuang Rui couldn't help but sigh inwardly, "The learning atmosphere at Peking University is really good; students listen to lectures as if they're in a battle."

Standing at the entrance of the School of Basic Medical Sciences at the medical university, Zhuang Rui reached out and grabbed a male student, saying, "Excuse me, student..."

"What are you asking? Dude, hurry up, if you get in late you won't even get a standing room, let alone a seat..."

The boy with the pimples on his face rushed into the building before Zhuang Rui could finish his question. However, Zhuang Rui was still holding onto his clothes, so he simply grabbed Zhuang Rui's hand and led him to the trapezoidal classroom on the first floor of the building.

Zhuang Rui was a bit dumbfounded. What was going on here? Before he could react, the helpful guy had already pulled him into the classroom.

The trapezoidal classroom was quite large, somewhat like a small auditorium. The semi-circular trapezoidal tables and chairs surrounded the podium in the middle. At this time, most of the people were already seated inside. After the male student pulled Zhuang Rui into the classroom, several people in the front row immediately waved to him.

"Dude, you're in luck. Come on, let's sit in the front..."

Zhuang Rui smiled wryly upon hearing this. He had originally intended to ask how to get to the History Department, but who knew this guy would be so enthusiastic, not only pulling him into the classroom but also saving him a seat.

Prestigious universities regularly invite celebrities to give lectures, which are very popular among students. However, there are more people than seats, so someone has to go early to reserve a spot. But such things usually happen between male students with ulterior motives and female students who are just beginning to experience romantic feelings.

Zhuang Rui spent four years as an undergraduate, always reserving seats for his dorm's few freaks or their girlfriends. He never expected that after changing schools for graduate studies, he would enjoy the same treatment.

Zhuang Rui didn't know which expert had been invited to give the lecture. As soon as he entered the classroom, people swarmed in behind him, scrambling to claim the best spots. Even if Zhuang Rui wanted to retreat now, he couldn't. He could only wait until everyone was seated before trying to leave.

"Hey, Mengzi, who is he?"

The people who were originally seated saw their classmate bringing over someone they didn't recognize and asked curiously.

"I don't know either, buddy. What's your name? How about it, you'll get a seat with us, right?"

The student named Mengzi scratched his head, looked at Zhuang Rui, and looked very smug.

Zhuang Rui said with a helpless expression, "My name is Zhuang Rui, but... I'm not from the medical school, and I'm not here to listen to any expert lectures. I just grabbed you because I wanted to ask you how to get to the history department..."

Chapter 782 Speech

"You...you want to ask for directions?"

When Mengzi heard Zhuang Rui's words, his mouth gaped open so wide it could fit a duck egg. Even the others nearby were speechless.

After a moment of silence, a deafening burst of laughter suddenly erupted from the point centered on Zhuang Rui.

"I'm laughing so hard, buddy, Mengzi, you're amazing..."

"Zhang Meng, if you're going to bring someone along, bring a female classmate. This guy definitely isn't interested in traditional Chinese medicine..."

"Yeah, I'm seriously questioning your sexual orientation now, Mengzi, you'd better tell me the truth..."

The laughter of Zhang Meng and his classmates echoed in the lecture hall, attracting the attention of many people. Curious people naturally asked about it, and soon the news spread throughout the entire lecture hall.

This incident will be posted on Kyoto University's campus network as soon as the lecture ends, becoming one of the best jokes of the year at Kyoto University.

Seeing everyone burst into laughter, Zhuang Rui wasn't angry. He had been that age too, and the whole thing was genuinely funny. That classmate named Zhang Meng was just too careless.

"Dude, I'm sorry, you know I'm just an impatient person, I'm really sorry..."

Zhang Meng blushed with embarrassment as everyone laughed at him. After realizing what had happened, he quickly apologized to Zhuang Rui, explaining that he had been too hasty and had pulled Zhuang Rui into the classroom before he could finish speaking, which had caused this misunderstanding.

"It's nothing, looks like I won't be able to attend my class today..."

Zhuang Rui glanced back, looking somewhat helpless. Fortunately, the "General Introduction to Chinese Archaeology" class wasn't taught by Professor Meng; otherwise, Zhuang Rui's mood would definitely be even worse now.

Upon entering the classroom and seeing the red banner hanging inside, Zhuang Rui already knew that this was a lecture on traditional Chinese medicine given by a vice president of the military medical university at the invitation of Peking University.

Because this professor is a highly respected figure in the field of traditional Chinese medicine in China, many medical students flocked to the lecture more than half an hour before it was scheduled to begin, fearing that they would miss out on a seat if they arrived late.

Zhuang Rui felt incredibly wronged. He had only wanted to ask for directions, but now, looking back, the classroom was already full of people, and even the corridor was packed with people, so he couldn't get out.

"Hey buddy, what name do you want? I'll take you to the history department later..."

Zhang Meng scratched his head a little embarrassedly, but then asked with some surprise, "By the way, you're a history student? How come you don't know the way?"

Although Zhuang Rui doesn't look very old, after a few years of working in society, his mature demeanor is quite obvious. At least he doesn't look like those freshmen in their late teens. But if he's an older student, it would be strange if he couldn't even find his way around the school.

"Hi, my name is Zhuang Rui. I'm a graduate student who just got in this year. Peking University has so many gates, I don't even know how I ended up here. I'll have to find a map later..."

Zhuang Rui laughed self-deprecatingly. If word got out, his situation would be news. Getting lost for two days in a row, he didn't know whether to say that Peking University was too big or that Zhuang Rui was too stupid.

"I'll take you on a tour of Peking University later, and I guarantee you won't get lost again next time..."

The people nearby chuckled, and Zhang Meng volunteered to take Zhuang Rui to familiarize himself with the various colleges of Peking University.

As soon as Zhang Meng finished speaking, someone next to him chimed in, "Mengzi, you're most familiar with the roads around the art department, right? So, did you manage to win over that junior you've been pursuing for half a year?"

"Yes, yes, hurry up and confess..."

A crowd joined in the teasing, and Zhuang Rui seemed to be transported back to his university days, joking with Wei Ge and the others. Yesterday's events were vivid in his mind; the scenes remained the same, but the people were different.

Zhuang Rui enjoyed this feeling; missing one professional class wasn't so important anymore. However, Zhuang Rui still hoped that the lecture later wouldn't be too technical, since he knew practically nothing about medicine.

However, Zhuang Rui brought his archaeology books with him, so if the lecture was boring, he could treat it as a self-study session.

Outside the lecture hall, people were still pouring in. Zhuang Rui looked back and saw that at least four or five hundred people had entered the classroom, which could seat two or three hundred people. This showed how popular the expert from the military medical university was.

On the stage, some people had already started adjusting the microphones and lecture slides. About ten minutes later, an elderly man with a full head of white hair, but who was unusually vigorous, walked from the side door of the classroom to the stage.

"Classmates, let me introduce myself first. My name is Zhou... um, that banner is correct, those are the three characters..."

Professor Zhou's words elicited a burst of good-natured laughter from the students; teachers with a sense of humor are the most popular with students.

"I'm so happy to be here at Kyoto University. Standing here, I feel younger..."

Today's lecture is divided into two parts. The first part is that I will talk and you will listen. Well... this is called rote learning, but it will only last for five minutes, which is only one-twelfth of the lecture. I think you can still tolerate it, right?

The second stage is the Q&A session. Everyone can share their unique perspectives on the current state and development of Traditional Chinese Medicine, as well as any insights they may have. I know Peking University has a philosophy of "open-mindedness and inclusiveness," and I hope to learn something from this lecture...

The white-haired professor's speech elicited thunderous applause in the lecture hall. None of the students present had expected that this expert, who held such a prominent position in the medical field, would speak so humbly and humorously.

Zhuang Rui, who had expected to hear a dry lecture, was also charmed by the professor's humorous language. He put down his textbook, "General Introduction to Chinese Archaeology," and looked up at the podium.

"This...isn't this Dean Zhou?"

After seeing the face of the expert on the stage, Zhuang Rui was stunned. This person was actually the president of the People's Liberation Army hospital that Ouyang Jun had taken him to last time. Zhuang Rui still clearly remembered what President Zhou said when he took Qin Xuanbing's pulse. He did not expect that he was actually the vice president of the military medical university.

There's nothing strange about that. That hospital is an affiliated hospital of a military medical university, and many of the doctors there are lecturers or professors at the university. They become teachers once they take off their white coats.

However, the fact that Peking University was able to invite a major general to give a lecture to the students is quite impressive. It should be noted that there is a big difference between the military and local governments. Inviting Dean Zhou would probably be much more difficult than inviting a provincial party secretary.

"Alright, five minutes are up. I haven't broken my promise, have I? Now it's time for questions..."

While Zhuang Rui was still in a daze, five minutes passed. Dean Zhou only gave a brief introduction to the origin and current status of traditional Chinese medicine without going into a deep explanation. Even Zhuang Rui, who was from a completely different field, understood it.

"Professor Zhou, you are the leading figure in modern acupuncture in China. Could you please tell me what conditions acupuncture is suitable for? And how can acupuncture be used to quickly alleviate symptoms?"

A female student in the audience raised her hand and asked a question. These students were all quite professional. Even if they weren't studying traditional Chinese medicine, they wouldn't ask such a silly question as comparing traditional Chinese medicine with Western medicine. This question had been asked countless times, and there was really no need to explain it again.

"For young people, acupuncture is the most practical... Students, listen carefully, it's practical, not just applicable..."

The elderly man on the stage smiled wisely, deliberately keeping everyone in suspense for a moment before continuing, "For young people who care about their appearance, the most practical application of acupuncture is naturally weight loss. And I'm talking about professional acupuncture, not the quacks in those beauty salons on the street. Students, please don't get confused..."

As soon as Professor Zhou finished speaking, the classroom erupted in laughter. For these privileged students, their age and the learning environment made them particularly averse to dogmatic theories and prefer lighthearted and humorous lectures.

Although Professor Zhou is not young, he does not have the dogmatism of the older generation. He speaks freely and expresses profound thoughts in simple words, making the students in the classroom think while laughing.

"Acupuncture? Should I audit some acupuncture courses?" Zhuang Rui thought to himself as he listened to Dean Zhou's lecture from the audience.

The reason Zhuang Rui has been able to get to where he is today and create such amazing wealth lies in those eyes that are full of spirit.

However, the function of Zhuang Rui's eyes is not limited to identifying antiques and healing injuries... that should be the greatest function of these eyes. Moreover, through experiments on several elderly people, it seems that this spiritual energy also has an extraordinary effect on prolonging life.

However, Zhuang Rui was cautious by nature and did not have the Buddhist idea of compassion for all mankind. He did not want to be a superman to save all mankind. He only wanted to use his spiritual energy on his relatives and friends. However, for the sake of secrecy, he could only use it when others were asleep. This greatly limited his abilities.

Zhuang Rui could naturally enter his mother's bedroom and help Ouyang Wan regulate her body while she was asleep.

However, he couldn't conveniently enter the bedrooms of celebrities like Xu, Zhuang Rui's sister, and his sisters-in-law. This meant that even with his own relatives, Zhuang Rui couldn't take care of them.

If Zhuang Rui learns acupuncture, he will have a legitimate reason to practice it. Of course, this will only work if someone dares to let Zhuang Rui use his needles.

However, this problem can be solved gradually. At first, we can try things like pricking the arm. Comrades like Peng Fei and Ouyang Jun can start by being lab technicians.

"Achoo! Oh my god, who's been talking about me again?"

Back in Zhuang Rui's courtyard house, Ouyang Si Shao, who was fighting with his son for milk, suddenly sneezed violently, causing his son to wail loudly. Xu Da Mingxing naturally wouldn't stand for it, and the house immediately descended into chaos.

Chapter 783 Trampling Incident

"Thank you, students. That concludes today's lecture. I hope that in the near future, we can switch places, and the students in the audience can stand here with me to share your creations and insights. Thank you all!"

An hour passed quickly, and the hall erupted in prolonged applause. All the students stood up, applauding this excellent lecture.

Zhuang Rui also felt that the trip was worthwhile. From what Dean Zhou had just said, even a novice can learn to perform acupuncture on some less important acupoints on the body, provided that someone is willing to do so.

Just as Zhuang Rui was still deep in thought in his chair, the classroom became a bit chaotic. Because there were too many people today, the students in the back had to squeeze to the front to get autographs, while those sitting in the front also got up from their chairs and rushed to the podium.

"Students, please be quiet and proceed in an orderly manner. Professor Zhou is getting on in years and cannot sign autographs for everyone. Please do not push..."

When a teacher noticed the scene was getting chaotic, he immediately picked up the microphone and said something. Ironically, if he hadn't said anything, things would have been fine, but his words only made the crowd push even harder, because if they were late, they wouldn't get any autographs.

Zhang Meng, who was sitting next to Zhuang Rui, also took a notebook and stood up from his chair. Since there were people in front and behind him, Zhang Meng simply climbed onto the chair, stepped on the back of the chair in front of him, and prepared to climb over to the front row.

Whether Zhang Meng slipped or was bumped by someone, when Zhuang Rui looked up, he saw the guy fall down like a mountain of gold.

Zhang Meng was quick-witted enough to protect his face with his hands, but his body slammed heavily onto the chair in front of him. He could only let out a cry of pain before falling sideways onto the steps between the two rows of seats.

The corridor was crowded with people. When they saw someone falling, they instinctively moved aside, creating a space so that Zhang Meng could fall solidly to the ground.

I wonder if Zhang Meng didn't check the calendar before leaving home this morning. Didn't he know today was an inauspicious day to go out? He fell twice, and that wasn't all. Just as people around him were reacting and preparing to help him up, those behind him, unaware of what was happening, were still pushing and shoving.

Trampling was definitely a mass trampling incident. Before Zhang Meng could be helped up, he was trampled on several times by the people behind him. Some people even lost their balance and fell directly on top of Zhang Meng.

The classroom instantly descended into chaos. There were angry shouts from the students in front, clamor from the back, and even screams from some female students—screams that were continuous and rhythmic.

Zhuang Rui listened to the sound and realized it was enough to qualify him for a music academy entrance exam; the shrillness of the sound could definitely reach the highest note of the piano, G7.

The chaotic scene lasted for more than three minutes before calming down amidst the teacher's hysterical screams on stage. The students at the back were diverted out of the lecture hall, and those who were originally in their seats sat down again.

However, just a few minutes later, more than a dozen pairs of men's leather shoes and women's high heels were trampled on the ground, turning the place into a leather shoe store.

Even more outrageous, there were two penises lying on the ground. I don't know which guy found them, but judging from the size of the penises, their original owner was definitely a *** type.

Many female students who had just left the classroom were blushing and filled with resentment. Those wearing skirts suffered an even greater misfortune. These medical students were extremely familiar with human anatomy and were incredibly ruthless. In any case, most of the female students who rushed back to their dormitories were wearing lace shorts.

Because the scene was too chaotic, there was simply no way to investigate. After leaving the classroom, the male wolves who had attacked the most viciously now had expressions on their faces that were even more gentlemanly than those of upright gentlemen. The female students could only suffer in silence.

"Mengzi, Mengzi, wake up..."

"Zhang Meng, Zhang Meng, wake up..."

"Teacher, Zhang Meng has fainted..."

After helping the students who were pinning Zhang Meng to his feet, Zhang Meng, now a human cushion, was barely breathing and on the verge of death. These students, despite being medical students, were all panicked and at a loss for what to do.

"Move aside, let me see..."

The place where Zhang Meng fell was very close to Zhuang Rui. Seeing that the two classmates who were squatting on the ground could only scream, Zhuang Rui rushed to Zhang Meng and pushed the two away.

"That's really tragic..."

Zhang Meng, who appeared in front of Zhuang Rui, looked utterly miserable. His white shirt was covered in black footprints, and there were two bloody welts on his forearms, from which blood was seeping out. His face was deathly pale, and blood was also seeping from his nostrils, possibly indicating internal injuries.

However, Zhang Meng was very experienced in combat. Whether he fell or was stepped on, he protected his head with his hands. Although his breathing was weak at the moment, he was not in any danger to his life.

"Young man, move aside, let me take a look..."

Dean Zhou never expected that his lecture would turn out like this. Just as Zhuang Rui was squatting down to examine Zhang Meng's injuries, Dean Zhou also stepped down from the podium, preparing to take Zhang Meng's pulse.

The teacher at the scene immediately arranged for someone to fetch first aid equipment and a stretcher. The experimental center was not far away, and all kinds of equipment and medicines were available there. However, given the current state of the injury and whether the spine was damaged, the teacher did not dare to have Zhang Meng carried away rashly.

"Okay, Dean Zhou, please take a look. They all seem to be external injuries, nothing serious..." Zhuang Rui stood up and made way for him.

Although he was inexplicably dragged to a lecture on traditional Chinese medicine, Zhuang Rui still had a good impression of Zhang Meng, this enthusiastic young man. Just now, he had channeled a lot of spiritual energy into Zhang Meng's chest and abdomen, which should alleviate some of his internal injuries.

However, Zhuang Rui ignored the obvious external injuries on his arm. Since everyone could see the injuries, it would be too obvious if he healed them himself.

"Hmm, young man, you have a good eye. That's right, they're all external injuries, and there's also a broken arm..."

Dean Zhou took Zhang Meng's pulse for a few minutes, then looked at his clothes and gave a diagnosis.

As he spoke, Dean Zhou's serious expression relaxed. If this really caused a disaster, although it was not Dean Zhou's fault, the old professor would still blame him.

"Ouch, ouch, oh my god, it hurts so much..."

Suddenly, Zhang Meng's voice came from the ground. He had been stomped on and lost his breath. After Zhuang Rui's spiritual energy entered his body, he immediately woke up. However, the pain all over his body made Zhang Meng groan involuntarily.

"Young man, don't do such dangerous things next time. Be careful..."

Dean Zhou was on stage just now and naturally saw that the student fell while climbing over the tables and chairs, so he couldn't help but say a few words of advice.

"Oh, Teacher Zhou, I know, where's my notebook? Teacher Zhou, could you please sign it for me?"

Those around Zhang Meng, who was looking around curiously, initially didn't know what he was up to. But after hearing his words, they realized that the kid was still thinking about getting an autograph, leaving them all somewhat amused and exasperated.

"Here, your notebook..."

Zhuang Rui picked up a notebook and pen from the ground, not knowing if they belonged to Zhang Meng, and placed them on Zhang Meng's chest.

"Hey buddy, sorry about that, I probably won't be able to take you to the history department later, boss, you have to get me there for me..."

To be fair, Zhang Meng's character is really quite good. He's barely human anymore, yet he still remembers this. Zhuang Rui smiled and didn't say anything. His use of spiritual energy was worthwhile.

"Excuse me, student, please make way..."

The stretcher arrived quickly. After Professor Zhou gave his diagnosis, they dared to move Zhang Meng. Amidst Zhang Meng's heart-wrenching cries, several people lifted him up and carried him outside.

After this incident, no one dared to ask for autographs anymore; they were all kicked out of the lecture hall by the teacher. Zhuang Rui, however, stayed behind, perhaps because the teacher didn't think he looked like a student.

"Dean Zhou, if you had needles at your disposal, could you have treated that student?"

Zhuang Rui noticed that Dean Zhou's forehead was covered in fine sweat, clearly indicating that this matter had also greatly impacted him.

"That's possible, but it can only temporarily relieve his pain. To cure the illness, medication is needed; acupuncture alone is not enough..."

Acupuncture is a combination of needling and moxibustion. Medications can also be applied to the tips of the needles. Dean Zhou casually explained this after hearing Zhuang Rui's words.

"Hey, young man, I feel like I've seen you somewhere before?" Dean Zhou looked Zhuang Rui up and down and asked.

"Hehe, Dean Zhou, you were the one who took my pulse when my wife was pregnant..."

Zhuang Rui laughed when he heard this. His current appearance was completely different from before. He used to wear shirts and trousers, but today he was wearing a t-shirt and jeans. In addition, he had gotten a tan in ***, so it was normal for Dean Zhou not to recognize him.

"Oh, I remember now, you're Xiao Zhuang?"

Dean Zhou patted his forehead and remembered that their hospital's patients were a very special group of people. After Zhuang Rui brought Qin Xuanbing to see him, he also made a backup of her medical record.

Zhuang Rui nodded and said, "Yes, what a coincidence! I never expected to have the honor of hearing your lecture today..."

"Okay, Xiao Zhuang, let's talk again another time. I have to go now..."

Dean Zhou originally wanted to say a few more words to Zhuang Rui, but two guards came to his side and whispered a few words to him. After that, Dean Zhou had no choice but to say goodbye to Zhuang Rui.

After Professor Zhou left, the classroom finally quieted down. Zhuang Rui followed Zhang Meng's classmate and left the medical school for the history school.

As for the shoes and two *** scattered on the ground, they were all picked up by students arranged by the teacher and handed over to the teacher, presumably so that the students who lost their items could retrieve them from the student affairs office.

However, while someone might claim those leather shoes, the question of whose shoes those two women belonged to will likely remain a mystery.

Chapter 784 Academy of Cultural Heritage

"Xiao Li, let's exchange phone numbers. I'll go see Zhang Meng when I have time; he's a nice guy..."

Zhuang Rui followed Zhang Meng's classmates all the way, learning they were third-year medical students at Peking University. Thinking of using acupuncture to fool people, Zhuang Rui exchanged phone numbers with one of the classmates, giving him an excuse to audit classes.

Moreover, Zhang Meng's major is Traditional Chinese Medicine, and he is going to study acupuncture this year. Zhuang Rui plans to learn some acupuncture techniques from him and practice on his cousin Ouyang in his spare time so that he can openly use spiritual energy to cleanse the bodies of his relatives in the future.

"Okay, Brother Zhuang, we'll come visit you at the Cultural Heritage Academy anytime..."

Xiao Li readily agreed. To these students, archaeology was an extremely mysterious thing. Getting to know Zhuang Rui would allow them to come and have some fun and experience the current antique craze.

"I'm probably the most confused graduate student ever..."

Standing at the entrance of the School of Archaeology and Museology at Peking University, Zhuang Rui shook his head and smiled wryly. He only now realized that the archaeology courses at Peking University were not located within the School of History, but rather in a separate School of Archaeology and Museology.

The Cultural Heritage Academy consists of several white-roofed, red-tiled houses connected by bright red lacquered corridors, exuding a classical atmosphere. In the courtyard, there is a small pond with several weeping willows growing along its banks, creating a very tranquil environment.

Zhuang Rui walked in through the main gate and learned about the history of the School of Cultural Heritage after seeing some pictures and introductions on the wall.

Although Kyoto University established an archaeology major as early as 1952, this major has always been within the history department and is not a completely independent discipline, but rather a derivative major of the history department.

Until 1983, after a decision by the Peking University President's Office, the archaeology major was separated from the history department to establish the Department of Archaeology. The Department of

Archaeology now offers two majors: Archaeology and Museology, and has four research directions: Archaeology, Museology, Cultural Relics Conservation, and Ancient Architecture.

In 2000, the Department of Archaeology partnered with the State Administration of Cultural Heritage to run the school, and was renamed the "College of Archaeology and Museology of Peking University". The College of Archaeology and Museology currently has 19 professors (16 of whom are doctoral supervisors), 12 associate professors, and 9 lecturers.

The School of Archaeology and Museology at Kyoto University admits approximately 30-40 undergraduate students, 15-20 master's students, 8-10 doctoral students, and about 10 international students or visiting scholars each year.

In addition, the School of Cultural Heritage and Museology accepts 3-5 visiting students and teachers and 3-5 visiting scholars each year, and also enrolls students in associate degree programs in different fields from time to time. Currently, there are more than 200 students at different levels.

Professor Meng, Zhuang Rui's mentor, is not only a doctoral supervisor in the School of Cultural Heritage and Museum Studies, but also serves as the dean of the school. After arriving at the School of Cultural Heritage and Museum Studies, Zhuang Rui realized how difficult it was for him to become a graduate student.

Imagine, even within China, not to mention overseas, every year tens of thousands of undergraduate students apply to Peking University's graduate programs, while the School of Cultural Heritage only admits 15-20 students. The probability of this is likely one in a thousand or even one in ten thousand.

Zhuang Rui initially felt that he had gotten in based on his own merits, but now he was a little guilty. It was highly likely that Professor Meng had taken care of him.

"Brother Zhuang, didn't you say you were coming to attend the class this morning? Why are you only arriving now?"

As Zhuang Rui was looking at the introductions and photos on the wall, he heard a greeting. Looking in the direction of the voice, he saw Wu Zhao walking in from the corridor outside the house with a notebook in his hand.

After having dinner with Zhuang Rui the day before yesterday, Wu Zhao and the others went to their mentor the next day to inquire about Zhuang Rui's background. What they found was surprising: not only did Zhuang Rui own a private museum, but he was also a director of the Jade Association—a prestigious title that would make him an expert.

That's not all. When Professor Meng mentioned that Zhuang Rui also had the title of "King of Jade" in the jade industry, the PhDs no longer underestimated Zhuang Rui.

It's important to understand that Zhuang Rui's status in the jade and jadeite industry is no less than that of their teacher in the archaeology field. Although the two disciplines are different, they both reflect a person's strength and ability. If Zhuang Rui didn't have real skills, could he be called the "King of Jade"?

These privileged students in their ivory towers, though proud, genuinely admire those with superior knowledge. Therefore, Wu Zhao's address of "Brother Zhuang" was entirely willing. Had it not been for the fact that they were both Professor Meng's students, Wu Zhao would probably have called him "Teacher Zhuang."

"Don't even mention it, I'm lost again..."

Zhuang Rui told Wu Zhao about what had happened that morning with a wry smile. Dr. Wu was almost dumbfounded. He had been at Peking University for five or six years and had never encountered anything like this. Zhuang Rui had only been there for two days and had already encountered quite a few strange things.

After listening to Zhuang Rui's words, Dr. Wu said, "Brother Zhuang, let's go eat first. I'll get you the vehicle access pass later, and then I'll take you through it again so you'll be familiar with it..."

"Okay, thank you. I was just thinking about that..."

Zhuang Rui nodded hurriedly. He had lunch with Wu Zhao again at noon. There was no other way; his meal card and student ID hadn't been processed yet, and he estimated he would have to wait another three or four days to get them.

After lunch, Wu Zhao went to process Zhuang Rui's vehicle access pass, while Zhuang Rui went to the School of Cultural Heritage to listen to a lecture given by an old professor to undergraduates.

Zhuang Rui discovered that the number of undergraduate students in the previous year was far more than thirty or forty. Although the classroom was not large, it was full, with no fewer than eighty people.

Looking at the students around him who were just over twenty years old, Zhuang Rui sighed inwardly. When he was an undergraduate, his school also had an archaeology major, but there were very few students. They couldn't even fill a class in a year, and students from different grades would have to attend classes together.

It was after 2000 that the antique craze began to rise, which also brought archaeology into people's view. Students did not understand the difference between antiques and archaeology, and they all flocked to apply for this major. It was during that period that archaeology became known to the general public.

Comparatively speaking, archaeology graduates are considered academics, having received formal national higher education. They possess solid theoretical knowledge in various fields and have extensive understanding of the origins of artifacts from different dynasties.

However, compared with many self-taught antique appraisal experts, the shortcomings of the academic school are also obvious.

First, there's the matter of authenticating physical objects. The opportunities for academics to get hands-on experience are far fewer than those who collect antiques. If you try to authenticate objects using knowledge borrowed from books, you're almost guaranteed to make a mistake and pay the price for your ignorance.

Moreover, antique appraisal experts have relatively diverse backgrounds, and they appraise antiques from various perspectives.

For example, the appraisal of a piece of porcelain involves examining its body, glaze, shape, decoration, and patina. This requires appraisers to have a broader range of knowledge. The body and glaze involve professional ceramic knowledge, while the shape and decoration require appraisers to have a certain level of artistic skill.

In addition, there are some common-sense things that require experience to accumulate, and academic dogmatic theories are difficult to apply here.

This is one of the reasons why many archaeology graduates, after entering society, often find themselves repeatedly cheated when trying to buy antiques using their professional knowledge. Even Professor Meng paid a lot of tuition fees in the antique market.

After class, Zhuang Rui received a call from Wu Zhao and went to get the vehicle pass to enter and exit Peking University. Since he didn't live on campus, he left alone after seeing that there were no more classes, which deprived several doctoral students who wanted to spend more time with Zhuang Rui of the opportunity.

In the following days, Zhuang Rui shuttled between the courtyard house and the school, and his life became more regular and fulfilling. He studied during the day and spent his evenings playing with his niece and spending time with his family. Zhuang Rui seemed to have found the life he wanted.

The little golden eagle has been changing almost every day lately. Its toes are getting longer and sharper, and it can even tear off a piece of bark from a big tree in the yard with a single swipe of its claw.

The little golden feathers also changed; their originally white downy feathers turned golden yellow, and their beaks became more curved, like hooks.

Perhaps it was because Zhuang Rui used his spiritual energy to help it regulate its body, but the feathers on the little golden eagle's wings were not the brownish-yellow of its parents, but a light golden-yellow, and its wingspan was almost a meter long.

Every morning when the golden eagle soars over the courtyard, the sunlight shines on it, reflecting a golden glow.

Fortunately, there are no national regulations regarding keeping birds as pets; otherwise, large birds of prey like the golden pheasant would certainly not be allowed to live in cities.

When the weekend arrived, Zhuang Rui received a call from Li Dali. This time, he didn't bring Bai Shi and the other kids with him. Instead, he took the set of eight Tang tri-colored figurines and drove with Peng Fei to the highway entrance, where Li Dali was already waiting.

Upon seeing Zhuang Rui waving at him, Li Dali immediately stepped forward and said, "Mr. Zhuang, let me get in your car. I've been looking into that Mr. Xu's background these past few days, and I'd like to tell you about it..."

Mr. Li has been having such a wonderful time in *** these past few days that he almost doesn't want to go back to Hebei. The young actresses at the club in the suburbs of Beijing are all so beautiful and youthful that Mr. Li is almost tempted to switch careers and go into the entertainment industry himself.

Of course, Li Dali's wallet has also shrunk considerably in the past few days. Just one night of "emotional" conversation with a minor celebrity who appeared in a few TV shows and had only a few lines cost him more than two million yuan in sponsorship fees.

"Mr. Zhuang, speaking of that Mr. Xu, he really is a legendary figure..."

After getting into the car, Li Dali didn't beat around the bush and directly told everyone what he had found out.

Chapter 785-786 Prodigal Son

"Oh? Tell me about it..."

Zhuang Rui was filled with curiosity about this Mr. Xu. The Tang tri-colored pottery with the character "Xu" on it was the only antique fake that Zhuang Rui could not find fault with. If it weren't for that character, Zhuang Rui would not have dared to break it open rashly and could only use carbon-14 dating to determine its authenticity.

"President Zhuang, you would never guess that this guy surnamed Xu is such a spendthrift..."

Li Dali smiled and continued, "Mr. Zhuang, the person you are looking for is named Xu Guoqing. He is forty years old this year. His ancestral home is Cixian County, Handan, Hebei Province. In the mid-1960s, Xu Guoqing, who was just born, moved to Gaoyi County, Shijiazhuang with his parents..."

In the 1980s, our country began to encourage private entrepreneurship. Xu Guoqing's father had a skill in firing ceramics, so he opened a ceramics factory. By the end of the 1980s, he had become a well-known multi-millionaire in Shijiazhuang...

Xu Guoqing's father passed away due to illness in 1990, and the factory was handed over to Xu Guoqing.

This man, however, did not do any proper work. He neither went out to do business nor cared about the production in the factory. As soon as he took over the factory, he built a research institute and spent all his time there fiddling with antique porcelain.

Normally, there's nothing wrong with studying ancient porcelain, but Xu Guoqing is different. He actually smashed several Tang tri-color pottery pieces that he bought from abroad at great expense. Many people know about this, and it has become a joke.

In the 1980s, there were relatively few private enterprises, and Xu Guoqing's factory had little competition, so business was quite good. However, he didn't know how to maintain relationships, and in the 1990s, various private factories sprang up one after another, and his ceramics factory was quickly eliminated...

"Look, in just over a decade, Xu Guoqing has almost ruined the family business. The factory is practically defunct now. President Zhuang, don't you think he's a spendthrift?"

"Heh, this guy is interesting..."

Zhuang Rui smiled and shook his head. From the Tang tri-color pottery that Xu Guoqing had fired, Zhuang Rui could see his superb skills and understand why he smashed the genuine tri-color porcelain. However, Li Dali's description was not wrong. This man was indeed a complete spendthrift.

It's important to understand that back in the 1980s, having tens of millions in assets was a remarkable achievement, far more valuable than being a billionaire today.

Taiwan's richest man today, Mr. Guo, who claims to have a net worth of tens of billions, was only worth a million in the late 1980s, and had fewer than a hundred employees.

If Xu Guoqing had even a little business sense, he wouldn't be a billionaire now, but he could at least have secured a place in the ceramics industry. Li Dali's assessment of him as a "spendthrift" was absolutely correct.

However, this person also made Zhuang Rui even more curious. Why would someone abandon a business worth tens of millions to specialize in making counterfeit Tang tri-color pottery? Zhuang Rui couldn't figure out what this person was up to. If he was making and selling fakes, he wouldn't have lost so much money that his factory was about to go bankrupt.

"By the way, Mr. Zhuang, I originally arranged to meet this guy at ***, but he's planning to sell his factory and can't get away right now, so I'm troubling you to make this trip..."

Li Dali suddenly remembered this matter and quickly explained it to Zhuang Rui. In President Li's heart, Xu Guoqing was not even as important as Zhuang Rui's little finger. Logically speaking, the fact that he hadn't called Xu Guoqing to meet Zhuang Rui meant that he had already failed to handle the matter properly.

Zhuang Rui smiled and waved his hand, saying, "It doesn't matter, it's not far anyway, it's good to go and take a look..."

Zhuang Rui also wanted to see what kind of environment this Master Xu was in that he could imitate Tang tri-color pottery that even many experts could not see through.

It's important to understand that replicating antique ceramics requires not only adhering strictly to the ancient firing techniques but also possessing the original recipes. Even the materials used and the firing temperature must be precisely controlled; sometimes, even a degree too high or too low can ruin an entire kiln of porcelain.

In ancient kiln sites that have been unearthed in recent times, a large number of broken ceramics are often found. These are not the broken pieces of intact porcelain that have been broken after so many years, but rather pieces that were broken by the kiln workers after they were fired.

In ancient times, the production of ceramic utensils for the royal family was extremely meticulous. If there was even the slightest flaw, the item had to be broken and discarded. Sometimes, it would take

more than ten kilns to produce a single masterpiece. That's why the fragments scattered all over the ruins are from this process.

The Tang Dynasty is more than 1,000 years ago, and the secret recipe for firing Tang Sancai has long been lost in the long river of history. What Zhuang Rui was wondering was how Xu Guoqing managed to recreate this technique.

Shijiazhuang is located in the heart of the North China Plain. It is the core city of the third pole of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei metropolitan area, an important national center for pharmaceutical and textile industries, one of the important modern service industry and bio-industry bases, and an important commercial port in North China.

After more than three hours on the highway, Zhuang Rui and his group arrived in Shijiazhuang. However, they were still more than 50 kilometers away from Gaoyi County. Li Dali originally wanted to entertain Zhuang Rui in Shijiazhuang, but Zhuang Rui declined and drove directly to Gaoyi.

Around noon, the two cars exited the Beijing-Shenzhen Expressway one after the other. At the expressway entrance, there was another car waiting there. Li Dali greeted Peng Fei and signaled him to stop.

"Old Yu, you didn't handle this matter properly this time..."

After Li Dali got out of the car, he punched a middle-aged man who got out of the car hard on the shoulder.

The man, with a pained expression, took Li Dali's punch and said with a frown, "Hey, Mr. Li, I was asked to do this by a friend, I really had no choice. Well, since you're here today, it's my treat. Let's go eat first, and we can talk about it this afternoon..."

"Yes, we have distinguished guests today, Lao Yu. Let's forget about that matter. But if we don't treat these guests well, our friendship of over ten years will be over..."

Li Dali himself was involved in shady dealings, and his black market auctions were shady business. He was used to this kind of thing and didn't blame Lao Yu for asking him to help sell counterfeit goods.

"Oh, Mr. Li, Brother Li, don't worry about it. You're not allowed to leave my territory if you don't drink properly. Let me tell you, I've arranged for several young girls to keep you company while you drink. You can do whatever you want..." Old Yu smiled when he saw that Li Dali wasn't angry, but his expression looked lewd.

Old Yu and Li Dali have known each other for over ten years. Knowing that Li Dali likes this kind of thing, Old Yu contacted several nightclubs yesterday and found a few nice girls to come and make sure Mr. Li is well taken care of tonight.

"What?"

Upon hearing this, Li Dali nearly jumped up in fright. He quickly lowered his voice and said, "Call and take it off right away, don't do this..."

After Li Dali went to *** City and spent a few days in a club in the suburbs of Beijing, he no longer looked down on the vulgar women in these small places.

According to Mr. Li's thinking, based on Zhuang Rui's performance at that club, wouldn't he be able to sleep with whichever celebrity he wanted?

"You don't want it anymore? I've already paid for it..."

When Lao Yu heard Li Dali's words, he was stunned for a moment. This old friend usually liked this the most. When the big cities were cracking down, he would often come to his place to have fun. Why was he acting so strangely today?

Besides, Lao Yu called eight girls today and paid 1,000 yuan to each of them. It would be a shame not to do anything with them.

"The guy in the car only hangs out with big stars; he wouldn't look down on this kind of thing. Don't make things worse. Hmm, I'm not leaving tonight. Let's make arrangements for tonight..."

Mr. Li wasn't exactly a saint either. After hearing Lao Yu's words, he immediately changed his mind and scheduled the important task of accompanying the prostitutes for the evening.

"Alright, drive and lead the way. Tell those girls to leave. Remember, don't try to get them to drink later. That girl is not in our league..." Li Dali gave Lao Yu a few more instructions.

You know, when friends come over for dinner in the North, it's unacceptable not to drink. And once they start drinking, they're bound to drink too much. They won't be hospitable if they don't get you drunk. Li Dali was afraid that Lao Yu might say something inappropriate and upset Zhuang Rui.

"I understand, Mr. Li, don't worry..."

When Lao Yu saw Li Dali repeatedly emphasizing the importance of the people in the car, he became more serious. He glanced at Zhuang Rui's Audi, and seeing that Zhuang Rui didn't get out to greet him, he turned and got into his own car.

After Li Dali got back into Zhuang Rui's car, he said, "President Zhuang, Xu Guoqing's factory isn't far from the county town. Let's go eat first; it's almost lunchtime..."

"Okay, Mr. Li, please make the arrangements. As long as I can see Xu Guoqing this afternoon..."

Zhuang Rui nodded in agreement. He had only had some porridge in the morning and was a little hungry. After the cars drove into Gaoyi County, they stopped in front of a restaurant that looked somewhat upscale.

"Old Yu, this is General Manager Zhuang from ***. General Manager Zhuang, this is my old friend Yu Zhengjun. This batch of goods came from him..."

After getting off the car, Li Dali introduced the two to each other. Yu Zhengjun was also a very perceptive person. After exchanging a few polite words with Zhuang Rui, he led him to a private room in the restaurant.

"Mr. Zhuang, these are all local specialties of Hebei: Shijiazhuang braised chicken, Ma Jia Lao Ji Pu braised chicken, Bohai prawns, Qinhuangdao sea crabs, and Steamed Wild Game Eight Delicacies. Come on, Mr. Zhuang, how do you like them?"

Yu Zhengjun had already ordered the dishes. There should have been a few girls at the table to keep the atmosphere lively, but they were all removed. Remembering Li Dali's words, Old Yu didn't dare to urge them to drink.

The dishes on the table were all quite good, especially the Steamed Wild Game Eight Immortals. When the lid of the steamer was lifted, the room was immediately filled with a wonderful aroma, making everyone's mouths water.

"This dish is good, thank you for your thoughtfulness, Boss Yu..."

Zhuang Rui had no idea about the dirty dealings between Lao Yu and Li Dali. He picked up a piece of wild game with his chopsticks and immediately began to praise it highly.

"Hehe, Mr. Zhuang, please eat more. This restaurant is called Baxianguan, and it's a long-established brand. The main ingredients for this dish are roe deer meat, pheasant breast, rabbit, lamb, Shafeng chicken, winter bamboo shoots, mushrooms, and green peppers. These ingredients are steamed in a steamer. This dish was personally prepared by the owner..."

Upon hearing Zhuang Rui's words, Lao Yu quickly introduced the dishes on the table to Zhuang Rui. Apart from not drinking alcohol, the meal was enjoyed by both host and guests.

After the meal, Zhuang Rui learned more about Xu Guoqing. It turned out that this Boss Yu was Xu Guoqing's neighbor before, and the two could even be considered childhood friends.

The Xu family's rise to prominence in the 1980s led many locals to get rich as well. Although Xu Guoqing made a mess of things after taking over the factory, many people still became wealthy. Some even started ceramic factories. Boss Yu, on the other hand, started a transportation business in the 1980s and now owns a sizable fleet of vehicles.

As for dealing in antiques, that was Mr. Yu's side business, and this story has to start with Xu Guoqing.

Although Xu Guoqing's business wasn't doing very well, he always had a good relationship with Yu Zhengjun. In the early 1990s, Xu Guoqing would casually give away the ceramic items he made, and Yu Zhengjun was one of the recipients.

Yu Zhengjun started his transportation business with just his own truck. He traveled all over the country and made many friends. Once, a customer from the south came to his house and saw the Tang tri-colored pottery displayed in the living room. He was immediately captivated by it. Yu Zhengjun knew whether it was valuable or not, so he casually gave it to the customer.

It was from this customer from the south that Boss Yu learned what antiques were. Later, when he traveled to other places, he paid attention to them. In the 1990s, antiques were not so popular, and he really found a lot of good things.

However, Yu Zhengjun is a very principled person. Although he made money in the antique business, he continued to run transportation and even set up a transportation company. His business gradually expanded, and in this small county, he can be considered a successful person with a net worth of tens of millions.

Over the years, Yu Zhengjun has developed a keen eye for antiques. Later, he met Li Dali and traded a lot of genuine and fake items from all over the country to Li Dali, making him a semi-insider in the antique circle.

After explaining these things to Zhuang Rui, Yu Zhengjun said to Zhuang Rui seriously, "Boss Zhuang, although my brother Xu is a bit slow-witted, he's definitely not a bad person. This time, I wanted to help him borrow some money. It was my decision, so please don't make things difficult for Qingguo..."

Zhuang Rui laughed upon hearing this and waved his hands repeatedly, saying, "Mr. Yu, you've misunderstood. I'm here simply to get to know Mr. Xu, nothing more. By the way, you said Mr. Xu is having some cash flow problems right now?"

When Zhuang Rui mentioned this, Boss Yu's face immediately showed worry. He sighed and said, "Sigh, he's not even in a cash flow situation anymore. He's completely broke. His wife has run back to her parents' house, and I'm the one who paid for the kids' college education..."

"How could this happen? Doesn't Mr. Xu still have some savings?"

Zhuang Rui was stunned for a moment. So this master had already reached the end of his rope?

Yu Zhengjun sighed and said, "Old Xu doesn't know how to run a business. A few years ago, he was swindled out of more than three million yuan. For three or four years, the factory had no output value. At that time, he still had to support a bunch of people..."

Plus, he frequently spends money on raw materials for firing porcelain, and he even sold the house his father built. Now the workers have left, and he's moved into the factory to live. I just don't understand, even though these things are made to look real, they don't fetch much price in China. Why is he so obsessed with making this stuff?

"Mr. Zhuang, please don't think I'm being dishonest. Qingguo and I are childhood friends, we've known each other since we were toddlers. But there's nothing I can do to help him with this. It's a bottomless pit, and I can't fill it..."

After hearing Yu Zhengjun's explanation, Zhuang Rui realized that Xu Guoqing never sold the things he made; he gave them away to whoever liked them, and who knows how many of them had been lost over the years.

However, the cost of making these items is extremely high, with each one costing nearly 50,000 to 60,000 yuan, not even counting the ones that are ruined. He can't keep living off his savings like this, no matter how rich he is.

Xu Guoqing's wife used to be very supportive of his hobby, but seeing his pockets getting emptier day by day, she tried to persuade him several times but he wouldn't listen, so she simply ran back to her parents' home.

Now that Xu Guoqing's factory is almost running out of electricity, he has come to his senses and has gathered dozens of exquisite ceramic pieces that he has made over the years, entrusting Yu Zhengjun to sell them.

Yu Zhengjun recently met a client who was interested in Xu Guoqing's factory. However, Xu Guoqing refused to sell, and the meeting ended badly. It was because of this incident that Xu Guoqing handed over dozens of his treasured works to Yu Zhengjun to sell.

However, Xu Guoqing's original intention was to sell these items as modern handicrafts. He did not expect that Yu Zhengjun would resell them to Li Dali. If they had not fallen into Zhuang Rui's hands, these items might have been auctioned off on the black market.

...

"Mr. Zhuang, this is Old Xu's factory. Now quite a few people are eyeing this land..."

After lunch, led by Yu Zhengjun, the group drove towards Xu Guoqing's ceramics factory. His factory wasn't far from the county town; after about twenty minutes, they could see the factory's perimeter wall, which covered a considerable area. It seemed Xu Guoqing's factory had truly reached its end; the lime and cement on the outside of the wall had crumbled, revealing the red bricks from the 1980s underneath. Weeds grew rampant at the base of the wall, giving it a dilapidated appearance.

Xu Guoqing's father chose this place to build the factory because it was surrounded by farmland and the land was cheap. However, now that there are residential areas and streets all around, the factory seems a bit out of place.

"Old Xu, Old Xu, open the door quickly..."

After parking the car at the factory gate, Yu Zhengjun started banging on the rusty gate. A few barks came from inside, but they quickly turned into low whimpers after hearing Yu Zhengjun's voice.

"This guy can barely afford to keep his dog anymore, sigh..."

Yu Zhengjun, holding the leftovers he had just packed, gestured to Zhuang Rui, who then understood why Boss Yu had asked the waiter to pack up the leftovers after finishing his meal.

"This guy's up to no good again, Boss Zhuang. Don't worry about him, I'll call him right away..."

After waiting at the door for five or six minutes without any movement from inside, Yu Zhengjun quickly picked up his phone and dialed. Once the call connected, he immediately yelled at Xu Guoqing to come and open the door.

"Old Yu, you brought food for Da Huang, couldn't you have just tossed it in through the door? Why did you have to call me over?"

Xu Guoqing was slow on the uptake; after the call connected, he waited another seven or eight minutes before he heard footsteps and voices coming from inside the door.

As the iron gate creaked open, a middle-aged man with long hair, a scruffy beard, and thick glasses appeared before them.

The middle-aged man's hair was quite distinctive. At first glance, it appeared to be three colors: white, red, and blue. Zhuang Rui took a closer look and realized that it was dye. It seemed that the man was busy with something.

However, this image is far from the master in Zhuang Rui's mind. He looks like a decadent old boy. This image, even without dressing up, is comparable to a hippie in the United States in the 1970s and 1980s.

The middle-aged man glanced at Zhuang Rui and the others, then turned to Yu Zhengjun and said, "Old Yu, didn't I tell you? The factory is for rent, not for sale. My lab can't be touched. And if we're going to rent it, it won't be to those *** people. ***'s current porcelain-making techniques were stolen from us back then..."

Zhuang Rui and the others were amused by Xu Guoqing's words; it turned out he was a patriotic hothead.

"Old Xu, can't you be a little more normal at other times, except when you're firing porcelain?"

Yu Zhengjun was somewhat exasperated with his old friend. After dumping the packaged food into the basin by the door, he said, "Old Xu, I told you before, this is President Zhuang. He came all the way from ***. You old rascal, you should at least let us in and have a seat..."

"President Zhuang? I don't know that President Zhuang."

Xu Guoqing had obviously forgotten what Lao Yu had mentioned to him, but although he was obsessed with ceramics, he still understood basic human relationships and let the group in.

The factory yard is quite large, but apart from the lime-paved roads, weeds grow on both sides of the roads. One of the workshops facing the gate is locked, and it's unclear how long it has been since it was put into operation.

"The only place I have where people can sit is the lab. Let's go to the lab to do it..."

Xu Guoqing led everyone around the workshop, and Zhuang Rui immediately saw a large chimney. Although it wasn't very tall, it was very thick. Below the chimney was the laboratory that Xu Guoqing had mentioned.

"Oh, I just remembered, Lao Yu, isn't this Boss Zhuang the one you told me about, the one who could tell that my tricolor pottery figurine was fake? Is that right?"

As soon as he pushed open the laboratory door, Xu Guoqing suddenly turned around as if possessed by a demon, startling everyone behind him.

"Yes, Mr. Zhuang came to see you after seeing your tricolor pottery figurines. May I ask if you can let us in first and pour us a glass of water?"

Yu Zhengjun was familiar with Xu Guoqing and knew that the man was a bit eccentric, so he pushed him aside and let Zhuang Rui and the others in.

Chapter 787 Flaw

"Old Yu, could you help me greet the guests? Mr. Zhuang, you're the expert, let's go inside and talk..."

Hearing Yu Zhengjun nod in agreement, Xu Guoqing grabbed Zhuang Rui, completely disregarding the paint still on his hands, leaving five finger marks on Zhuang Rui's pristine white shirt.

"This... Mr. Zhuang, I'm so sorry, I really am sorry. I wanted to ask you for advice on what flaws in my work you were able to spot?"

Even though Xu Guoqing was clueless about social etiquette, he knew that his actions were somewhat inappropriate, so he awkwardly let go of her hand. However, he still looked anxious, and his bright eyes were fixed on Zhuang Rui through his glasses.

Zhuang Rui looked at the mark on his sleeve and couldn't help but smile wryly. He could tell that Xu Guoqing was not mentally unstable, but he just focused all his attention on studying ancient ceramic techniques, so to outsiders, he seemed a bit strange.

However, people who have made outstanding achievements in certain fields all have one or another quirk. Picasso, for example, could not live without women. Even when he was over ninety years old, he was still surrounded by beautiful women.

Many scientists also have peculiar habits unknown to outsiders, but once they become famous, these quirks and flaws have all turned into virtues.

"Call me by my name, Zhuang Rui..." Zhuang Rui said with a smile.

"Oh? I thought your name was President Zhuang. Come on, let's go inside and talk..."

Xu Guoqing scratched his head sheepishly, adding another color to his hair, but in Zhuang Rui's eyes, this forty-year-old man seemed very simple.

Zhuang Rui was also curious about what Xu Guoqing's studio looked like, so he followed him in from one side.

Peng Fei sensed that Xu Guoqing had some mental issues and, fearing he might harm Zhuang Rui, followed him inside. Li Dali, who was specifically accompanying Zhuang Rui, naturally couldn't wait outside, so the group all entered Xu Guoqing's laboratory.

"Wow, this... is your studio?"

As soon as Zhuang Rui stepped into that side room, he was startled. The room was at least four or five hundred square meters in size, but what was in the middle left Zhuang Rui speechless.

It turns out that the huge chimney Zhuang Rui saw from the outside was actually inside the house. A brick chimney with a diameter of almost ten meters appearing inside a house was quite impressive.

Nearby, shelves of varying heights were displayed, and on each shelf were hundreds of porcelain pieces, almost all of which had been prepared but not yet colored and fired.

That's not all. In one corner of the room, there are also a pulverizer, a Raymond mill, and a highly professional air jet mill. These are all very professional pulverizing tools that can grind ore and some dried hard soil into very fine powder.

Zhuang Rui knew that truly exquisite imitation porcelain required a great deal of effort. Not only did it require building kilns using ancient methods, but it also required using the original porcelain clay.

Even the glaze pigments used for coloring require grinding colored mineral powders yourself, then heating them at high temperatures to mix them. Commercially available chemical raw materials are absolutely unacceptable.

Even after these processes are completed, defective products often appear during firing. Modern imitations made in this way are not cheaper than some old antiques, and may even be more valuable.

Zhuang Rui could tell that Xu Guoqing had completed all the processes of shaping, painting, glazing, and firing all the objects here by himself. Just this alone required mastering several disciplines. If Xu Guoqing didn't have that kind of fanatical attitude, he really wouldn't have been able to do it well.

"Zhuang Rui, you still haven't told me how you saw through the flaws in my works..."

To be honest, Xu Guoqing was extremely confident in his replicas of the sancai (three-color glazed pottery) figurines, because he strictly followed ancient secret recipes in both the clay and firing techniques.

In Xu Guoqing's mind, unless a carbon-14 test is performed, he does not believe that the objects can be detected as fake by the naked eye or other instruments.

"Hehe, I'll call you Xu Gong..."

Since the other person was older than him, it wouldn't be appropriate to call him by his name, so Zhuang Rui came up with a way to address him.

"Call me whatever you want, just tell me quickly..." Xu Guoqing had absolutely no interest in what Zhuang Rui called him; he just wanted to know what was wrong with his Tang tri-color pottery and what needed to be improved.

Zhuang Rui smiled and shook his head, saying, "Mr. Xu, may I ask, from which dynasty did the idea of official kilns begin?"

"It started in the Song Dynasty. Although there were kilns in the Han and Tang Dynasties that were exclusively for the use of the royal family, the supervision was not as strong, and there was no distinction between them and those used by the common people..."

It was only from the Song Dynasty onwards that imperial ceramic utensils became distinct from those used by ordinary people. But Zhuang Rui, what does this have to do with my Tang tri-color pottery?

Xu Guoqing started firing Tang Sancai a few years ago. He felt that he had completely deciphered the craftsmanship of Tang Sancai and that it was no longer challenging. Therefore, he has been studying Cizhou ware from the Song Dynasty in recent years. So he was able to answer Zhuang Rui's question on the spot.

"Yes, it was indeed an official kiln established during the Song Dynasty. Among the ceramics from the Han and Tang Dynasties, apart from Tang tri-color pottery which is considered a masterpiece, there aren't many good pieces that have been passed down to posterity. This also proves the principle that

things aren't necessarily better the older they are. Otherwise, why would the oldest stones on this mountain be the least valuable?"

Zhuang Rui's words not only confused Xu Guoqing, but also Li Dali and Yu Zhengjun, who were bewildered as to what Zhuang Rui's words had to do with Xu Guoqing's problem.

"Perfect, XCMG, the only flaw in your tricolor terracotta figurines lies in the perfection!" Before Xu Guoqing could even ask, Zhuang Rui gave the answer himself.

Xu Guoqing still didn't understand, muttering to himself, "Perfect? Is there anything wrong with perfection? It should be a replica that's exactly the same as the real thing..."

"Perfection is certainly not wrong, but it depends on the era. If it's official kiln porcelain from the Song Dynasty onwards, then perfection is the goal. The thickness of the lines on a single petal, the distance between two petals—there can be no mistakes whatsoever. But for sancai porcelain, you've gone too far in achieving perfection..."

After the Han and Tang dynasties, any official kiln porcelain with even the slightest flaw had to be broken. It could not be used in the imperial palace, nor could it be circulated among the common people. This is the main reason why exquisite porcelain pieces passed down from the Song dynasty onwards are extremely rare and precious.

Zhuang Rui's words gradually brightened Xu Guoqing's eyes. He had been playing with porcelain shards that his father had dug up from the Cizhou kiln site since he was a toddler, and his research on porcelain was extremely profound.

However, he was far from understanding human nature. Now, after hearing Zhuang Rui's explanation, Xu Guoqing slowly began to understand.

"Zhuang Rui, are you saying that when sancai porcelain was fired in the Tang Dynasty, due to the lack of unified supervision, many flawed sancai pottery figurines were preserved, while my porcelain pieces are all flawless, which is why you were able to spot the flaw? Is that right?"

Xu Guoqing was also a very smart person. After hearing Zhuang Rui's suggestion, he thought about it for a moment and understood the key point. It turned out that the perfection he pursued had become a flaw in the eyes of others.

"Yes, that's right, Mr. Li. When you take these tricolor glazed tiles to others for appraisal, do many people say they can't tell the difference?" Zhuang Rui nodded and turned to Li Dali.

"Yes, several experts have also said that these objects are too perfect..."

What Mr. Li said is true. Several experts couldn't find anything wrong, but they still felt something was off. In the end, they didn't issue an appraisal certificate, only saying that they couldn't tell for sure.

"I understand now, it's like the moon waning after it's full, or water overflowing when it's full..."

Xu Guoqing was slightly disappointed, but then an excited expression appeared on his face. He said to Zhuang Rui, "Han and Tang porcelain doesn't pursue perfection, but I'm currently studying Cizhou ware. Zhuang Rui, come and see if you can find any flaws?"

"What? You've started firing Cizhou ware now?"

Zhuang Rui was stunned for a moment upon hearing this. It turned out that this guy had stopped collecting Sancai (three-color glazed pottery) and started collecting Cizhou ware from the Song Dynasty. You should know that although Cizhou ware was a folk kiln, it was the largest folk kiln system in northern China in ancient times.

Not only in the Song Dynasty, but also in the Liao, Jin, Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties, porcelain production continued. It has a long history of production and strong vitality, and the number of exquisite porcelain pieces that have been passed down to us is also the largest.

Furthermore, during the Southern Song Dynasty, a small portion of the Cizhou kiln also produced official kiln wares specifically for the Southern Song court. Therefore, the Cizhou kiln porcelain circulating in the market today is not cheaper than the market prices of other Song Dynasty official kiln porcelains.

"Yes, it's a pity that I've finished making all the embryos and everything, but I don't have the money to fire them..."

Xu Guoqing's excited expression suddenly fell. You see, the firing process of antique porcelain is the most important step, and the firing time can be as long as half a month. The charcoal consumed is a huge expense.

Unlike the ceramic plates we use now, which are made by throwing the blanks into a kiln and firing them directly with coal, the whole process is automated by computer.

Xu Guoqing's modern antique-style kiln, although it can also be temperature-controlled by computer, is now in dire financial straits. He can barely afford electricity, let alone charcoal.

"Open the door, open the door quickly..."

Just as Zhuang Rui was about to take a look at the porcelain blanks made by Xu Guoqing, he faintly heard knocking coming from the gate, and the wolfhound started barking.

"Mr. Zhuang, you two chat, I'll go out and take a look..."

Yu Zhengjun was practically a second master to Xu Guoqing. He knew that Xu Guoqing was currently struggling with funding issues and would definitely not take the initiative to open the door.

Chapter 788: Mountain Trees

"Mr. Xu, although your items are very lifelike, they are still missing something..."

Xu Guoqing didn't care at all who came outside, so Zhuang Rui, as a guest, naturally had even less reason to meddle; they might just be there to collect payment.

The flaws that Zhuang Rui and Xu Guoqing just pointed out are actually a bit far-fetched.

When you're doing an appraisal for someone else, this reason is something you can't say openly. You can't exactly tell someone that your item is fake because it's too perfect, right? You'd definitely get spitting in their face for that.

"Zhuang Rui, what other flaws are there? Tell me, are they in the craftsmanship?"

Upon hearing Zhuang Rui's words, Xu Guoqing's eyes immediately lit up. He repaired ancient kilns and fired ancient porcelain entirely out of personal interest and hobby, though of course, this interest and hobby was a little too enthusiastic.

"It's not about the craftsmanship, Mr. Xu. From a craftsmanship perspective, the tri-color pottery figurines you've fired are already flawless. However, although you've captured the spirit of Tang tri-color pottery, they still lack a sense of historical depth and vicissitude..."

Seeing that Xu Guoqing seemed a little confused, Zhuang Rui continued, "I once acquired a bronze sword from the Shang and Zhou dynasties. Legend has it that this sword could automatically unsheathe and emit a sword-ringing sound when its owner was in danger. I personally think that this is a kind of spirituality that history or the makers endowed to the object..."

This kind of spirituality can resonate deep within people's hearts, allowing them to feel the silent journey of historical vicissitudes, the rise and fall of dynasties, and the development and progress of civilization.

"Xu Gong, while your Tang tri-colored pottery is exquisitely beautiful and flawless, it lacks the profound weight that comes with the passage of time. Older generations can sense this..."

Zhuang Rui's words were not unfounded; the idea that all things possess a spirit is not a fool's tale. Leaving aside Zhuang Rui's keen eyes and the expert appraisers in the field, even grave robbers who handle numerous objects develop this sense of aura.

Just like why modern people like to wear jade ornaments, while aesthetic decoration is certainly one reason, the spirituality of jade is also very important.

For example, if you can personally handle a good piece of jade for ten or twenty years, your understanding of that jade will undergo a complete transformation, and you will feel a sense of belonging to it. This is definitely not feudal superstition. Friends who have the means can give it a try.

Getting back to the topic, there are reasons why these sancai (three-color glazed) vessels were once identified as genuine by several "experts." Firstly, they couldn't find any flaws, and secondly, the "fees" for authentication were substantial. With money paving the way, even scholars would bow down.

"I know I created these things, but I didn't give them a soul, but... but that's not something I can decide..."

After figuring this out, Xu Guoqing couldn't help but feel a little troubled. The so-called accumulation and sedimentation of history cannot be replicated by aging. That kind of weight can only be expressed on objects after experiencing the vicissitudes of time and the changes in the landscape.

"XCMG, haven't you ever thought about making your own things, giving them a soul and life? Although they can't be called antiques, your craftsmanship is in no way inferior to those great craftsmen of the past. Why can't the things you make become treasures that people will want to own thousands of years from now?"

After carefully examining the porcelain blanks painted by Xu Guoqing, Zhuang Rui forgot the purpose of his visit. In Zhuang Rui's opinion, Xu Guoqing's skill in porcelain making even surpassed that of those in ancient times.

"I?"

Xu Guoqing was taken aback by Zhuang Rui's words, then waved his hands repeatedly, saying, "No, no, it's just a hobby..."

"XCMG, don't underestimate yourselves. More than a thousand years ago, our ancestors left us with precious works of art such as Tang tri-color pottery and porcelain from the Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties. But what can we leave to future generations a thousand years from now?"

Zhuang Rui interrupted Xu Guoqing and continued, "Are we leaving behind only mass-produced handicrafts for future generations? What then represents the carriers of our era?"

Zhuang Rui hadn't thought about this question before, but after seeing Xu Guoqing and his creations, a chord was struck within him. There are fewer and fewer artisans these days; in various traditional industries, those who can be called masters are extremely rare.

"Can...can I really do it?" Xu Guoqing's eyes lit up.

Zhuang Rui nodded and said, "Of course, if I may not be so modest, the only modern handicraft I can find without a single flaw in the object itself is your work, Mr. Xu..."

"Okay, I'll give it a try. I've always thought about imitating ancient porcelain before, and I've never thought about creating something myself. This is a completely new field, and it's worth my challenge..."

Xu Guoqing became more and more excited as he spoke, but after glancing around the huge laboratory, he couldn't help but sigh and say, "But... I'm going bankrupt now, and I can no longer support experiments like this..."

After Xu Guoqing finished speaking, his face turned somewhat grim. Having imitated ancient porcelain for so many years, he naturally knew that it was extremely costly. With his current financial resources, he probably didn't even have the money to hire a car to haul porcelain clay from Cixian County.

"No, Mr. Xu, you have money. As long as you agree to my conditions, I will build you the world's most advanced research institute in ***, making your handicrafts one of the most popular works of art in the world..."

As soon as Xu Guoqing finished speaking, a voice came from the doorway. Although it was spoken in Chinese, it was very stiff, and from the words, the people in the room could tell that it was a Japanese person.

"Old Yu?!"

Xu Guoqing ignored the voice, but instead raised his voice and called out to Yu Zhengjun with a hint of anger.

Yu Zhengjun, who had just gone out to open the door, looked a little embarrassed. He chuckled and said, "Old Xu, guests are always welcome. I can't just kick them out, can I? Let's sit down and talk things over..."

Although Yu Zhengjun also dislikes this person, his transportation company recently wanted to transform into a modern logistics company, which involved cooperating with this person. Both sides rely on each other, so Mr. Yu also faces difficulties.

"Let's talk outside. My lab is only for guests..."

Xu Guoqing glanced at Yu Zhengjun with some displeasure, then strode to the door, blocking the path of the man who had just spoken.

With the host gone, Zhuang Rui and the others felt embarrassed to stay in the laboratory any longer, so they returned to the outer room and found that in addition to Yu Zhengjun and Xu Guoqing, there were three more people in the room.

"Mr. Xu, please forgive my rudeness last time, and please believe in my sincerity. This factory is still yours. As long as you are willing to come with me to ***, I will provide you with the best laboratory in the world, and will give you no less than three million US dollars in research funding every year, so that you can reproduce the exquisite porcelain from your esteemed Song Dynasty..."

The man in the room, who was only about 1.65 meters tall and in his early fifties, bowed deeply to Xu Guoqing after saying these words. Even Zhuang Rui and the others could feel his sincerity.

Xu Guoqing shook his head and said firmly, "I'm sorry, I will not leave China. And even if I manage to replicate Cizhou ware, it will belong to China, not to you bastards..."

"Mr. Xu, art knows no borders..." The man bowed at a ninety-degree angle again.

"Damn, does this little brat even have spinal problems?"

Zhuang Rui's back ached from looking at her. Beneath that humble exterior lay a wolf's ambition. In any case, Zhuang Rui had absolutely no liking for the young woman.

Furthermore, Zhuang Rui was a little annoyed by the fact that those people kept saying they would provide Xu Guoqing with the most advanced laboratory. Did they think that only the people valued traditional craftsmanship?

However, in China, this area is not really taken seriously. At most, people just shout slogans about protecting intangible cultural heritage, but they haven't actually spent a penny on it.

"Boss Yu, what's going on here?"

While Xu Guoqing and that young lady were dawdling, Zhuang Rui pulled Yu Zhengjun aside and took a few steps.

Upon hearing Zhuang Rui's words, Yu Zhengjun sighed and said, "Alas, President Zhuang, this bastard is named Yamaki Taro, and he is the chairman of a large corporation..."

"Don't talk about that. What I wanted to ask this Japanese guy was, 'Are you asking Engineer Xu to go to *** to make porcelain?'"

Zhuang Rui curled his lip and interrupted Yu Zhengjun. "Little ***'s name is the most damn meaningless thing. Before the Meiji Restoration, only the nobility, aristocracy, and powerful families had surnames, while commoners had given names but no surnames."

In the early Meiji period, in order to compile household registers and levy taxes and conscription, laborers began to have surnames. As a result, place names, field names, background, family lineage, occupation, residence, house number, tools, and even the names of animals and plants became the basis for choosing surnames.

*** don't have their own culture at all; they stole it all from China. Just like the Korean ***, they're like people who have drunk from the mother's breast and then turned their backs on her.

"Mr. Zhuang, even though I brought this guy here before, I'm powerless to stop him. This little devil has become obsessed with Lao Xu, and this time he even brought people from the city. I can't say anything now..."

Zhuang Rui had really asked the right person. This whole thing was indeed started by Yu Zhengjun, and no one knew the ins and outs better than him.

Yamaki Taro's company entered China a bit late and has nothing to do with the automotive industry. Now, in addition to investing in Zhengjun's logistics company, he is also preparing to do some industrial work in Gaoyi.

Some time ago, under the leadership of Yu Zhengjun, Yamaki Taro originally intended to acquire Xu Guoqing's factory. However, after seeing Xu Guoqing's skills, the Japanese changed his mind.

Chapter 789 Political Achievements

I don't know what possessed Yamaki Taro, but after seeing Xu Guoqing's imitations of Tang Sancai (Tang tri-colored glazed pottery) and Cizhou ware blanks, he wanted to invite Xu Guoqing to a brothel, and Yamaki Corporation was willing to provide Xu Guoqing with all the necessary conveniences.

Although Xu Guoqing was obsessed with the study of ceramics, he had no affection for Xiao Mi at all and refused her on the spot. Yamaki Taro later brought Yu Zhengjun to visit twice more, but they still couldn't persuade Xu Guoqing.

"This picture of Shanmu is probably not of Xu Guoqing..."

After listening to Yu Zhengjun's explanation, Zhuang Rui sneered. Without huge benefits, would these Japanese be so kind as to offer Xu Guoqing such generous conditions?

Compared to the five major official kilns of the Song Dynasty, Cizhou ware porcelain was mostly made for the daily lives of ordinary people, and its output was very large throughout the dynasties, with a much larger number surviving to this day.

However, many people are unaware that Cizhou kilns also had kilns that produced porcelain exclusively for the imperial court. Because they were not the main supply base for the royal family, they produced relatively few pieces, and the number of surviving pieces is even rarer than that of Yuan blue and white porcelain. Only the Tokyo National Museum has two pieces of Cizhou official kiln porcelain, and their provenance is self-evident.

It is precisely because of the lack of physical examples that the Cizhou official kiln is not well-known, and there are relatively few people studying it in China. However, in ***, the situation is exactly the opposite.

Cizhou ware is far more famous in Xinjiang than in China. This is because, since the Song Dynasty, people in Xinjiang have purchased large quantities of Cizhou ware from China. Later, these shameless individuals actually claimed that they were the ones who fired it and brought it to China, and even cited classical texts to prove it.

There's no need to refute these things at all. With the discovery and excavation of Cizhou kiln sites in various places, these people from that island nation have been thoroughly slapped in the face.

Now, Yamaki's invitation to Xu Guoqing to *** may well harbor ulterior motives. If they can successfully replicate the Cizhou official kiln porcelain of that era, even as a modern artifact, its value would far surpass that of ordinary antiques, allowing Yamaki to reap both fame and fortune.

Zhuang Rui's guess was correct. Yamaki Taro was indeed thinking about this. Although the country was small and lacked various resources, its national cohesion was extremely strong, which could not be denied. Otherwise, they would not have been able to become a world economic power in just a few decades after the war.

If Yamaki Taro can replicate the Cizhou official kiln porcelain that has been circulating in China for a long time, then this reputation will be a huge intangible asset for his company.

That's why Yamaki Taro visited Xu Guoqing several times, trying to invite him to ***, even going so far as to pull strings with the government and use the guise of academic exchange to persuade Xu Guoqing to go to ***.

This arrangement was indeed a windfall for Xu Guoqing, but it was a cultural distortion of right and wrong and an act of aggression, which was extremely shameful.

Although Xu Guoqing didn't have Zhuang Rui's profound understanding, he was disgusted with the Japanese from the bottom of his heart. Besides, he had given away all his wealth, so he didn't take the generous offer from Yamaki Taro seriously at all. He couldn't carry out the experiment without money, so he could just settle down and live a peaceful life with his wife and children.

Yamaki Taro and Xu Guoqing talked for a long time, but he couldn't persuade Xu Guoqing. Helpless, he bowed deeply to a Chinese man in his thirties who had come with him and said, "Mr. Cen, please talk to Mr. Xu. I beg you!"

"Mr. Xu, hello. I think the conditions proposed by Mr. Yamaki are quite favorable. You can consider them. This is also a form of cultural exchange between China and Japan..."

The man speaking was about thirty-seven or thirty-eight years old. His speech was full of official jargon. When he spoke to Xu Guoqing, he was sitting on the only sofa, and the cup he was holding was one he had brought himself, giving him the air of a leader.

Moreover, the man's words, rather than being a discussion with Xu Guoqing, carried a commanding tone, causing Zhuang Rui to frown.

"Boss Yu, who is this person?" Zhuang Rui asked Yu Zhengjun in a low voice.

"He's a vice mayor of the city, who also serves as the director of the investment promotion office. I didn't expect Yamaki Taro to be able to get this person here. This matter is a bit difficult..."

Yu Zhengjun only has some influence in this small county town. His reach is far from extending into the city. Let alone a vice mayor with real power, even a minor section chief or department head could bring down Yu Zhengjun's company if he were to get under his thumb.

Although Yu Zhengjun was a businessman who lived in a small county town, he was quick-witted and naturally familiar with the newly appointed mayor.

So Yu Zhengjun brought these people in without Xu Guoqing's consent, mainly because the other party was too powerful and he couldn't afford to offend them.

"Sino-Japanese exchanges? I've heard that the Japanese claim their country is the birthplace of Cizhou ware. If that's the case, what's the point of exchanges?"

Although Xu Guoqing was obsessed with studying ceramics, he wasn't stupid. He didn't see things as clearly as Zhuang Rui, but he sensed that something was wrong. Plus, he didn't know the person in front of him at all, so he immediately refused.

"Hey, how dare you talk like that? Don't you know this is Mayor Cen..."

Perhaps out of consideration for his own status, Mayor Cen did not say anything after hearing Xu Guoqing's words. However, the man behind him, who looked like a secretary in his early twenties, disagreed and immediately stepped forward, his finger almost poking Xu Guoqing's face.

"Xiao Liu, you mustn't speak to Mr. Xu like that. We have such an expert in the restoration and manufacture of ancient porcelain here; he is the pride and glory of Shijiazhuang..."

Upon hearing the secretary's words, Mayor Cen's face immediately tightened. He reprimanded the secretary for a few moments, then turned to Xu Guoqing and said, "Mr. Xu, it is a very meaningful thing for you to represent Shijiazhuang City to visit and conduct cultural and academic exchanges in ***. It will also greatly promote the development of Shijiazhuang City and enhance its city brand."

Personally, I hope Mr. Xu can seriously consider this. If you have any requests, please feel free to make them, and our government will do its best to help you resolve them...

To be honest, the mayor is quite capable. On a grand scale, these words relate to the development and construction of Shijiazhuang. On a smaller scale, it shows that the leader has extended an olive branch, implying that any requests can be discussed.

Mayor Cen was originally the director of the investment promotion office and was just promoted to vice mayor this year. The reason he was able to go from a department leader to a city leader is because he made a lot of achievements in his position in the investment promotion office.

With Mayor Cen having connections in the provincial government, his achievements made things easier, and he was directly promoted from a division-level cadre to a department-level cadre. It should be noted that although he was only a deputy mayor, Shijiazhuang was a major city, and the municipal party secretary was a member of the provincial party committee standing committee, which was half a grade higher than that of a typical prefecture-level city.

This isn't like the 1970s or 80s, when the emphasis was on strong political ideology. These days, political achievements are directly linked to a city's GDP. A leader's competence is judged by whether the city's economic level improves during their term—these are all hard indicators.

If it weren't for Yamaki Taro's promise that he would invest 100 million US dollars in Shijiazhuang if Xu Guoqing could go to *** to conduct research, the newly appointed Mayor Cen would have been too busy to have time to bother with such a nobody as Xu Guoqing.

An investment of one hundred million US dollars was a considerable sum in an inland city in 2005. If it could be secured, it would be a real achievement. If Mayor Cen hadn't been in charge of the investment promotion office, even the city's mayor would probably have been tempted.

Of course, Yamaki Taro wasn't at a loss either. His 100 million US dollars was an investment, not a free gift. Moreover, the city would offer many preferential policies, which might even harm the interests of ordinary people. However, the officials didn't care about these things; they just wanted the money to be settled in Shijiazhuang.

"mayor?"

Xu Guoqing was taken aback by the secretary's words, but upon hearing Mayor Cen's reply, he shook his head and said, "I have no requests, and I don't want to go to ***. I grew up here and don't want to leave. Mayor Cen, I'm sorry, I still have friends to entertain..."

Xu Guoqing, who also grew up eating grains, spoke relatively normally when facing this local official. This was the best he could say about dismissing guests; he couldn't come up with any more sophisticated language.

However, as soon as he said this, Mayor Cen's face immediately darkened, and he almost doubted that he had misheard. How dare a mere businessman tell him to leave?

"Who are you? Mayor Cen has official business to discuss with Mr. Xu. You'd better leave now..."

Mayor Cen's expression was a barometer for his secretary. Little Liu didn't dare to lash out at Xu Guoqing, but he gave Zhuang Rui and the others a look that clearly meant they should get lost.

The duty of a secretary is, of course, to solve problems for the leader. If Secretary Liu could not understand the leader's intentions, he would not be in this position.

"This...this, we..."

Secretary Liu's words not only made Yu Zhengjun's face turn ugly, but also made Li Dali somewhat uneasy.

Although Mr. Li claimed to have connections in both the legitimate and underworld circles of Shijiazhuang, his backer was only a deputy bureau chief in the city, which was several levels lower than the person in front of him.

These days, no matter how arrogant you are, it's too easy for the government to find fault with you once they get serious. Besides, President Li's background isn't exactly clean either. If Mayor Cen just cracks a few words, he'll end up in jail.

"What is this? Let's go quickly, the leader still needs to discuss official business with Mr. Xu..."

Secretary Liu didn't take these people seriously at all, and waved his hand as if shooing away flies.

Chapter 790 Recipe

Secretary Liu has been with Mayor Cen since his time in the Investment Promotion Office. He usually receives well-known domestic and international businessmen, so he's always had a very high standard.

After becoming the mayor's secretary, his status rose even higher. Even some powerful leaders in the city addressed him as a brother. In Gao County, where he was now, Secretary Liu didn't even take the top official there seriously.

Mayor Cen came to Gao County without notifying the local leaders. He wanted to give Shan Mu Dalang a capable leader image, so he came in person. Unexpectedly, Xu Guoqing was unyielding and the leader was angry. Naturally, Secretary Liu would not give Zhuang Rui, a nobody, a good look.

"We're leaving now, right away..."

Yu Zhengjun was the first to back down. What could he do? Even if he broke ties with Yamaki Taro and stopped cooperating, that Secretary Liu could crush him with a single finger. How could he possibly fight back?

Upon hearing Yu Zhengjun's words, Secretary Liu waved his hand dismissively, without even glancing at him. He was currently preoccupied with how to persuade Xu Guoqing to agree to Shanmu's conditions. Being attentive to the leader's needs and thinking what the leader was thinking—that's what makes a qualified secretary.

"Old Yu, you can go first. Zhuang Rui, stay here. I still have a few questions to ask you later, so you can't leave..."

Whether Yu Zhengjun leaves or not, Xu Guoqing doesn't care, but he cares a lot about Zhuang Rui.

Xu Guoqing is obsessed with replicating ancient ceramics. Most of the people he usually interacts with are craftsmen. Zhuang Rui is the first person, or at least the first person Xu Guoqing has met, to explain the process of making handicrafts from the perspective of antique connoisseurs.

"Mr. Xu, Mayor Cen has something to discuss with you. Please, no one else should stay."

When Secretary Liu spoke, he gave Zhuang Rui a sarcastic look, the meaning of which was very clear: if you know what's good for you, be grateful and get lost, don't delay the leader's business.

"I have nothing to talk to you about. I said I'm not going, and that's final. If you're in love with ***, go by yourselves. Aren't you annoyed? Alright, you can leave now..."

Upon hearing Secretary Liu's words, Xu Guoqing's face immediately turned ugly. He was a straightforward person who didn't mince words, and when he heard Secretary Liu say Zhuang Rui was going to leave, he erupted and directly ordered the mayor to get rid of him.

As the saying goes, "No madness, no magic," and Xu Guoqing is that kind of person. Talking to him about human relationships and worldly wisdom is pure nonsense. He can steer the conversation back to ceramic making in just a few sentences.

Not to mention the people in front of him, even his wife, who has been married to Xu Guoqing for more than ten years, has been influenced by him and is now almost an expert in ancient ceramics. Her level is definitely no worse than that of an ordinary ancient ceramics appraiser.

"What...what did you say? Say it again!"

Upon hearing Xu Guoqing's words, Secretary Liu picked at his ear in disbelief. He hadn't expected Xu Guoqing to be so disrespectful to him... no, Mayor Cen. Was this person even a citizen of the Celestial Empire?

"I said, you can leave now. I have to entertain my friends. This is my factory, and you're not welcome here..."

Xu Guoqing's stubbornness flared up, ignoring Yu Zhengjun's constant winks, and his words became even harsher than before. Did these people have something wrong with their ears? Did they have to be told things out in the most explicit way to understand?

Xu Guoqing had no idea that these officials were usually very subtle in their speech. If they couldn't make something very clear sound into a roundabout way, it meant that the leader wasn't competent enough. And if subordinates couldn't understand the leader's meaning, it meant that they weren't attentive to their work and didn't know how to read the leader's intentions.

Let alone Secretary Liu, even Mayor Cen has never met a guy as direct as Xu Guoqing.

"I...I said you don't want to...don't want to...don't want to stay here anymore?"

Secretary Liu was so angry with Xu Guoqing that his face turned red, and his chest heaved. He pointed a finger at Xu Guoqing's face, but for a moment, he couldn't find anything to threaten him with. After thinking for a while, he finally managed to utter a rather unthreatening remark.

Pointing at him like that by Secretary Liu, Xu Guoqing's temper flared up. This honest man usually didn't get angry, but when he really got into a fight, he was incredibly stubborn. Xu Guoqing shoved Secretary Liu's hand away, stepped forward, grabbed Secretary Liu's collar, and said, "This is my home. What right do you have to stop me from staying here?"

Despite his slender build, Xu Guoqing was a man of considerable strength, capable of handling tasks like moving stones and grinding pigments all by himself. When he grabbed Liu, the secretary struggled to breathe.

"Old Xu, you mustn't, you mustn't! Let's talk this out, please don't use force, release them first..."

When Yu Zhengjun saw that things were about to escalate into a full-blown fight, he turned pale with fright. Although this matter had nothing to do with him, if Secretary Liu took his anger out on him afterwards, he would be more wronged than Dou E.

Peng Fei, who was standing to the side, watched the scene with great interest and whispered in Zhuang Rui's ear, "Brother Zhuang, this master you're talking about is really amazing..."

"Hey kid, don't talk nonsense. We don't even know how this will end..."

Zhuang Rui glanced at Peng Fei. He had just been considering whether to invest in Xu Guoqing's laboratory, but before they could finish their conversation, they started fighting. And the one who struck first was none other than the seemingly honest Xu Guoqing.

However, Zhuang Rui was not Xu Guoqing. Although he did not know much about officialdom, Zhuang Rui knew that Mayor Cen had plenty of ways to deal with Xu Guoqing after he had offended him. Or,

Mayor Cen might not even need to lift a finger; even Secretary Liu could make Xu Guoqing feel "ecstatic" afterward.

"What's the point of cleaning up this mess? They're just a few petty bureaucrats. Damn it, I'll take care of that little bitch later..."

Peng Fei curled his lip and said nonchalantly. He was originally from the capital, and people from the capital city were known for their loud voices. In addition, Peng Fei's horizons had broadened considerably under Zhuang Rui's guidance, so he naturally did not take the people in front of him seriously.

"Stop talking nonsense, do you think you're Huo Yuanjia?"

To be honest, Zhuang Rui didn't think much of the two government officials in front of him. They were actually trying to push away their ancestors' lost skills in order to achieve their own political achievements. They were really despicable.

However, Zhuang Rui had no intention of getting involved. He was just an ordinary citizen, and if he wanted to get involved in this matter, he would have to ask several uncles for help. Even Ouyang Jun, a provincial-level official from another province, probably wouldn't have much influence with his words.

Zhuang Rui was also having a plan in mind. If Xu Guoqing really couldn't stay here, he would invite him to go to Daxing, buy a piece of land in the countryside, and build a laboratory for him.

Judging from Xu Guoqing's personality, he is not the kind of person who pursues material enjoyment. If he were to play in the mud, he probably wouldn't care where he lives. Zhuang Rui also wanted to see if Xu Guoqing could really replicate the Cizhou official kiln porcelain.

While Zhuang Rui and Peng Fei were talking in hushed tones, Xu Guoqing, persuaded by Yu Zhengjun, released Secretary Liu. After this incident, it was impossible to continue the conversation. Secretary Liu was about to speak when Mayor Cen stopped him.

"Mr. Xu, I think you may have misunderstood something. Mr. Yamaki invited you to *** with the intention of promoting academic exchange between China and Japan. Please reconsider, and we won't bother you any longer..."

Whether or not Mayor Cen, as the deputy mayor of a provincial city, has any magnanimity is another matter, but Mayor Cen certainly has a certain level of composure. Mayor Cen didn't say anything more. This person in front of him, let alone a mayor, probably wouldn't be afraid even if the governor came. If he stayed any longer, he would only be asking for trouble.

Mayor Cen had already regretted it. If he had known better, he would have had the leaders of Gao County handle the negotiations first, which would have given him some room to maneuver. Now that he had messed things up, if the leaders of Gao County had managed to get things done, it would have made him look like a very incompetent deputy mayor.

However, after much thought, Mayor Cen felt that economic work should still be the top priority. As long as things were done well, people would only see that he had brought hundreds of millions of dollars of funds to Shijiazhuang, and would not get bogged down in these trivial matters.

So, after leaving the laboratory, Mayor Cen, with a gloomy face, said to his secretary Liu beside him, "Xiao Liu, call County Chief Kong and ask him to come over..."

The county magistrate of Gao County was only a division-level official, so Liu could have just sent his secretary to make the notification. However, Mayor Cen stayed in the car outside. He wanted to get things done today, otherwise he would lose face in front of Shanmu.

After Secretary Liu opened the car door for Mayor Cen, he went to make a phone call. Shanmu also got into Mayor Cen's car, glanced at Mayor Cen's expression, and said, "Mr. Cen, I have seen and admire your serious attitude towards handling matters. I'm entrusting this matter to you..."

"Mr. Yamaki, please don't say that. It's only right that we can make some contribution to cultural exchanges between China and Japan. However, Mr. Xu is a bit resistant, so we still need to work on him slowly..."

After seeing Xu Guoqing's attitude, Mayor Cen no longer dared to make any promises. After all, Xu Guoqing wasn't an official who could issue administrative orders; he was just an ordinary citizen. He couldn't very well arrest him, could he?

After glancing at Mayor Cen, Yamaki said, "Mr. Cen, I have a small suggestion..."

"Oh? Please go on..."

"Here's the thing, if Mr. Xu really doesn't want to go to *** to head the laboratory, then as long as we can get the Cizhou kiln process and firing formula from him, then my promise of a \$100 million investment can be fulfilled..."

After seeing Xu Guoqing's attitude, Shanmu's mindset changed. Even if he kidnapped him, if others were unwilling, they would naturally not be willing to work.

If that's the case, Yamaki thinks it would be better to get the porcelain firing formula and ask domestic ceramic experts to study it himself.