

Golden 861

Chapter 861 The Person I Least Want to See

I followed that black Volkswagen around Langfang City for almost an entire loop before it finally headed towards the outskirts. These black market antique dealers all operate in the same way, using the same methods every time.

Zhuang Rui glanced out the window and said, "Hmm? Why are we heading towards *** again?"

"Brother, the black market isn't fixed; it might be in *** city..."

Fatty Jin, however, was used to it. He leaned back in the back seat and closed his eyes to rest. He wasn't very interested in this black market because, regardless of whether the two pieces of Cizhou porcelain were real or fake, it was beyond his reach.

The car drove on for another twenty minutes or so, and then turned onto a side road surrounded by birch forests.

"This place does resemble my garden a bit..."

Behind the woods was a small manor, much smaller than Zhuang Rui's garden. It was surrounded by a wooden fence, and inside were two small buildings, with a row of brick houses behind them, the purpose of which was unknown.

"Hey, I know this place. It's an equestrian club..."

When the car stopped, Fatty Jin opened his eyes and looked around. He had once appraised calligraphy and paintings for an entrepreneur in *** and had been invited to visit this place once. That entrepreneur kept two private horses here.

In China today, bowling and golf are outdated. The truly wealthy and sophisticated people have started playing horse racing. They spend their own money to keep a horse, which stays at the club during the week and invites a few bosses to race on weekends. That's what's truly prestigious.

"Horse farm?"

As soon as Zhuang Rui asked the question, he saw a girl riding a tall, chestnut-red horse galloping in a very open space behind the house. She looked very heroic, but she was wearing a protective headgear, so he couldn't see her face.

At this moment, a man in his early thirties stepped out of the car that had led the way. He approached Zhuang Rui and the others and said, "Mr. Jin, gentlemen, the auction starts at 11:00 AM sharp, but it won't begin for another hour. You can go inside and rest for a bit, or you can go to the horse farm for some fun; it's all very luxurious..."

"Was the person on horseback also participating in this auction?"

Zhuang Rui pointed to the girl on horseback and asked, "In all the black market auctions I've participated in, the organizers have always been extremely cautious. This time, it's been arranged in a public place. This is the first time I've seen it done. It seems Li Dali isn't afraid of being investigated."

The middle-aged man glanced towards the horse farm and said nonchalantly, "No, those should be customers of the horse farm..."

"Aren't you afraid that a spy might sneak in?" Zhuang Rui asked curiously.

"Don't worry, the boss has taken care of everything. You can relax and have some fun. We're just organizing an exchange activity for antique enthusiasts. It's not illegal, and even if the police come, they can't do anything..."

The middle-aged man said nonchalantly, in his eyes, Boss Li had connections everywhere and could handle any trouble.

"Okay, is that the building? We'll go there ourselves later..."

Zhuang Rui glanced at his watch; it was only a little past 10 a.m., and he and his companions had arrived far too early.

"Okay, you can have the drinks over there as well. We'll put the bill on your tab..." The middle-aged man said politely and then left.

"Why do I feel like we're here on vacation?"

After the man left, Zhuang Rui said with a smile, "Participating in this black market for antiques doesn't make me feel nervous at all."

Fatty Jin chuckled and said, "Brother, don't underestimate this guy who organizes the black market. He's been in this business for over ten years and has extensive connections in Hebei, Shandong, Anhui, Jiangsu, and other regions. He has a lot of good stuff too. You'll see later..."

"Oh, that's certainly a formidable person..."

Zhuang Rui raised an eyebrow. He really hadn't expected Li Dali to have such a prestigious reputation in the antique circle. Even someone like Fatty Jin spoke of him with a hint of admiration.

"Brother Zhuang, wanna race some horses?"

Peng Fei wasn't interested in what the two men were talking about. He walked to the row of houses, looking at the long row of stables, a hint of excitement in his eyes.

"Raise horses with me? Why don't you compete with me in appraising antiques?"

Zhuang Rui glared at Peng Fei with annoyance. He had never seen this kid unable to handle any mode of transportation. Whether it was an airplane, a car, or a ship, Peng Fei could drive them all with ease. He must be quite good at horseback riding as well.

"Brother Jin, would you like to have some fun...?"

Zhuang Rui wasn't interested in horse racing, but he did want to experience riding a horse for a while. In other countries, horseback riding is considered an elegant sport.

When Zhuang Rui was very young, he was able to ride a horse once when he was taking pictures in the park. Looking at the tall horses in the stable, he couldn't help but feel a little tempted.

"Come on, look at the way that shopkeeper's eyes are looking at him. Do you think he'd let me ride it?"

Fatty Jin waved his hand with a wry smile. With his weight of over 200 pounds, sitting on a horse would surely break the horse owner's heart.

"Boss, how much do you charge here?" Peng Fei had already gone over to chat with the boss.

"Gentlemen, this is a members-only horse farm, and most of these horses belong to members and are not usually open to the public. However, since you're here to have some fun, we can't spoil the mood, can we?"

The horse farm owner was from Yunnan, speaking with a thick Beijing accent. After rambling on for a while, he finally pointed to the stable and said, "This horse and the one that the customer was riding are mine. They're quite docile and I guarantee they won't throw you off. It's 300 yuan an hour. Would you like to have a ride?"

"Alright, bring out two horses, the two of us can ride them..."

Zhuang Rui was dressed casually today, in jeans and sneakers. If he were dressed in a suit and tie, he really wouldn't be able to make it.

"Alright, that guest's time is almost up. Another guest will have to wait about five minutes. Which of you would like to go first?"

The horse owner only had two horses, so they had to wait for the girl to return before they could ride together. Seeing Peng Fei's eager expression, Zhuang Rui said, "Peng Fei, you go play first..."

The horse owner then led out a white steed, which was very tall. When he brought it to Zhuang Rui's side, its back almost reached his neck.

Taking the whip from the horse owner, Peng Fei waved his right hand, ignoring the headgear offered by the owner. Instead, he grabbed the reins with his left hand, gave it a gentle pull, and as the horse's head tilted slightly, he slipped his left foot into the stirrup, flipped himself over, and mounted the horse with remarkable agility.

"Hey, this guy's a pro. Only the coach could pull off that move around here..."

The horse owner's gaze towards Peng Fei changed somewhat; this movement was something only someone with extensive equestrian training could perform.

Peng Fei cracked his whip, gave a knightly salute to the group, spurred his legs, and shouted, causing the white horses to trot.

Unlike the female knight on the field who was trotting slowly, Peng Fei's horse picked up speed after trotting for twenty or thirty meters. With the "clatter" of the horse's hooves, the white horse galloped along the track like a white lightning bolt.

"Show-off..."

Zhuang Rui was itching to try Peng Fei's actions, but he also knew that if he were to go up there himself, he probably wouldn't be as good as the female rider. He would be lucky to even make it around the horse farm once.

Zhuang Rui and Fatty Jin drank some beverages under the parasol while the female knight rode her chestnut horse slowly to the stable.

"Hey buddy, it's your turn. Do you need this protective gear?"

The horse owner led the horse, and after the female rider dismounted, he held up a mask that looked somewhat like the one worn by fencers and asked Zhuang Rui a question.

"want....."

Zhuang Rui wasn't as skilled as Peng Fei, so he casually took the protective gear. But just as he was about to put it on his head, he suddenly saw the girl who was about to get off remove her mask, and he was dumbfounded.

"Miss Miao... Miss Miao!"

Zhuang Rui glanced around, managing to hold back from calling out "Officer Miao," but his wide-open eyes betrayed his astonishment.

Zhuang Rui never expected to run into Miao Feifei here. Considering Officer Miao's profession and the black market auction that was about to begin, Zhuang Rui didn't think she was just here to ride horses.

If there's one person Zhuang Rui least wants to see right now, it's definitely Miss Miao. Putting aside their personal relationship, Miao Feifei is a police officer!

“Zhuang Rui...”

Miao Feifei's feelings were complicated when she saw Zhuang Rui. After Zhuang Rui got married, she applied for a transfer to work in another province. Although she was stubborn at the time, she still couldn't bring herself to steal someone else's husband or become a mistress.

For over a year, Miao Feifei thought Zhuang Rui had disappeared from her life, but unexpectedly, she ran into him again on her first case after returning to Beijing.

Actually, Miao Feifei had already recognized Zhuang Rui while they were still on horseback, but she was calming herself down before coming over.

"Brother Jin, why don't you go for a stroll? Miss Miao and I need to discuss some things..."

Zhuang Rui handed the reins to Fatty Jin and, without waiting for his consent, pushed him out.

"Hey bro, why are you still riding a horse? Let's get going..."

Fatty Jin grabbed Zhuang Rui. He knew Miao Feifei's identity. What good could a policewoman do in a place that ran an illegal market?

"It's alright, Brother Jin, you go take a stroll, I need to talk to Miss Miao..."

Zhuang Rui was unwilling to leave. He had gone to great lengths to set up this scheme, and he was essentially the one who started this black market.

If the police ruined things, Zhuang Rui would not only be unwilling, but he would also feel sorry for Li Dali, who would definitely make him the scapegoat.

After hearing Zhuang Rui's words, Fatty Jin remembered that the two were friends. He then led his horse toward the horse farm with some suspicion, wondering whether he would be riding the horse or letting the horse lead the rider.

Upon seeing the sudden change in rider, the horse owner became unhappy and shouted from behind, "Hey, hey, I was saying if you were riding it, it would cost five hundred yuan an hour..."

Chapter 862 Open and Frank

After sitting down under a parasol in a corner with Miao Feifei, Zhuang Rui asked awkwardly, "Officer Miao... how have you been lately?"

Miao Feifei is straightforward and was once a good friend of Zhuang Rui. However, due to changes in their thinking, they have become estranged, not quite like strangers, but they haven't been in contact for over a year.

Although Miao Feifei was a little thinner than a year ago, she was in good spirits. Upon hearing this, she looked up at Zhuang Rui and said, "I'm fine, Zhuang Rui, what are you doing here?"

Zhuang Rui smiled wryly upon hearing this. This young lady was still so blunt. What was he here for? To participate in the black market auction of antiques, of course. Did she come here to ride horses?

However, once the conversation turned to business, Zhuang Rui felt less awkward. He coughed and said, "There's an antique and art exchange here. I've come to take a look and see if there's anything that catches my eye. As you know, my museum's foundation is still weak, and the collection is too small..."

"hehe....."

Zhuang Rui's words made Miao Feifei laugh. It turns out that people who are into culture really know how to talk. What was clearly an illegal black market for antiques was described by Zhuang Rui as an antique and art exchange meeting. Does he really think I'm stupid?

"Zhuang Rui, we're friends, right?" Miao Feifei stared intently at Zhuang Rui with her beautiful big eyes.

"Ahem, of course, but I hope you and Xuanbing can become friends too..."

Zhuang Rui's expression was somewhat unnatural. He wasn't a wooden person; of course he could sense Miao Feifei's feelings.

However, thinking of his children, Zhuang Rui dared not make a mistake. Besides, Miss Miao was always known for her fierceness and would definitely not be interested in a married man like him anymore.

"Would you die if you didn't mention your wife?"

Miao Feifei rolled her eyes at Zhuang Rui and said, "Since we're friends, can I ask you for a favor? I've recently become very interested in antiques and would like to attend this antique and art exchange meeting. With your reputation, Professor Zhuang, bringing someone along shouldn't be a problem, right?"

After returning to Beijing, Miao Feifei remained idle for a while. Recently, news broke that someone was preparing to auction Cizhou official kiln porcelain at the junction of Beijing and Tianjin. Because most of the buyers were from mainland China, the two places decided to jointly investigate the case. →

However, the branch office where Miao Feifei works has a lot of cases lately and can't spare any manpower. Also, Miao Feifei has handled cases related to antiques before, so they asked her to take charge of the work related to ***.

During the previous investigation, the police discovered that a number of ceramic fragments were indeed unearthed in a field in Handan, Hebei Province. After expert identification, it was confirmed that this was very likely an ancient kiln site from the Song Dynasty.

However, this kiln site had already been visited, and after a rescue excavation, nothing of value could be found except for some scattered porcelain shards.

As for whether Southern Song Dynasty official kiln porcelain will be unearthed inside, even experts dare not be certain or deny it, and can only say that it is "possible".

However, it was precisely the word "possibly" that made the police nervous. After nearly a month of investigation, they began to monitor Li Dali's black market antique auction gang.

Even Zhuang Rui didn't know that Li Dali had put in a lot of effort to set up this scheme. Not only did he spread the news of the excavation of Cizhou official kiln porcelain, but he also tampered with an ancient kiln site that had already been looted, making it appear as if it had just been excavated.

It can be said that Li Dali's efforts far exceeded Zhuang Rui's expectations. This scheme not only involved numerous collectors from home and abroad, but also kept the police in the dark.

This setup is designed to be nine parts real and one part fake, with everything logically consistent. Just like that guy who used to rent a house in a courtyard house in ***, the bait he used was all genuine Ming and Qing dynasty rosewood furniture.

However, every advantage has its disadvantages. Li Dali knew that this commotion had become quite significant, attracting the attention of relevant departments, and some people had even advised him to lay low for a while.

However, after weighing the pros and cons, Mr. Li realized that even if he were caught by the police, these fake items wouldn't be enough to convict him, but breaking his promise to Zhuang Rui was something he didn't want.

Between two evils, he chose the lesser one. Boss Li decided to proceed with the antique auction. Even if the police disrupted the transaction in the end, he could still explain himself to Zhuang Rui.

Li Dali maintained a relaxed exterior but strict interior approach to the auction, forbidding anyone from bringing anyone other than those he had invited, thus eliminating the possibility of the police sending infiltrators to the venue.

Jin Pangzi was aware of this matter as well. In order to bring Zhuang Rui to the auction, he made a special application to the organizers, which is why Zhuang Rui was able to come.

However, Fatty Jin didn't know that Zhuang Rui was already on Li Dali's invitation list, but he hadn't planned to participate at first.

Li Dali's move put the police in a difficult position. Both the Beijing and Tianjin police had managed to find out the auction location, but they couldn't get into the auction venue and take control of the case immediately.

It's important to understand that police investigations also require evidence. In addition, the dealers who come to auction antiques are mostly people of status. If there are no contraband items in the black market, it will not only alert the suspects but also raise questions about the dealers' competence.

Upon hearing Miao Feifei say that she had fallen for ***, Zhuang Rui shook his head with a wry smile and said, "Officer Miao, I know you're here for the so-called Cizhou official kiln porcelain. I can tell you right now, those porcelains are fakes, modern imitations, not worth all this fuss..."

Zhuang Rui was weighing his options. He couldn't let the police ruin the matter, so after thinking for a while, he revealed that the porcelain was a fake.

"How...how did you know? Have you seen those two pieces of porcelain?"

Miao Feifei had a lot of faith in Zhuang Rui's expertise, but she didn't understand why Zhuang Rui would participate in the auction if he knew the porcelain was fake.

It seemed that he couldn't dispel Officer Miao's doubts without making things clear. Zhuang Rui glanced around and lowered his voice, saying, "Those two pieces of porcelain were originally mine. Do you think I've seen them before or not?"

"What?!"

Miao Feifei's mouth dropped open in surprise; she never expected to get such an answer from Zhuang Rui.

"You...you're committing fraud, aren't you?"

Miao Feifei immediately realized that the so-called ancient kiln site was probably a setup by Zhuang Rui.

"Fraud? Who did I scam?" Now that he had made his point clear, Zhuang Rui was more open.

"First you hyped up the discovery of Cizhou ware at an ancient kiln site, then you used a ladder to release porcelain. These methods can all be considered fraud..."

Miao Feifei has been a police officer for years, and after several experiences, her knowledge and experience far surpass that of the junior traffic cop in Zhonghai.

"What fraud? These two pieces of porcelain cost me over ten million to make, and I might not even be able to sell them for that much. Who do you think I'm trying to scam?"

Zhuang Rui was very dissatisfied with Miao Feifei's words. He wasn't trying to get something for nothing. These two pieces of porcelain actually cost more than ten million RMB to make. Are there really any scammers in this world who would spend so much money and be so stupid?

"Two pieces of porcelain cost ten million?"

Miao Feifei was also confused by Zhuang Rui's words.

"Alright, I'll explain later when I have time. These two pieces of porcelain won't end up in the hands of Chinese people. If it doesn't work out, I'll just buy them back myself. Please, police officers, don't cause me any trouble..."

Zhuang Rui noticed that some people had already started entering the small building. He glanced at his watch; the hour hand was almost pointing to 11 o'clock. He stood up, ready to end the conversation.

"What are you saying? If you are engaging in illegal or criminal activities, I have the right to stop you. No, I'm going to go into the auction house with you..." Zhuang Rui's words were not to be liked by the upright Officer Miao.

"Alright, alright, I'll go, I'll take you, okay?"

When Zhuang Rui saw that Fatty Jin and Peng Fei had already returned with their horses, he quickly agreed. If he angered this little miss, she could really ruin the scheme that he and Li Dali had painstakingly planned.

"That's more like it..."

When Officer Miao saw that Zhuang Rui had given in, he smugly took out his phone and ordered the police officers who were ready to rush into the venue to withdraw.

Officer Miao believed Zhuang Rui's words. After all, a billionaire with a net worth of over a billion wouldn't stoop so low as to take such a huge risk to defraud tens of millions.

Upon seeing that Miao Feifei was going to the auction with them, Fatty Jin took a step back, grabbed Zhuang Rui, and said with wide eyes, "Brother Zhuang, you... why did you bring her along again? If this gets out, it won't look good for you..."

Zhuang Rui laughed and said, "Brother Jin, it's nothing. She's just an antique enthusiast who came to broaden her horizons..."

"If I don't want to bring it, then I can forget about running this black market..." Zhuang Rui muttered to himself.

Seeing Zhuang Rui's nonchalant attitude, Fatty Jin reminded him, "Brother, I don't have the ability to bring her in. Even if I brought you here, I still gave you advance notice."

"I'll handle this. That old lady is someone I can't afford to offend..."

Zhuang Rui gave a wry smile, took out his phone from his pocket, found Li Dali's number, and dialed it.

He didn't dare say he was bringing the police, but only that he was bringing a friend. Li Dali naturally had no objection and immediately notified the people at the door via walkie-talkie.

Seeing Zhuang Rui bring Miao Feifei and Peng Fei inside, Fatty Jin's eyes widened even more.

It should be noted that many bodyguards were kept out of the small building, but Zhuang Rui brought two people in with just one phone call. This made Fatty Jin wonder if Zhuang Rui knew the mysterious Boss Li.

Zhuang Rui was delayed for a while by Fatty Jin. After entering the small building, he found that the huge hall was already full of people.

Chapter 863 Foolish and Rich (Part 1)

The enormous living room of the horse racing club, originally intended for parties hosted by so-called high society elites, is now being used as an auction table by the bar counter, and the former dance floor is filled with chairs.

The auction caused quite a stir. Almost all the chairs, which were supposed to seat 10 people per row, were full. Even Zhuang Rui was a little apprehensive. Li Dali was probably the only one in the country to run such a blatant black market for antiques.

"Brother Jin, let's sit in the back..."

The front row seats were already full, and Zhuang Rui was just there for show, not intending to make a scene. He figured that the shameless little brat was determined to win back those two pieces of porcelain.

"Teacher Jin, you're here too!"

"Oh, Professor Zhuang is here too. It's been a while since we've seen you..."

"Old Jin, you're into calligraphy and painting, how come you're interested in porcelain too?"

Before Zhuang Rui and Fatty Jin could even sit down, they heard greetings.

Since the opening of the Dingguang Museum, Zhuang Rui organized an industry conference, and now almost everyone in the antique business with even a little reputation recognizes him.

In situations like this, there are relatively few experts, but a large number of wealthy business owners and speculators. After all, playing the game is a demonstration of strength; otherwise, no matter how good your eye is, you won't be able to buy anything if you're broke.

Zhuang Rui and Jin Pangzi can be considered experts without a doubt, so many collectors greeted them warmly, hoping that a word from them later would save them a lot of losses.

As for Peng Fei and Miao Feifei, they were naturally categorized as bodyguard and mistress.

"Mr. Liu, I heard last time that you were planning to sell that Tang Bohu painting. We can talk about it later. Hey, Mr. Wang, do you still have that Qianlong gilded plate? If you're willing to sell it, please let me know..."

After two or three years of navigating the antique trade, Zhuang Rui had shed his initial naiveté and was now able to converse with these successful businessmen with ease.

Since Zhuang Rui started his antique website, there has been more interaction between experts and collectors. Both sides have benefited a lot from it, and their relationship is like that of friends.

Zhuang Rui's Dingguang Museum also benefited greatly, acquiring many fine items, including several truly excellent pieces, which he obtained through transactions with several people in the venue.

Inside, not only Zhuang Rui and his group were chatting, but other familiar antique collectors were also exchanging experiences.

Not all of these entrepreneurs were cultured people; quite a few spoke in a loud and boisterous voice, making the entire auction venue seem rather chaotic.

However, Zhuang Rui noticed that in the first row of the venue, there were seven or eight people dressed in suits and ties, sitting there with serious expressions and not saying a word.

Zhuang Rui was observing others, while Miao Feifei was watching Zhuang Rui. Looking at Zhuang Rui at this moment, Miao Feifei felt both familiar and a little unfamiliar. The slightly naive young man from two years ago had now reached a height that ordinary people could hardly reach.

This feeling left Officer Miao somewhat disappointed. He sat down alone in a chair, observing the various characters and their expressions in the room.

"Ladies and gentlemen, bosses, well... this is the more comfortable way to put it. You are all my bread and butter..."

Just as Zhuang Rui and the others sat down, a voice rang out from the front of the stage. Zhuang Rui heard it clearly and realized that it was Li Dali himself hosting the event, which surprised him.

This phenomenon is relatively rare in the black market for antiques. Usually, owners with powerful backgrounds will hide behind the scenes and remotely control the auction process, so that even if problems arise, they can pay to extricate themselves.

The fact that the organizer's boss personally presided over the auction usually indicates that there are some important items involved.

Although Li Dali rarely appears at auctions, there are quite a few people in the room who know his identity. After Li Dali finished speaking, there were only a few light laughs from the audience, and the atmosphere became slightly heavy.

The excavation of Cizhou official kiln porcelain will write an important chapter in the history of Chinese ceramics. For these entrepreneurs, acquiring it would be a very prestigious thing.

"Gentlemen, I've taken time out of your busy schedules to attend this antique exchange meeting, so I won't waste any more words. The first item we'll be discussing is..."

Li Dali's words caused the audience to burst into laughter. Everyone knew that they were there to participate in an antique auction, but Li Dali made it sound like an antique exchange.

Miao Feifei, sitting next to Zhuang Rui, also curled up her lips slightly. It seemed that what Zhuang Rui said was true, at least his statement was the same as the host's.

"Alright, let's look at our first craft item today. This is an early work by Mr. Huang Binhong, a master of calligraphy, painting, and seal carving in modern times..."

At last month's Hanhai Spring Auction, one of Mr. Huang's works from the same period sold for 4.38 million yuan. Interested parties can come and take a look..."

As Li Dali introduced the painting, two henchmen slowly unfurled a scroll from a tray onto the table. A bright spotlight was on the table, so even Zhuang Rui, who was sitting in the last row, could clearly see the entire painting.

This is a splashed-ink landscape painting. The mountains are vigorous and powerful, rugged and precipitous, while the painting style is sparse and elegant, reminiscent of Huang Binhong's early artistic conception.

"Brother, why don't you go up and take a look?"

Jin Pangzi, who was sitting next to Zhuang Rui, asked, "At this moment, the collectors have already stepped forward, put on gloves, and begun to examine the painting."

"Brother Jin, why don't you go and take a look?"

Zhuang Rui laughed upon hearing this. Even without using his spiritual energy to examine it, Zhuang Rui was confident that the painting was definitely a fake.

Li Dali isn't stupid. He certainly wouldn't put up a genuine item for auction while being closely watched by the police. He was even very careful with his wording, using the term "crafts."

There are no standardized regulations in China for the antique market, and private transactions have always existed. The scope of handicrafts is even broader, and if someone is willing to buy them, the government cannot interfere.

While chatting with Fatty Jin, Zhuang Rui scanned the painting with his spiritual energy. Sure enough, it was a modern replica, with no trace of spiritual energy present.

"If I go up there, I'll be taking away someone's livelihood..."

Although Fatty Jin was envious, he knew that once he stepped onto the stage, he would become a bellwether for many collectors. Whether something was real or fake depended entirely on his word. This

was the main reason why many antique dealers and black market bosses spared no effort to curry favor with the experts.

If the painting were a fake, Jin Pangzi would definitely offend the boss if he said so directly. To be honest, that would be against his conscience. Therefore, Jin Pangzi was determined not to get involved in calligraphy and painting.

"Teacher Jin, why don't you go up and take a look..."

"Old Jin, we've known each other for over ten years, right? Go up and give your brother a piece of the eye..."

"Yes, Mr. Jin, could you please give your opinion? No one in China can match your level of expertise in appraising calligraphy and paintings..."

Fatty Jin sat there motionless, but the collectors surrounded him. Some tried to curry favor, while others flattered and fawned over him. In short, they all wanted Fatty Jin to take a look.

"Gentlemen, please don't make things difficult for me, okay? I'll treat you all to a meal later to apologize..."

Fatty Jin was sweating profusely from everyone's comments. The people who could talk to him were all people of some status and position, and Fatty Jin couldn't afford to offend any of them. So he simply clasped his hands in a fist and acted like a coward.

"Gentlemen, this painting was a gift from a friend. He's short on cash and wants to sell it. The asking price is 200,000 RMB. Interested parties are welcome to consider it. As per the rules, the highest bidder wins..."

After everyone had looked at the painting and returned to their seats, Li Dali's voice rang out, but he never used the word "auction" in his words; instead, he said "transfer."

None of the people in the room were new to the antique black market; they were well-versed in these linguistic techniques and wouldn't change their opinions based on what Li Dali said.

"Three hundred thousand, I'll take this painting..."

After a brief silence, a voice suddenly rang out. The speaker was Mr. Liu, the same Mr. Zhuang Rui who had greeted him earlier.

Every successful person is extremely confident. The keen eye they honed in the business world is also brought into the antique trade. Based on their understanding of antiques, these people are the ones who like to make rash moves.

However, amateur collectors are unaware that their behavior is a major taboo in the antique trade. When appraising items in the antique trade, the principle is that an item is three parts fake, and one should look at the fake rather than the real. Even if one cannot find fault with the item, one should still ponder it carefully.

"Four hundred thousand, Lao Liu, you have quite a few famous paintings and calligraphies, let me have this one..." A voice followed closely behind Mr. Liu's bid.

"Five hundred thousand, good things are never too much..."

Not to be outdone, General Manager Liu called out another price, which made Zhuang Rui shake his head inwardly. No wonder Li Dali had such a fortune thanks to the black market for antiques; it turned out he was a fool with too much money.

While legitimate auction houses also have their share of fakes, they are much more regulated than the black market. At the very least, they will provide authentication certificates from relevant appraisers, rather than relying on gut feeling like this.

"Six hundred thousand..."

"Eight hundred thousand..."

The bidding continued, and two more people joined in, also with speculative intentions. After all, Huang Binhong's landscape paintings are very famous internationally, and if they were to be auctioned in a proper auction house, they would fetch at least two million.

After several rounds of fierce bidding, the painting was finally won by Mr. Liu for 1.2 million yuan. Looking at the smug Mr. Liu, Zhuang Rui was both amused and exasperated.

Chapter 864 Foolish and Rich (Part Two)

Buying fake items and acting like one has struck gold—that kind of behavior only happens in the antique trade. These shopkeepers act like they're in a marketplace, driven more by spite than reason.

Of course, the happiest person right now is Boss Li. He spent 30,000 yuan to have a master copy this painting made, and he made forty times that amount in one go. Even drug trafficking doesn't have such high profits.

"Alright, next I'm going to share with you a piece of official kiln porcelain from the Xianfeng period of the Qing Dynasty. Please look, this is a pair of famille rose lotus-patterned bowls without lids..."

As our friends know, Xianfeng imperial kiln products are extremely rare, so this pair of famille rose lotus-patterned bowls can be considered two unique pieces that exist in the world..."

As Li Dali spoke, the auction continued. This time, a pair of Qing Dynasty Xianfeng imperial porcelain pieces were brought up on a tray.

As is well known, Emperor Xianfeng was one of the most unlucky emperors of the Qing Dynasty. He was caught up in the Taiping Rebellion, the largest peasant uprising in Chinese history, and he also encountered the unprecedented upheaval of Western powers invading China.

Emperor Xianfeng bore the burden of all the suffering of the Qing Dynasty's ancestors. His life was short and filled with hardship. After the blow of the Second Opium War, Emperor Xianfeng finally collapsed and died in Rehe at the age of thirty-one.

Emperor Xianfeng loved opera and women most in his life, and he disdained the calligraphy, paintings and ceramics that his ancestors liked. Therefore, the porcelain produced during the Xianfeng era is considered to be extremely rare.

As the saying goes, rarity increases value. The value of fine porcelain from the Xianfeng period was no less than that of porcelain from the Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong reigns.

"Brother, let's go up and take a look..." Since this time it wasn't calligraphy and paintings that were being photographed, Fatty Jin also planned to take a look.

"Okay..." Zhuang Rui nodded and walked to the front of the stage with Fatty Jin.

"Excuse me, let me make way, let the two teachers take a look first..."

"Yeah, Lao Xu, why are you squeezing like that? Do you even understand what you're doing?"

"Come on, come on, Teacher Zhuang, this is a good spot, take a look..."

As soon as Zhuang Rui and Fatty Jin walked over, the collectors, who had been crowding around the table, made way for them. There were just too many people at the auction today, making the scene rather chaotic.

"Brother Jin, please take a look first..." Zhuang Rui gestured to Fatty Jin.

"No, I'm not as good as you at appraising ceramics. Here are two pieces, let's each take a look at one..."

Fatty Jin waved his hands repeatedly. As the saying goes, everyone has their own area of expertise. No matter how skilled an expert is, they are only good at a certain field. People like Zhuang Rui, who can make achievements in many categories such as bronzes, calligraphy and paintings, jade and ceramics, are extremely rare.

"Alright, let's look at one of each then..."

In summer, people tend to sweat and their hands become greasy. Zhuang Rui took a pair of white gloves and put them on. He then picked up the famille rose lotus-patterned bowl from the tray and examined it closely.

This porcelain bowl, originally a covered bowl, has four layers of famille rose lotus petals on its outer wall, which is different from the three layers of lotus petals in other dynasties. The inside of the bowl is glazed white, and the rim is decorated with gold. The decoration on the outer wall makes the bowl look like a lotus flower, with lotus stamens and four layers of lotus petals painted from top to bottom, and the foot is painted as a lotus stem.

The entire object is brightly colored and has a unique shape. Given that the Xianfeng era was a hundred or two years ago, if this object is genuine, it is quite remarkable that it has been passed down as a pair.

Zhuang Rui had little knowledge of Qing porcelain, and with his eyesight alone, he couldn't find any faults. He then focused a wisp of his spiritual energy on the porcelain, letting it wander over the piece. His eyebrows twitched slightly, and he glanced at Li Dali standing to the side out of the corner of his eye.

So this guy's really going all out with making fakes? The famille rose lotus bowl that I thought looked pretty good immediately became obvious under the influence of the magic, it's still a fake.

This result left Zhuang Rui somewhat frustrated. It turned out that without the spark in his eyes, his appreciation skills were truly subpar.

After Zhuang Rui put down the famille rose lotus-patterned bowl, Boss Li immediately came over, pretending not to know Zhuang Rui, and said, "Teacher Zhuang, isn't this a nice piece? It's Xianfeng imperial porcelain, which is quite rare on the market..."

Li Dali wasn't stupid. This event was organized because of Zhuang Rui, so of course he wanted to take full advantage of Zhuang Rui's expert status to make a quick buck. «-(^`v´)-« 6©(S)h"x.©°mm »-(^`v´)-»

"Yes, porcelain from the Xianfeng reign is very rare, and it's even more unusual for a pair to have survived after so many years. If they are genuine, the starting price at auction would be at least 500,000..."

Zhuang Rui understood what Li Dali meant. If it were a different occasion, he definitely wouldn't have said those words.

However, most of the people gathered here now are amateur collectors, and even if they buy them, they use them to show off their wealth.

Although the existence of these people has boosted the antique market, it has also brought many factors that are detrimental to the development of the art market, so Zhuang Rui doesn't mind making them bleed a little.

On another note, Zhuang Rui's words also contained a hidden meaning. Before the starting price of 500,000, it was stated that the item had to be genuine to be worth that price. However, Zhuang Rui never said anything about whether the famille rose lotus bowl was genuine.

"Old Liu, you can't argue with me this time..."

"Why should I? You can buy it, but I can't?"

"This is interesting. Let's hear the starting bid. Even Professor Zhuang is optimistic about this item..."

"Yes, most Qing dynasty porcelain is from the Kangxi and Qianlong periods, but this Xianfeng era piece is quite unique and has investment value..."

After hearing what everyone was saying, the people gathered around the display table began to whisper among themselves.

This black market auction was different from previous ones. Those who did not receive an invitation were not allowed to enter. Many owners were unable to bring their own appraisers, and they had to figure out the authenticity of the items themselves. Therefore, Zhuang Rui's words gave many collectors some peace of mind.

"Brother Jin, have you taken a good look?" Zhuang Rui asked Fatty Jin after putting the lotus-patterned bowl back.

"It's hard to say. Judging from the glaze, patina, and style, it should be from the Xianfeng period of the Qing Dynasty. However, there are no objects with this shape in history, so I'm not sure..."

Fatty Jin's answer was relatively objective, giving a vague answer, but it was enough to make Boss Li overjoyed. As long as the experts didn't say it was fake, there would definitely be people bidding against it.

"Is that porcelain real or fake?"

After Zhuang Rui returned to his seat, Officer Miao spoke up for once, which was quite unusual.

Zhuang Rui looked around; no one was paying attention to him. He opened his mouth and mouthed, "Fake..."

"What a shrewd businessman..." Officer Miao curled his lip.

"Tch, if it weren't for that, wouldn't it have given you guys something to talk about?"

Zhuang Rui was dismissive of Officer Miao's words. He said that fake items were just handicrafts, and that it was a matter of mutual consent, so even the police couldn't do anything about it. But if they were real, then it would be illegal.

"Alright, the asking price for this pair of extremely rare famille rose lotus-patterned bowls is 100,000 RMB. Interested parties can now make bids..."

About ten minutes later, after some self-proclaimed experts in ceramics went up to take a look, the auction of the pair of famille rose bowls began under the supervision of Li Dali.

However, to Mr. Li's surprise, no one made a bid within a minute or so after he announced his bottom price.

"I'll offer 150,000..."

A rather unfamiliar boss sitting in front of Zhuang Rui broke the silence in the room by speaking.

"Two hundred thousand..."

Once someone takes the lead, others immediately start bidding. In the eyes of Chinese people, anything that isn't sought after or sold cheaply isn't considered a good thing; the more people scramble for it, the more valuable it is.

"Old Yu, is this item reliable?" a voice rang out from the front row.

"It looks alright to me. The glaze is bright, and the patina is quite thick, like an old piece..."

The boss, Mr. Yu, who had shouted out 200,000, answered with a confident air, leaving Zhuang Rui, who was sitting behind him, speechless.

In the antique trade, there's no fear of those who don't understand; they're afraid to make a purchase. The real threat is those players who aren't very knowledgeable but happen to know a little bit about the market. These are the main force in the antique market; you could also call them suckers.

In the end, Mr. Yu bought the pair of lotus-patterned bowls with pink backgrounds for 680,000 yuan. This guy even proudly boasted that it was an auspicious number.

This guy just didn't know that he had already been categorized by Teacher Zhuang as one of those people who are foolish and rich.

Next, a painting by Qi Baishi and a piece of so-called Han jade were auctioned off, both fetching hefty prices. Mr. Li was beaming with joy on stage, feeling that today's auction had been a success, bringing in nearly five million.

After auctioning off four or five items, Li Dali coughed and said, "Alright, the next item we'll be discussing is a Song Dynasty porcelain piece unearthed from an ancient kiln site in Cizhou. According to Professor Xue, a renowned cultural relics appraisal expert from Hebei Province, this should be an official kiln porcelain piece presented as tribute to the imperial palace during the Song Dynasty..."

"Mr. Li, whether there are official kilns in Cizhou is still unverified..." Before Li Dali could finish speaking, he was interrupted by someone in the audience.

"That's right, but it's undeniable that we can see palace marks on the unearthed porcelain fragments, which shows that there were still official kilns in Cizhou, they just hadn't been unearthed yet."

However, all of this will become history today, because after expert appraisal, these two Cizhou ware vessels are identical to fragments of official kiln porcelain previously unearthed from Cizhou, and can be basically identified as Cizhou official kiln porcelain..."

Li Dali waved his hand, and the two porcelain pieces he had obtained from Zhuang Rui were placed on the table, immediately attracting everyone's attention.

The several well-dressed guests sitting in the front row, who had never placed a bid, also showed solemn expressions.

Chapter 865 Antique Finishing

"These two artifacts, one a white-glazed, black-decorated, cloud and phoenix-patterned four-handled vase, and the other a erotic figure vase, were both unearthed from the ancient Cizhou kiln site of the Song Dynasty. There are also a few fragments of Cizhou official kiln porcelain unearthed previously; you can come up and compare them..."

After Li Dali gave a brief introduction to the two porcelain pieces, he gave the time to the audience. Whether this scheme could trap those Japanese people depended on how well Zhuang Rui's porcelain was imitated.

To spread the news subtly, Li Dali went to great lengths, deliberately creating an abandoned ancient kiln site that had long been looted by tomb raiders, thus disseminating the information about the unearthed official porcelain.

Afterwards, Li Dali used his overseas connections to spread the news of the excavation of Cizhou official kiln porcelain to these Japanese people. The process was full of twists and turns, and apart from him and Zhuang Rui, no one could see that this auction was a carefully set-up scheme.

Just as Li Dali finished speaking, six or seven people sitting in the front row rushed to the display table and surrounded the two pieces of "official porcelain".

"Mr. Yamaki, your family is in the ceramics business, and I've heard that your company has invested heavily in researching this kind of porcelain. In your opinion, are these two pieces of porcelain genuine or fake?"

A Japanese man, about fifty years old and wearing a navy blue suit, asked a young man who looked to be only in his thirties.

"Mr. Yehe, I need to conduct an appraisal first. My father was the most knowledgeable about Cizhou porcelain. Unfortunately, he passed away last month. Otherwise, if he had come in person, he would definitely have been able to determine whether this is a Cizhou official kiln piece..."

The young man was wearing a black suit, with even his shirt and tie in black. If the people around him could understand their conversation, they would know that this young man named Yamaki had just lost a family member.

Influenced by Confucianism, Japanese funeral customs share many similarities with China, and are even more elaborate in terms of etiquette and procedures. Japan does not have the custom of wearing mourning clothes; instead, people are dressed entirely in black.

"Hey, why are there two Japanese people?"

"Yes, Mr. Li, what kind of act are you putting on?"

"Old Li, this is taboo, it's not proper..."

When the people who had gathered behind heard the two Japanese speaking gibberish, the scene erupted into chaos, with shouts and commotion directed at Li Dali.

Although there are many unscrupulous antique dealers in China who have privately sold antiques to Japanese people, they dare not do so openly, as it would easily arouse public outrage.

Because of the history between China and Japan, the Chinese are the least fond of the Japanese. So when they heard two Japanese people talking, the businessmen in the room suddenly turned into angry young men, and some of them started to utter harsh words.

Last time in Tibet, the Japanese man only came to see the sights, but he was questioned for a long time by several people in the industry. So this time, in order to help Zhuang Rui, Li Dali also risked his reputation and went all out.

"Ahem, everyone, please be quiet for a moment and listen to what I have to say..."

Seeing that the situation was getting out of control, Li Dali quickly gave a signal to the people next to him. A dozen strong young men immediately surrounded them and separated the Japanese from the domestic collectors. The two pieces of porcelain were also temporarily taken back.

"Mr. Li, what's there to say? We can talk behind closed doors, but inviting the Japanese is just making things difficult for us."

"Exactly! Many of our country's treasures have already been lost to other countries. Are we now engaging in cultural aggression?"

"That's right. If you don't give us a reasonable explanation today, we'll smash your porcelain and hear the sound..."

Although the people were separated, domestic collectors remained outraged, loudly questioning Li Dali's motives.

Some of the more agitated individuals even started inciting the crowd to vandalize and loot; this guy was definitely eager to create chaos.

Once the shouting subsided a bit, Li Dali quickly said, "Ladies and gentlemen, please listen to me first. Art knows no borders..."

"Nonsense, then why don't you buy Japanese antiques and bring them to China?"

"What kind of antiques do island nations have?"

Before Li Dali could finish his sentence, he was interrupted by the people below the stage. He hadn't expected this to happen. He kept wiping his sweat with a tissue and looked at Zhuang Rui from afar with pleading eyes.

Zhuang Rui had to step in on this, so he immediately stood up and shouted, "Everyone, please calm down and let's hear what this Mr. Li has to say..."

"Okay, let's listen to Teacher Zhuang and see what he has to say..."

"Teacher Zhuang has spoken, everyone please be quiet for a moment..."

"If you don't give me an explanation, I'll never attend your auctions again..."

Zhuang Rui has made a name for himself in the domestic art collecting circle in recent years. This call to action silenced many people, who then sat back down in their chairs.

Two or three of the Japanese men, who were fluent in Chinese, sat back down and began speaking quietly in Japanese to the people around them, presumably translating what had just happened.

Seeing that the room had quieted down, Li Dali wiped his sweat, picked up the microphone and said, "Friends and bosses, let me first introduce these Japanese friends. This is Mr. Kazuo Nogai, the president of the Japan Ceramic Research Association, and this is Mr. Yamaki, the chairman of Japan's largest ceramic production company."

As everyone knows, no actual artifacts from the Cizhou official kiln have been unearthed in China. We can only rely on these few fragments of porcelain to determine whether these two items are official kiln porcelain. To be honest, not only are we unsure, but even I, Old Li, am not entirely sure...

In Japan, research on Cizhou porcelain has been ongoing for over a century. The reason I invited these friends here was to ask them to help authenticate these items...

I'll say it again: art knows no borders. Let's not be so narrow-minded...

Li Dali's words silenced the audience, but then a voice rang out: "Mr. Li, will they participate in the auction of these two porcelain pieces?"

"Well... it depends on what our Japanese friends think. After all, I run a business, and I can't just turn people away, can I?"

Li Dali's shrewd businessman demeanor left everyone speechless.

Most of the people here are business owners. It's understandable that businessmen pursue profits. You can't stop others from making money just because you love your country, can you?

"Gentlemen, if no one has any objections, let's continue examining these two items..."

Li Dali breathed a sigh of relief when he saw that no one was shouting anymore. He picked up the bottle of mineral water on the table and drank half of it in one gulp.

"I've managed to offend quite a few big bosses in the country..."

Li Dali looked at Zhuang Rui, his heart filled with bitterness. What he had done this time would probably spread quickly in the industry, and even if it were to become a regular auction house in the future, it would likely lose a lot of popularity.

"Professor Zhuang, why don't you go up and take a look? You're the only ceramics expert here..."

"Yes, Professor Zhuang, as long as you say it's true, we'll definitely keep it in China..."

"That's right. If it's true, I'd sell everything I own to keep it from leaving the country..."

For a time, all the collectors in the room pinned their hopes on Zhuang Rui, which put Zhuang Rui in a difficult position. He had originally set a trap for the island nation, but he hadn't expected to catch so many people in one fell swoop.

"Alright, let me take a look first. However, I don't have a deep understanding of Song Dynasty porcelain, so I might not be able to discern anything special..."

Zhuang Rui cupped his hands in a respectful gesture towards the four directions, walked to the display table, and pretended to examine it.

"Damn, Old Li has some capable people on his hands!"

Zhuang Rui was taken aback when he first saw them. The two pieces of porcelain had completely changed from what they looked like a little over a month ago. The glaze was duller than when they were in his hands, but they appeared more substantial and simple.

Although the shape of the vessel remains unchanged, the object itself carries an indescribable sense of historical vicissitude, and it also has an extremely natural-looking patina, as well as traces of wiping. In the eyes of experts, this is caused by cleaning off the dirt.

It can be said that the person Li Dali is working with to age porcelain is definitely an expert in aging new porcelain. It seems that the aging of those Tang tri-color ware pieces last time was also done by this person.

Antique porcelain is a craft, and excluding the very primitive method of polishing shoes, there are usually four methods available on the market.

The first method is polishing, which involves repeatedly rubbing the ceramic surface with tools to make it lose its luster and look old. Commonly used tools include animal hides and gourd shells. However, this method leaves friction marks on the glaze even if the surface is very smooth due to repeated friction.

The second method is the soil immersion method. In order to create the soil patina that forms on ancient porcelain after being buried in the tomb for many years, the method is to immerse the ceramics in the soil to produce an effect similar to that of unearthed cultural relics.

Thirdly, chemical erosion can be used. Placing newly made imitation ceramics in acidic or alkaline corrosive chemicals can also achieve an aged appearance, but this will damage the original patina of the porcelain.

Fourth is smoking. This method usually involves hanging the newly made ceramic replica above the kitchen and letting it be smoked and heated for a certain period of time, which will also achieve satisfactory results.

Besides these four methods, there is another uncommon method of aging, which is re-firing. The newly made ceramic is coated with a type of loess-based nodule stone powder clay and then re-fired in a kiln.

This method is quite complicated and requires extremely high standards for heat control and ingredient selection.

However, the antique porcelain produced has a kind of slurry similar to that formed naturally, and even experienced appraisal experts cannot distinguish between the real and fake with the naked eye.

Chapter 866 Falling into the Trap (Part 1)

Whether it's the previous Tang tri-color pottery or these two imitation Cizhou ware pieces, the aging process is impeccable; at least Zhuang Rui couldn't detect any flaws with the naked eye.

As times change and technology advances, although many ancient porcelain-making techniques have been lost to the annals of history, the wisdom of modern people is only more advanced than that of the ancients, especially in the imitation and aging of antiques.

It is estimated that in a few decades, these counterfeit artifacts will be undetectable even by carbon-14 dating.

Picking up the broken porcelain shards from the ancient kiln site provided by Xu Guoqing, Zhuang Rui compared them with the two porcelain pieces. Because the broken porcelain shards were unearthed earlier, the black glaze body appeared slightly whitish, while the aged porcelain pieces highlighted the characteristics of newly unearthed porcelain, with relatively brighter colors.

"Brilliant! Truly a master!"

Zhuang Rui sighed inwardly, thankful that he had given the item to Li Dali; otherwise, he really didn't know if anyone else could have made the porcelain so realistic. After all, he was a professional.

"Professor Zhuang, are these two porcelain pieces from the official kilns of the Song Dynasty?"

"Teacher Zhuang, is it a newly made replica or an old item?"

"Tell us quickly! If you say it's true, we'll definitely keep them today..."

Zhuang Rui spent a little too long looking at the two pieces of porcelain, nearly 20 minutes, before putting them back. The people below were already impatient and immediately started asking questions.

"Cough cough..."

Zhuang Rui coughed, and the chatter below immediately ceased. Hundreds of eyes were fixed on Zhuang Rui, and even the Japanese men pricked up their ears, ready to listen to his explanation.

Zhuang Rui took the microphone from Li Dali and said, "The shapes of these two porcelain pieces are quite different. One is for appreciation and enjoyment, while the other is a utensil, which is for daily use and is more in line with the characteristics of Cizhou porcelain..."

The porcelain itself has a pure glaze and a thick patina. The inscription "Chunxing Palace" on the base suggests it was likely the residence of a concubine. Song Dynasty official porcelain often bears the name of a palace inscription, making this piece somewhat resembling Song Dynasty official porcelain.

However, the color of this porcelain seems too bright compared to the broken pieces. There are two possibilities: one is that it was originally new porcelain, and the other is that it was well preserved in the soil and was wiped clean after being unearthed...

Of course, the above views are just my own rather superficial opinions. After all, I don't know much about Song Dynasty porcelain. I'll just say what I have to say, and you can take it with a grain of salt..."

Today's situation has put Zhuang Rui in a difficult position. If he tells the truth, he'll definitely implicate those people in China as well. But if he tells the truth, he might scare away those island nations. In the end, Zhuang Rui could only give an ambiguous answer.

"Professor Zhuang, is this actually an official kiln porcelain piece from the Song Dynasty? Please give me a definite answer..."

"Yeah, I'm still confused after listening for so long. Are we going to film it or not?"

"Brother Zhuang, we're old friends. Give me a straight answer. If it's really true, I'll demolish the houses and sell the land to take them all..."

After Zhuang Rui finished speaking, the crowd below stirred up again. Several bosses who had previously associated with Zhuang Rui acted as if they were following Zhuang Rui's lead, as if they were truly willing to go bankrupt to bid on these two items if Zhuang Rui said it was true.

Upon hearing the man's words, Zhuang Rui waved his hands repeatedly and said, "Everyone, as you all know, I mainly deal in jade and don't have much expertise in porcelain. I really can't tell the difference between these two items. How about we ask Teacher Jin to come up and take a look?"

After Zhuang Rui said this, everyone in the room remembered that this young man was also known as the "Jade King" of the North. Asking him to appraise porcelain was indeed asking too much of him.

"No, Brother Zhuang, if you're unsure about an object, it's pointless for me to go up there. However, Brother Zhuang has already analyzed both sides of the object, so let's all make our own decisions..."

Upon hearing Zhuang Rui's words, Fatty Jin shook his head vigorously, knowing his own limitations and daring not to comment on this controversial item.

Seeing that they couldn't count on Zhuang Rui, the amateur collectors surrounded the exhibition table again, and, taking advantage of their numbers, intentionally or unintentionally excluded the Japanese.

However, these people were really only half-baked and lacked real expertise. Compared to Zhuang Rui, they were miles behind. They couldn't see anything at all and eventually returned to their chairs with a confused look on their faces.

"Mr. Li, we've all finished watching, let's begin..."

"Yes, it's past noon, we should go eat. Let's get filming going..."

"Yes, yes, Teacher Zhuang, I'll treat you to a meal later, you must come!"

Perhaps it was a tacit understanding, but as soon as these domestic collectors sat down, they all urged Li Dali to hurry up.

Firstly, they didn't want to give the Japanese time to authenticate the pieces. Secondly, if these two porcelain pieces were truly genuine, they could take advantage of the situation and acquire them at a relatively low price.

Deep down, these collectors are all just speculators in the antique market; very few of them have pure intentions.

"Mr. Li, I would like to see these two pieces of porcelain. Please!"

Before the crowd could finish speaking, the president of the Wild Sex Association, who was sitting in the front row, suddenly stood up and bowed deeply to Li Dali on the stage at a 90-degree angle, startling the guy so much that he almost fell off the stage.

"Damn it, it's one thing for men to bow, but these island nation women bow during sex? What kind of tradition is this?"

Li Dali had been to Japan several times. In order to promote my country's prestige, he had found several Japanese women and even hired a translator to learn a few simple Japanese phrases for this purpose.

However, what frustrated Mr. Li was that every time he was having a good time, as soon as he opened his mouth to give a certain command, the Japanese woman under him would immediately nod and lower her chest and say "Hai". That's why he was startled by the sudden action of the wild sex.

"Well, see? China is a land of etiquette, so you can't really see anything wrong with it anyway..."

Li Dali waved his hand and said, "Please take a look, everyone, there's no rush..."

"Damn it, you traitor..."

"A son born without an anus..."

"Fawning over island nations is no good..."

As soon as Li Dali finished speaking, a lot of murmurs arose from below the stage. Although the voices were not loud, they were enough for Boss Li to hear. Li Dali's face turned green and he almost choked on his breath.

These people are just talking without understanding the situation. If it were a Japanese company investing there, they would probably be even more humble.

"Yamaki-kun, what do you think?"

Nogai and Yamaki each took an item, and after examining it for about ten minutes, they put it down at the same time.

"President Yehe, judging from the shape and body of this porcelain, it is undoubtedly from the Cizhou kiln. However, ordinary Cizhou kiln porcelain would never be made so exquisitely. Therefore, I suspect that this is the Cizhou official kiln porcelain recorded in history..."

The Yamaki family has a book written in the mid-Qing Dynasty about ceramics from the Song, Yuan, and Ming dynasties. It contains a detailed description of Cizhou porcelain from the Song Dynasty and mentions that Cizhou kilns were presented as tribute to the imperial court. That's why Yehe sought Yamaki's opinion.

And this Yamaki has another identity that Zhuang Rui doesn't know: his father is Yamaki Ichiro, whom Zhuang Rui met in Hebei more than half a year ago.

Out of consideration for his reputation, Yamaki Ichiro did not reveal his experiences in China after returning to Japan. Instead, he focused on urging his research institute to intensify its research and development of Cizhou official porcelain.

However, as the saying goes, "Man proposes, God disposes," and a month after returning to Japan, Ichiro Yamaki suddenly suffered a myocardial infarction and died at home.

As his son, Yamaki came to China to fulfill his father's last wish: to buy a piece of Cizhou official kiln porcelain that his father never got to see before his death.

"Yes, Mr. Yamaki, I agree with you. These Chinese are short-sighted and can't distinguish the authenticity of this porcelain piece at all. Only we can understand the profound meaning of ceramic culture..."

Nogai gave Yamaki an appreciative look. He was a China expert, especially knowledgeable about Chinese porcelain from various dynasties. After careful examination, Nogai could not find a single flaw in the two pieces of porcelain.

Furthermore, he was somewhat dismissive of Zhuang Rui's behavior of appraising porcelain as a jade expert. In Yehe's view, the knowledge of ceramics alone was enough to keep one pondering for a lifetime.

The Japanese people have their merits, but it must be said that their way of thinking has significant flaws and is prone to extremes.

Yehe was like that; his decades of in-depth research on porcelain gave him an almost arrogant and strong sense of self-confidence.

"Yamaki-kun, please, you absolutely must bring these two porcelain pieces back to Japan, I beg you..."

Although Nogai was a leading figure in Japanese ceramics research, his financial resources were far inferior to Yamaki's. After bowing slightly to Yamaki, Nogai continued, "If you can take these two pieces of porcelain back with you, then after your father's death, if others seize your company's market share, I will help you get it back..."

Since Ichiro Yamaki's death, Yamaki Corporation's business has declined significantly. Their ceramic customers have been snatched away by other companies, and their market share has shrunk drastically.

So when he heard what Yehe said, a blush appeared on Yamaki's face, and he made up his mind to bring the two pieces of porcelain back to Japan.

"Alright, everyone's seen it. Next up is this 'private item,' with a starting price of 1 million RMB. Interested parties can start bidding..."

Although the authenticity of the two porcelain pieces could not be determined on the spot, neither of them seemed to have the high price that Li Dali had quoted.

After Li Dali announced the bottom price, Zhuang Rui kept his eyes fixed on the Japanese. After a month of planning, he was about to be trapped!

Chapter 867 Falling into the Trap (Part Two)

The Song Dynasty was the golden age of porcelain development in my country, with the world-renowned Ru, Guan, Ge, Ding, and Jun kilns producing highly prized wares. However, all five were official kilns.

The reason why Cizhou ware was not included among the famous kilns mentioned above is that no official kiln porcelain has been unearthed from it.

If the two porcelain pieces now displayed before everyone are indeed from the Cizhou official kiln, they will change the entire history of Chinese ceramics. Perhaps in the future, when Song Dynasty porcelain is referred to, it will be called the Six Great Kilns.

Therefore, when Li Dali announced a starting bid of 1 million RMB, no one felt it was abrupt. If the porcelain was genuine, it would be worth 10 million RMB, let alone 1 million.

After Li Dali offered the bottom price, the scene suddenly fell silent. Some people who had been whispering to each other stopped talking and looked around to see if anyone would make a bid.

"Ladies and gentlemen, the price of these two porcelain pieces is definitely well over 1 million. If it weren't for the rumors being so... But I digress. Professor Xue is an expert in the appraisal of Cizhou porcelain from Hebei Province. His appraisal certificate is infallible..."

Seeing that no one was bidding, Li Dali started shouting on stage again, but his eyes kept glancing at the Japanese. He wasn't sure what these island nations were thinking.

Domestic collectors were all watching and waiting, and the Japanese collectors didn't seem to be bidding either, making the atmosphere in the room somewhat strange.

No one could have imagined that the Cizhou official porcelain, which had been the subject of much speculation before the auction, would actually face the predicament of failing to sell at auction.

"Mr. Yehe, these Chinese people don't think much of this porcelain piece, so I've already put down a bid?"

Yamaki was still young, and after five minutes of silence, he started to lose his composure.

Yehe was a cunning old fox. After glancing around, he lowered his voice and said, "No, it's better if it doesn't sell. That way you can buy it at a lower price..."

Auctions inevitably involve items failing to sell. In antique-focused auctions, unsold items generally fall into two categories: one is where a shill inflates the price to an exorbitant level. These unsold antiques are very difficult to resell after the auction, because if the auction house were to abruptly lower the price, it would be tantamount to slapping itself in the face.

Another phenomenon stems from the antiques themselves. For example, these two pieces of porcelain are difficult to distinguish between genuine and fake, and there is a great risk in bidding for them. After such antiques fail to sell at auction, the organizers often lower the price and sell them off after the event. Yehe saw that no one was bidding, and that was exactly what they were thinking.

"Damn it, they were all so indignant just now, but now not a single one of them is bidding..."

Zhuang Rui was speechless at the performance of the people on the field. Even if these two porcelain pieces were fakes, they still cost more than 10 million RMB to make, and their value was many times higher than the fakes that had just been auctioned off.

"One million, I'll put up one million..."

Zhuang Rui didn't want to steal the spotlight, but if he didn't say anything, Li Dali would probably feel even more awkward standing on the stage.

"Hey, Teacher Zhuang has made a move. Maybe this porcelain is genuine..."

"Yes, I heard that Teacher Zhuang has never been wrong since his debut..."

"Then what are we waiting for? 1.1 million, I'll offer 1.1 million RMB..."

As soon as Zhuang Rui called out his bid, murmurs arose in the room, and others quickly followed suit, making the atmosphere slightly more lively.

"1.5 million, everyone. My museum has quite a few porcelain pieces from the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties, but very few from the Song dynasty. Please raise your hands so I can bid on them..."

Zhuang Rui added 400,000 yuan at once, then cupped his hands in a gesture of respect to the four directions. Several people who had originally wanted to take advantage of the situation lowered their hands.

Zhuang Rui had no choice but to accept this. If the Japanese didn't intervene, he would have to bid back the two porcelain pieces. Otherwise, he would be the one who got into trouble, and if word got out, he, Zhuang Rui, would be unable to continue working in the antique world.

"2 million RMB..."

A voice drew everyone's attention to the source of the call. The person bidding was a middle-aged man in his forties. After announcing the price, he looked at Zhuang Rui apologetically and said, "Brother Zhuang, you know I'm into ceramics. Although I'm not sure about these two pieces, just based on the fact that they're Song Dynasty official kiln porcelain, I have to get my hands on them!"

"2.8 million!"

Zhuang Rui shook his head with a wry smile. The Japanese men still hadn't made a move, making him feel like he'd brought this upon himself. Had he gone through all this trouble only to find himself trapped?

"What a small world..."

Zhuang Rui recognized the person who spoke; it was this same Mr. Liu who had smashed the Tang tri-colored pottery he had brought out during the last folk treasure appraisal program in Jinan.

Coincidentally, the Tang tri-color pottery piece that Mr. Liu made last time and the two porcelain pieces in front of us were both made by the same person.

Zhuang Rui didn't know what kind of feeling he would have if Boss Liu actually bought these two items and accidentally broke them one day, and then saw the character "Xu" inside.

“Three million, Brother Zhuang, you're a big and wealthy man, you don't care about one or two things, do you? I think you should just give it to me. It's not right for the two of us to be fighting over a toilet...”

The reason why Boss Liu kept raising the price was mainly because after the Tang Sancai was smashed last time, he was completely convinced of Zhuang Rui's abilities and had an almost superstitious faith in Zhuang Rui's appraisal skills.

So when Mr. Liu saw Zhuang Rui call out a price, he immediately realized that these two pieces of porcelain might be very valuable, and that's why he started competing with Zhuang Rui without giving an inch.

If Zhuang Rui knew that Boss Liu had this idea, his expression would be priceless. He had smashed someone else's Tang Sancai pottery, and now he was getting his comeuppance.

"Five million. Regardless of whether the item is genuine or not, its craftsmanship and condition alone are worth that price!"

Zhuang Rui didn't want to get entangled with that Mr. Liu any longer, so he directly offered a high price.

After bidding, Zhuang Rui glanced at the people in the first row, but to his disappointment, they remained unmoved, seemingly not there for this reason.

Although the price of 5 million RMB is still somewhat lower than that of porcelain from the five famous kilns of the Song Dynasty, it is not low for this highly controversial piece of porcelain.

On the other hand, even if Zhuang Rui were to ask for a price of 100 million, the money wouldn't leave his pocket. After all, the goods belonged to him, and Li Dali wouldn't ask him for a commission.

Sure enough, after Zhuang Rui called out the price, Mr. Liu's expression became hesitant. Anyone would be apprehensive about spending so much money on something they couldn't be sure about.

"Teacher Zhuang has offered five million. Are there any other bidders? This chastity device may be unseemly, but it might have been used by some empress..."

Li Dali told jokes, but he felt bitter inside. He hadn't expected that the Japanese he had gone to great lengths to invite would have no interest in the two pieces of porcelain.

After Li Dali asked three times, no one in the audience responded. Firstly, the crowd was unsure whether the item was genuine or not, and speculating on it for five million was not worth the risk. Secondly, Zhuang Rui had spoken first, so they had to give him some face.

Seeing that the audience didn't react, Li Dali picked up the gavel and said, "Alright, if no one bids, then this Song Dynasty Cizhou porcelain piece belongs to Teacher Zhuang..."

"Wait!"

Just as Li Dali was about to strike with the hammer, Shanmu, who was sitting in the first row, stood up and said loudly, "I admire Chinese culture very much, and I also like this piece of porcelain very much. I'll offer 10 million!"

"What?! 10 million?!"

"Has this island nation gone mad?"

"Could this porcelain be a genuine Cizhou official kiln piece?"

"That's possible, otherwise why would an island nation offer such a high price?"

Yamaki's words caused a huge stir, making the entire venue boil over. This sudden turn of events excited everyone.

It is important to know that very few porcelain pieces from the five major official kilns of the Song Dynasty have survived to this day. Most of them are collected in national and foreign museums and are almost never circulated among the public. Therefore, they are extremely expensive, with even smaller pieces costing over ten million.

However, that refers to official kiln porcelain with a clear provenance. It is extremely rare for an unrecorded item to fetch tens of millions of dollars at auction.

So although everyone present was very dissatisfied with Yamaki's offer, no one dared to raise the price rashly. After all, no one's money comes easily. Those who had just vowed to protect the national treasure even lowered their heads.

Compared to the complex emotions of these people, Zhuang Rui secretly breathed a sigh of relief. It seemed that his scheme had not been in vain, and the island nation had indeed fallen into the trap.

Similarly, Li Dali, standing on the stage, felt the same way. It wasn't that the Japanese didn't want the two pieces of porcelain; rather, they were playing a psychological game. They didn't bid at first, but then suddenly doubled the price, hoping to snatch them up in one fell swoop.

Mr. Li was very satisfied with the price, but he didn't know that Zhuang Rui had already spent tens of millions of yuan just to make these two pieces of porcelain.

"12 million! This belongs to the Chinese people, it should stay in China..."

Just when Li Dali thought Zhuang Rui wouldn't bid again, Zhuang Rui's voice rang out throughout the room.

Not only was Li Dali dumbfounded, but even Miao Feifei, who was sitting in the back, opened her mouth wide and exclaimed in surprise, "Ah!" She knew that the porcelain originally belonged to Zhuang Rui.

"Teacher Zhuang, well done..."

"Brother Zhuang, you're a real man!"

"Professor Zhuang is right, things from China should stay in China!"

Immediately, those who offered hindsight advice began praising Zhuang Rui, almost to the point of singing "The Big Sword is Cutting Down the Japanese Devils," and the atmosphere in the entire venue became enthusiastic.

"Damn it, I spent over ten million on this, I should at least make a profit, right? Otherwise, wouldn't it be a waste of money for the Japanese?" No one knew that this was what Zhuang Rui was thinking at the moment.

Chapter 868 An Exorbitant Price (Part 1)

Yamaki immediately doubled the price, which only showed that he was determined to get this porcelain piece. What did Zhuang Rui have to be afraid of? He directly shouted out a price of twelve million.

The crowd below was in a frenzy, as if Zhuang Rui had knocked out his opponent in a boxing match between China and Japan. Everyone was incredibly excited, disregarding their status, and they all shouted at the top of their lungs.

"Everyone, please be quiet, please be quiet..."

Li Dali already regretted his role as a guest host today. He was unprofessional; he shouted several times but still couldn't control the situation.

"15 million, I'll offer 15 million!"

Mr. Li's shouts were useless, but Shanmu's soft voice drowned out all the noise in the room. After he announced the new price, the whole place fell silent.

Around 2006, the price of ancient Chinese official porcelain did indeed see a significant increase, driven by foreign speculators. The most expensive piece of Yuan blue and white porcelain depicting a figure was speculated to reach a sky-high price of nearly 300 million RMB (this is a fictional story, so don't compare it to reality; in the book, Zhuang Rui had already acquired the Yuan blue and white porcelain).

Riding this wave, the prices of other porcelain pieces have also soared. If these two pieces are indeed Cizhou official kiln porcelain, then both the porcelain itself and the cultural connotations behind it are definitely worth more than 15 million yuan.

But the most crucial point is that no one can give an accurate assessment of this porcelain. As for the appraisal report issued by the ceramic expert from Hebei Province, it is simply not up to the public's standards. Outside of Hebei Province, who would know who that expert Xue is?

Therefore, the price that Shanmu quoted is already very high. You should know that last month, a Yuan blue and white porcelain fish-patterned jar was auctioned at a Beijing auction house for 23.8 million yuan.

"Mr. Yamaki, you're not talking about Japanese yen, are you? Our transactions are in RMB..."

A voice broke the silence, a collector "kindly" reminding Shanmu of something.

"Excuse me, I meant your country's currency, not the Japanese yen..."

Yamaki bowed politely to the person, causing the person to sit back down reluctantly.

Now everyone's eyes were focused on Zhuang Rui. Although no one spoke, they all hoped that Zhuang Rui would continue bidding and prevent the Japanese from taking the porcelain back to Japan.

Zhuang Rui now noticed something amiss. This Japanese man seemed to care a lot about the porcelain piece, and he was frequently whispering to the person next to him, as if they were discussing something.

"25 million RMB, I can't just watch a national treasure be lost..."

After a moment of silence, Zhuang Rui finally shouted out an exorbitant price, startling many people who involuntarily stood up and turned to look at him.

Even if it's genuine porcelain from the five famous kilns of the Song Dynasty, only the finest pieces can fetch this price. If Zhuang Rui spends so much money on this item and it turns out to be fake, then he'll have suffered a huge loss.

"Brother, wow, this price..."

Jin Pangzi was also shocked by Zhuang Rui's extravagant spending. Even if this was just a black market auction, more than 20 million RMB would still be a considerable sum in a regular international auction house.

"Brother Jin, my museum is currently lacking Song Dynasty porcelain, so adding Cizhou official kiln porcelain as a selling point would be a good thing..."

Zhuang Rui spoke loudly, and even Shanmu, who was sitting in the front row, could hear him clearly. This made him frown. Before making a move, he never expected that the price would be raised to 25 million.

Upon hearing Zhuang Rui's words, the people in the room finally remembered that Zhuang Rui was not only an expert in antique appraisal, but also had a powerful business empire. His private museum alone was worth billions.

After overhearing the people around him discussing Zhuang Rui's wealth, Shanmu began to hesitate. After all, he wasn't entirely certain that the two porcelain pieces were genuine Cizhou official kiln pieces, so he was starting to have second thoughts.

Nogai seemed to sense Yamaki's doubts and immediately whispered, "Yamaki-kun, please!" Nogai was practically standing up and bowing to Yamaki.

Although Nogai doesn't have much personal wealth, he holds a pivotal position in the Japanese ceramics industry. If we could gain his support and promote the newly acquired Cizhou official kiln porcelain, the benefits to Yamaki Co., Ltd. would be self-evident.

After weighing his options in his mind for a while, Yamaki stood up and said loudly, "I'll offer 40 million RMB!"

Because Zhuang Rui had just increased the bid by 10 million, Shan Mu immediately increased it by 15 million, hoping to psychologically overwhelm Zhuang Rui.

The venue fell silent once again. Apart from the panting of a few people who were excited, most people held their breath. They had never expected that a small black market for antiques would allow them to witness such a thrilling auction process.

After Shanmu called out the latest price, Zhuang Rui looked hesitant, as if he wanted to bid again but couldn't make up his mind. Anyone could see that Teacher Zhuang was in a dilemma.

"Brother, forget it. If it can't be confirmed as Cizhou official kiln porcelain, buying it would be a complete loss..."

When Fatty Jin saw Zhuang Rui trying to get up again, he quickly pulled him back. Even if this porcelain was indeed the first official kiln piece from Cizhou Kiln, whether it was worth 40 million RMB was still another matter.

"this....."

Jin Pangzi's pull seemed to offer Zhuang Rui a way out, but Zhuang Rui still stood up and said, "This urinal is basically a toilet. Since our Japanese friends like it, as a nation of etiquette, we have no reason to steal it. Mr. Yamaki, this porcelain is yours..."

Zhuang Rui's words were rather far-fetched, somewhat like sour grapes, but no one blamed him. After all, he was the only one bidding against the Japanese, and he had driven the price up to a staggering 40 million, which was enough to earn respect.

"Damn it, you get all the good stuff, and I'm left with nothing but bad reputation..."

After hearing Zhuang Rui's words, Mr. Li felt extremely aggrieved. The 40 million yuan didn't belong to him, and he was being misunderstood for no reason. After weighing the situation in his mind for a long time, he realized that this business deal was a huge loss!

Despite his displeasure, the auction had to continue. Li Dali slammed the gavel on the table and said, "This porcelain piece, suspected to be from the Cizhou official kiln of the Song Dynasty, belongs to Mr. Shanmu. Congratulations, Mr. Shanmu! I hope that you can provide more detailed evidence to prove the value of this porcelain piece in the near future!"

"Thanks!"

Yamaki bowed politely to Li Dali. For the Japanese, what they value is the age and background of these things, and they don't care much about what the objects themselves are.

If you don't believe me, you can ask around. Just grab any Japanese person and ask them if they'd be willing to use the Emperor's chamber pot as a tea utensil. I guarantee they'll all nod in agreement.

"Mr. Yamaki, please examine this porcelain piece again before we transfer the payment and proceed with the auction for the next piece..."

If this were a legitimate auction house, the transaction would definitely take place after the auction. However, the rules of the black market are naturally set by the owner.

Yamaki also wanted to get the porcelain as soon as possible, so he didn't raise any objections. After examining the porcelain with Yehe, he transferred the money to Li Dali on the spot.

Holding the porcelain piece in a styrofoam box, Yamaki's face lit up with barely suppressed excitement.

Yamaki Corporation's total assets reached as much as 500 million US dollars. With their family's wealth, 40 million RMB was nothing. Moreover, the sensation caused after returning to Japan would be enough to make up for the money.

"Mr. Yamaki, I hope that both of these porcelain pieces can appear in Japan..."

Noga was also very happy. He was planning to make a name for himself. Once the two pieces of porcelain arrived in Japan, he would immediately announce that in a certain place in Japan, they had discovered that Japan had already produced porcelain that was more exquisite than that of China in the year 1000 AD.

Anyway, this auction wasn't conducted publicly, so even if these Chinese people came out and made a fuss, it was all without any evidence. Yehe knew that recording black market auctions was strictly prohibited.

"President of the Wild Union Association, don't worry!"

Yamaki nodded heavily, ignoring the hostile stares around him. He was well aware of the grievances between the two countries, so he did not expect to receive any respect or courtesy here.

"Hmph, foolish people, you'll know what you'll lose then!"

Looking at the Chinese collectors behind him, Yehe felt an indescribable sense of satisfaction.

As a nation without its own history and culture, Yehe's strong sense of national pride had been greatly damaged, which is why he disregarded the conscience of a scholar and pushed this event forward at all costs.

"The next piece to be auctioned, a white-glazed vase with black floral fish and phoenix design and four handles, is a typical example of Cizhou ware craftsmanship. However, the workmanship of this vase is more meticulous and exquisite, and it also conforms to the characteristics of official kiln products..."

In terms of artistic value and size, this four-handled vase far surpasses the previous ritual vessel, so its starting price is 2 million RMB. Interested parties are welcome to place bids...

Li Dali was a very cautious person, and he insisted on the word "transfer" from beginning to end. The transaction price of the last piece of porcelain made even this black market boss, who had seen many big scenes, feel a little scared.

The fact that a fake porcelain piece could fetch 40 million at auction made Mr. Li begin to doubt whether his decision to switch to legitimate business was the right one.

"20 million RMB, I'll take this porcelain!"

As soon as Li Dali finished speaking, Zhuang Rui stood up, adopting a confident posture. In any case, he had already made back the cost of the two porcelain pieces, so he might as well go all out and play along with the island nation.

Chapter 869 Exorbitant Price (Part Two)

In terms of both artistic and aesthetic value, this white-ground, black-decorated, four-handled vase with fish and phoenix design far surpasses that imperial vessel.

Before Zhuang Rui made his bid, many skilled domestic players were excited and eager to try their luck.

However, when Zhuang Rui announced the price of 20 million RMB, the room fell silent.

Several bosses who had originally planned to bid three to five million immediately backed down, their faces burning with embarrassment. Luckily, they hadn't made a bid first, or they would have been too ashamed to admit it.

"Professor Zhuang has bid 20 million RMB. Is anyone else interested? This is the last piece of Cizhou official kiln porcelain to be auctioned today. Don't miss out, or you'll never have another chance..."

The previous porcelain auction had also spurred Mr. Li on. After Zhuang Rui made his bid, he started shouting enthusiastically. However, his auction hosting skills were really not very professional. His words sounded like those of a vegetable vendor at a market.

“Mr. Li, I’ll add 10 million, 30 million RMB...”

After a brief two-minute silence, Yamaki stood up again and called out a price.

Yamaki really enjoyed the feeling when he won the first piece of porcelain. He felt that all the eyes in the room were filled with envy, jealousy and hatred as if the auction was held just for him. This feeling of controlling the auction process was wonderful.

"Mr. Yamaki has made a bid of 30 million RMB. Is there anyone else who would like to bid?"

Li Dali also had a feeling that in the final auction before the end of his more than 10-year career in the black market, he was about to fetch an unprecedented astronomical price. This made Boss Li's blood boil, and he seemed to have found a sense of riding on a brothel woman.

"Brother, don't be fooled. These two items are unverified. It's no big deal if the people in the video buy them..."

Seeing Zhuang Rui about to bid again, Fatty Jin quickly tried to dissuade him. Having spent decades in the antique business, he had seen far too many things to pass up. While these two porcelain pieces were flawless, something about this auction felt rather strange to him.

Although Fatty Jin couldn't pinpoint any flaws, his nose detected a hint of conspiracy, which is why he stopped Zhuang Rui from bidding further.

Jin Pangzi's pull caused the room to fall silent again. Everyone had been hoping that Zhuang Rui and Xiao Ni would bid, but unexpectedly Zhuang Rui remained silent.

Yamaki wore a victorious smile. It seemed that the bid for the first piece of porcelain had frightened these Chinese people, and no one dared to compete with him anymore.

Forty million!

But before the smile on Yamaki's face could fade, it froze on his face as the bid of forty million interrupted his daydreaming.

"Did Teacher Zhuang give another offer?"

"What kind of look is that? That's President Lu, President Lu of Dongshan Group..."

"Hey, as expected, it's the largest private company in Shandong Province, they're really rolling in money..."

"What do you know? Spending forty million not only brings practical benefits but also makes you a god-like figure. You get both substance and prestige. If I had the money, I'd do the same..."

The atmosphere in the room became heated with the bid, and Mr. Lu stood up and repeatedly bowed to the people around him to express his gratitude, making it seem like a celebrity press conference.

In fact, some of the things people predicted about President Lu's actions were true; his asking price of 40 million was somewhat of a show.

Although this black market auction is shady, the people present are all well-known business owners in the country. Making a deep impression on them would be entirely beneficial to the development of your own business.

Just like the Prince Life Insurance Group, founded in the 1980s in China, which was originally unknown, it suddenly spent hundreds of millions of yuan at an international auction in Hong Kong to acquire several precious national treasures.

After this incident, with the help of the media, the name of Prince Libao Group spread almost overnight, becoming a household name in China. The effect was far greater than spending hundreds of millions of yuan to fight GG.

Of course, the nature of the black market for antiques is different from that of auctions in Hong Kong, but the word-of-mouth spread by these people after they leave can also make Mr. Lu famous in the domestic business circle.

"Fifty million!" Yamaki stood up and shouted expressionlessly.

When the price of fifty million was announced, a collective gasp filled the room, and all eyes turned back to Shanmu. Even Zhuang Rui was taken aback.

Although the price of Chinese porcelain has soared in the international auction market in recent years, a price of 50 million RMB is enough to rank among the top five in the history of porcelain transactions in the last decade. Moreover, this happened in a black market transaction, which makes it even more rare.

It's important to understand that many antiques that fetch astronomical prices are actually staged, so large transactions usually occur in formal auctions. Black market auctions, where three to five million are considered big deals, have completely overturned everyone's expectations.

This price dampened Mr. Lu's spirits. Although he could have spent even more money, he ultimately lacked confidence. The price of 40 million was already the limit he could psychologically bear.

The many collectors in the room looked at each other in bewilderment; they already sensed that this piece of porcelain was about to be auctioned off to a foreigner.

Some people even started to wonder if they should call the authorities the moment they left the auction house. They couldn't just watch the Japanese take the stuff back to the mainland, could they?

Sixty million!

Just when everyone thought the white vase with black floral fish and phoenix design would fetch 50 million RMB, Zhuang Rui's voice rang out again.

"Brother, are you crazy? This isn't Yuan blue and white porcelain. Even the most famous porcelain from the five great official kilns isn't worth this price..."

Fatty Jin looked at Zhuang Rui with disappointment. In his opinion, Zhuang Rui's bid was purely out of spite, as he didn't want the young lady to buy the porcelain.

"Teacher Zhuang is kind and righteous..."

"As expected of a major collector, he has such confidence; he can talk about 60 million without batting an eye..."

"Of course! I heard that the pirate treasure that Teacher Zhuang obtained last time was worth billions of US dollars. What is 60 million RMB?"

Those who came to participate in the black market auction today felt like they were on a roller coaster, going up and down. People with weak hearts really couldn't handle the excitement.

However, everyone felt that today's trip was worthwhile, and they were truly amazed. The price of this one piece of porcelain alone is now almost higher than the total transaction price of many auctions.

"My ancestors, it's time to stop while you're ahead..."

Amidst the praise from those in the room, Li Dali felt as bitter as if he had swallowed a bitter pill. The initial bid of 50 million RMB was already testing his heart's endurance, but unexpectedly Zhuang Rui added fuel to the fire, raising the price directly to 60 million.

"Pretend, really pretend..."

Miao Feifei sat next to Zhuang Rui, glancing at him with disdain out of the corner of her eye. When Zhuang Rui bid on the first piece of porcelain, Officer Miao had already realized that Zhuang Rui's tactics were aimed at the bastards.

This could technically be considered fraud, but firstly, Officer Miao had no evidence, and secondly, the market has been promoting transparency for over a decade now. It was a case of mutual consent, so it had nothing to do with the police.

So Officer Miao remained indifferent and did not take any action. Perhaps in her heart, she felt that it would be a great pleasure to make the *** people suffer a loss?

"Teacher Zhuang is indeed exceptional. The current price is 60 million RMB. Are there any higher bids?"

With the arrow already on the bowstring, there was no turning back. As Li Dali spoke, he glanced at Shanmu, silently praying, "Raise it up, raise the price..."

Perhaps his prayers had worked, for as soon as Mr. Li finished speaking, Shanmu stood up and said, "I'll offer 80 million. As an ancient artifact with a long history and rich cultural significance, I think it's worth that price..."

Eighty million RMB was only about ten million USD in 2006, which was nothing for Yamaki Corporation, whose total assets exceeded five hundred million USD.

"I'll offer 90 million RMB. I agree with Mr. Yamaki's opinion, but I think it's better if this item stays in China..."

Before the audience could recover from their shock, Zhuang Rui immediately threw out another price of 90 million. This was like a depth charge, making everyone's heads ring and some couldn't believe their ears.

After Zhuang Rui's words, Shan Mu felt his dignity had been challenged. He stood up, looked at Zhuang Rui, and said, "Sir, art knows no borders. Good works should be appreciated by those who understand them. I offer one hundred million RMB!"

The scene of the two confronting each other has made many people lose their ability to think. Tens of millions or hundreds of millions of dollars are treated like tens or hundreds of dollars in their mouths. They just casually throw them away.

If it were an investment in a project, many entrepreneurs in the market would understand and dare to make a move. However, what they were scrambling to acquire was an antique whose authenticity was unknown and whose potential for appreciation was uncertain. This made everyone hesitant and fearful.

Even the most decisive and ruthless business owners wouldn't dare to get involved in the game that Zhuang Rui and Mu Shan were playing.

"Hehe, it seems Mr. Yamaki is determined to get this porcelain piece. I wonder if Teacher Zhuang is willing to part with it?"

Li Dali's voice drew everyone's attention to Zhuang Rui. If anyone had focused on Boss Li, they would have seen that Li Dali's face was now contorted in a smile that looked more like a grimace.

Chapter 870 Exorbitant Price (Part 3)

Li Dali knew that no matter the outcome, he was now famous, very famous. He estimated that his name would be known throughout the country's antique and related circles.

As the saying goes, "People are afraid of becoming famous, just as pigs are afraid of getting fat." The first bird to stick its head out gets shot. Even though he kept a low profile before, the police still caused him a lot of trouble. Now that this has happened, even if Li Dali doesn't want to go back to the right path, he probably won't have a place in the black market anymore.

Firstly, the commotion caused by this incident was too great, and the police would definitely keep a close eye on him. Secondly, those tomb raiders would definitely not dare to trade with him anymore. Now, Li Dali is like a powder keg; whoever gets close to him is doomed.

Li Dali didn't know whether to be happy or angry. He no longer felt the joy of creating a record-breaking price on the black market auction. All he wanted was to sell this damned porcelain piece, no matter who it was. He just wanted to end this damned auction as soon as possible.

Seeing that Zhuang Rui didn't reply, Li Dali wanted to cut to the chase quickly. This time, he only waited for a little over a minute before shouting, "Since no one else is bidding, I hereby declare this white-ground, black-flowered, fish and phoenix-patterned four-handled vase to be returned to the mountain wood..."

"Wait, one hundred and twenty million, I'll offer one hundred and twenty million!"

Zhuang Rui's voice wasn't loud, but the sensation it caused far exceeded the sound of Li Dali shouting into the microphone. When the number 120 million was displayed, the entire venue fell silent.

After Zhuang Rui finished speaking, a slight look of tension appeared on his face. He then looked at Shan Mu. In other people's eyes, Zhuang Rui's asking price was already a bit like forcing a duck onto a shelf.

In truth, Zhuang Rui didn't know if Shanmu would continue to bid higher, but he was confident that since the item was his, he wouldn't be afraid even if it cost a billion RMB.

On another note, the fact that both porcelain pieces were sold to *** people did hurt the pride of those in the room. So, Zhuang Rui took a gamble and bid 120 million. If Shanmu didn't bid, he'd keep the four-element bottle for himself.

Of course, if Shanmu raises the price again, even if it's just one yuan more, Zhuang Rui won't raise it any further. He's not stupid; he made more than ten times the cost of over ten million yuan for nothing. In Sichuan dialect, this business is really good.

...

"Chairman Yamaki, do you think that person was arranged by the Chinese?"

After Zhuang Rui called out a price of 120 million, several people began to whisper among themselves. The person who had spoken earlier was a long-time employee of Yamaki Corporation, who had worked for the company for decades.

"No, I know that person. He's a very famous jade appraisal expert in China, with considerable expertise. He wouldn't be a skill for someone..."

Yamaki is now a little conflicted. Judging from the Chinese man's posture, it seems like he's determined to fight him to the death. If that's the case, acquiring this porcelain piece will be extremely difficult.

However, Shanmu never considered that Zhuang Rui was a shill. Although it is normal for auction houses to have shills, no shill would be so bold as to bid such an exorbitant price for a piece of porcelain.

At this moment, Yehe also came over. Since he didn't have to pay for it, and it was easy for him to talk when he was standing there, he said, "Yamaki-kun, I think we should overwhelm them with our momentum!"

"Yes, please rest assured, I will definitely bring both pieces of porcelain back with me!"

Wild sex strengthened Yamaki's resolve. It's just a little over 100 million RMB, right? That's about the price of a top-of-the-line yacht.

Yamaki had no experience in starting a business. As the saying goes, "a son sells his father's land without feeling the pain." If it were the cunning and shrewd Yamaki Ichiro, he certainly wouldn't have followed suit so rashly.

After discussing it with his colleagues, Yamaki stood up and said to Li Dali on the stage, "Mr. Li, I offer 150 million RMB. The value of this artwork cannot be measured in money..."

"My God, 150 million?!"

"Damn it, this little bastard has gone mad..."

"Oh no, I'm afraid Teacher Zhuang won't bid anymore. This... this is too outrageous..."

When Shanmu announced his offer, the entire room erupted in uproar, with everyone rising from their chairs. As they shared their comments, all eyes were fixed on Zhuang Rui, who sat in the last row.

"Boss Zhuang, my goodness, you should know when to stop..."

Li Dali stood on the stage, wiping away sweat. Originally, according to his plan, he would be lucky if this scheme could swindle tens of millions from the people. He never expected that things would go out of his control and that the decision-making power would be in the hands of the chief director, Zhuang Rui.

However, this matter put a lot of pressure on Mr. Li. He was afraid that as soon as he walked out of the door after the auction, he would be invited for tea by the relevant departments. After all, if an item was auctioned for hundreds of millions of yuan, even if it was fake, it would become real.

Hearing the whispers of the crowd around him, Zhuang Rui's expression turned grim. He seemed to be contemplating how to speak. Seeing Zhuang Rui's demeanor, the collectors from all over the country immediately felt a chill in their hearts.

Zhuang Rui slowly stood up from his chair, and the originally noisy venue immediately quieted down, with dozens of eyes focusing on him.

"Ladies and gentlemen, it is rare for our guest to have such a fondness for Chinese antiques. I think we should congratulate Mr. Yamaki on acquiring this four-handled vase!"

Zhuang Rui spoke very slowly, and anyone could tell that he was in a bad mood. Perhaps only Miao Feifei and Li Dali could see from the smirk in Zhuang Rui's eyes that he was secretly overjoyed.

Indeed, Zhuang Rui was overjoyed. Although he didn't lack the money, he wanted to know where it came from. He considered it a small compensation from the Japanese for their crimes back then.

"Mr. Zhuang, thank you. You are a true artist!"

Upon hearing Zhuang Rui's words, Shanmu stood up from his seat, quickly walked to Zhuang Rui, and bowed deeply.

Zhuang Rui himself didn't react much, but Officer Miao and Li Dali almost burst out laughing. The legendary story of selling someone out and then helping them count the money had come to life in real life.

"Alright, if no other friends bid, this white vase with black floral fish and phoenix design will belong to Mr. Yamaki..."

Li Dali's words made everyone in the room feel somewhat disappointed. This was China, on their home turf, and dozens of people had been utterly defeated by a few foreigners. This made them feel extremely ashamed.

So after Li Dali finished speaking, many people began to leave. However, the 150 million yuan incident quickly spread throughout the domestic antique and archaeological circles after these people left.

Even Professor Meng called Zhuang Rui to inquire about the reason for this matter. Zhuang Rui could not say it outright, but he vaguely indicated that there was a very high possibility that the two pieces of porcelain were fakes, which made the old professor feel a little better.

However, no one knew that this auction was just the beginning, and that the Cizhou official kiln incident would cause an even bigger upheaval in the future.

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After the transaction, Yamaki and his entourage hurriedly left the area under the protection of their bodyguards. According to their plan, the two porcelain pieces would be returned to China along with a counselor from the Chinese Consulate General in China who was returning to the country recently.

Zhuang Rui, Peng Fei, and the others followed the crowd out of the auction house. Zhuang Rui found a gap, slipped away from Fatty Jin, and whispered to Officer Miao, "Officer Miao, this is just an exchange of folk handicrafts. Our friends are willing to spend so much money to buy them back, so it's their business, isn't it?"

Regarding this income, I will urge the auction house owner to pay taxes according to regulations. I hope you won't hold this against me...

Although the weather outside was still hot, Zhuang Rui felt exceptionally cool and comfortable inside.

"Zhuang Rui, as your friend, I have a piece of advice for you: don't let this happen again. You'd better watch yourself..."

Miao Feifei glanced at Zhuang Rui with mixed feelings. She had known him for several years, but she had never realized that Zhuang Rui was actually a radical young man at heart.

However, Miao Feifei has neither the intention nor the means to pursue this matter further.

Just as Zhuang Rui said, those things are all fake, and there is no way to hold the person responsible. Even if you ask Shanmu now, Shanmu will insist that he bought modern handicrafts!

After saying goodbye to Miao Feifei at the horse farm, Zhuang Rui first took Jin Pangzi home. The guy was still excited in the car, clearly the auction had a great impact on him.

"Brother Zhuang, you're amazing! You managed to squeeze nearly 200 million from the Japanese without making a sound..."

After dropping Jin Pangzi off at home, Zhuang Rui didn't return to the courtyard house. Instead, he and Peng Fei went into a quiet teahouse and asked for a private room.

"Hehe, if it's really as they say, taking it back to admire, then there's no problem. But if they want to cause some trouble, hehe..."

Zhuang Rui smiled maliciously. He had asked Xu Guoqing, and both pieces of porcelain had the character "Xu" on their inner walls, which had become Xu Guoqing's signature.

Furthermore, Master Xu did something that left Zhuang Rui speechless: he engraved the date the porcelain blank was completed on the inner wall. Even without breaking the porcelain, it could be clearly seen with the help of relevant instruments.

"Oh, Mr. Zhuang, you really scared me to death today..."

While Zhuang Rui and Peng Fei were chatting over tea, the door to the private room was pushed open. Boss Li peeked out first, and after making sure that only Zhuang Rui and Peng Fei were in the room, he walked in.

Li Dali was afraid that there were police hiding in the room and that such a big incident would occur, so he was already preparing to go abroad to lay low.

"Mr. Li, this is a matter of mutual consent, what's there to be afraid of..."

Zhuang Rui poured Li Dali a cup of tea. The fact that this matter turned out this way was all thanks to this Boss Li.