

## I. Dynasty 249

### Chapter 249: The Fiery Auction

“Heehee!”

Xiaohuan covered her mouth and giggled, while Fei Yue’er’s face turned a soft shade of pink.

“What’s wrong? Don’t like it?” Fei Ji sighed with mock seriousness. “If that’s the case, I’ll just keep the mirror for myself.”

“Father! You’re not a young lady,” Fei Yue’er protested, her cheeks flushed.

In Great Yu, before marriage, men and women rarely had direct contact. Yet Prince Qi had sent her this mirror as a gift—it was certainly out of the ordinary.

She’d only caught a quick glimpse of Xiao Ming at the poetry gathering that day, not daring to look for long. But even in that moment, she’d gotten a clear impression of his appearance.

What had left a deeper impression was how naturally poems flowed from his lips.

And now, after hearing so many rumors about the mirror’s wonders spreading through Chang’an, she received one from him personally. Her heart couldn’t help but skip a beat—after all, this mirror was said to be incredibly valuable.

“Hahaha...” Seeing his daughter’s shy reaction, Fei Ji laughed loudly and said, “Since you’ve got the mirror now, I won’t disturb you any longer.”

With that, he left with the steward.

Once they were gone, Xiaohuan peeked out the door and, seeing they were truly alone, quickly turned back and yanked off the black cloth covering the mirror.

Instantly, a reflection appeared in the glass—Fei Yue’er in a peach-colored dress, delicate and radiant, more beautiful than a flower.

“Miss! Look! It’s me! This mirror is so clear!” Xiaohuan exclaimed, her little face glowing with excitement.

Fei Yue’er was just as amazed. She stepped up to the mirror and carefully studied her reflection. Every smile, every frown, every little movement—it all appeared vividly, as if another her was standing inside the glass.

“This mirror is truly different. No wonder it’s become such a sensation in Chang’an,” she said with admiration.

“The mirror may be small, but His Highness’s affection for you is big,” Xiaohuan said with a sly smile.

Fei Yue’er blushed and snapped, “You cheeky girl! I ought to rip that mouth of yours!”

The two of them burst into playful laughter.

News of Prince Qi gifting a mirror to Fei Yue'er quickly spread among the noble circles in Chang'an.

The mirror in the palace had become the talk of the city, and few outside the palace had even seen one. Now that someone had one in the private sector, the noble ladies couldn't hold back any longer and came in groups to visit Fei Yue'er.

Once they saw the mirror with their own eyes, they were completely stunned.

Its beauty and clarity made them all fall in love with it instantly—and one after another, they sent their servants racing toward Qingzhou.

Meanwhile, Qingzhou's mirror auction was officially underway.

That day, the Commerce Hall was heavily guarded by Qingzhou soldiers to ensure the event went smoothly and prevent any unauthorized people from sneaking in.

For three days before the auction, merchant registration was open—and only those who could prove they had at least 100,000 taels of silver were allowed to participate.

This threshold immediately discouraged those who just wanted to join the fun.

“Your Highness, we’ve got 3,000 registered participants,” Li Kaiyuan reported.

“Only 3,000? Just the nobles from Chang’an alone could fill that number. Looks like some still haven’t arrived. Never mind—let’s begin,” Xiao Ming said.

He’d already spent over a month preparing for this auction. He couldn’t wait any longer.

Li Kaiyuan nodded and stepped up to the stage, explaining the auction rules to the eager crowd.

Xiao Ming stayed behind the scenes—he didn’t want to show his face at this kind of event.

Pang Yukun, however, was more nervous than Xiao Ming. After all, how much silver entered the treasury today depended on how successful this auction was.

After going over the rules, the staff brought out the first batch of mirrors—30 in total—each placed carefully on display facing the crowd.

Most of the audience was seeing the glass mirrors for the first time. Many stood up to get a better look.

Li Kaiyuan allowed the staff to carry a mirror down among the crowd so everyone could see just how clear the reflection was.

Gasps of amazement echoed through the room.

Li Kaiyuan smiled in satisfaction and said, “You’ve all seen it now—these mirrors are made only in Qingzhou. No one else in the empire has them. You’ve experienced their clarity for yourselves, and I trust you understand their value.”

In Great Yu, even polished bronze mirrors were expensive. So everyone immediately understood—these glass mirrors were worth even more.

“Vice Chairman Li, just tell us the starting price,” one merchant said.

He’d attended previous auctions and knew every item started with a base price.

Li Kaiyuan announced, “Since everyone’s so eager, I’ll make it simple—the starting bid for each mirror is 3,000 taels of silver.”

“3,000 taels?!”

Many attendees exhaled in relief. It was expensive, yes—but still within reach.

Li Kaiyuan continued, “Now, let the bidding begin. Because of how difficult they are to make, only 500 mirrors are currently available in Qingzhou. After this auction, they’ll be sold through the Qingzhou Chamber of Commerce. You’re welcome to come purchase more later.”

“3,100 taels!”

“3,200 taels!”

The moment he finished speaking, the bidding war erupted.

Many of the bidders were house stewards, ordered by their mistresses to return with a mirror at all costs. If they came back empty-handed, they might not survive the scolding.

“4,000 taels!”

The bids climbed quickly. Behind the auction platform, Xiao Ming murmured, “That’s enough for two cannons.”

And Pang Yukun muttered, “Higher, higher...”

With 3,000 bidders vying for only 500 mirrors, that meant on average only one in six would win.

And since travel in Great Yu wasn't easy, most people came with the firm intention of buying a mirror no matter what.

So the bidding got more and more intense.

"6,500 taels!"

"7,000!"

"8,000!"

By the end of the first round, only a few wealthy merchants were still in the running. They weren't buying for personal use—they planned to gift them to powerful officials at court.

"10,000 taels!"

A voice called out, and the bidding stopped. No one else raised the price.

At that level, it was already insanely expensive. Many were hoping the next mirror might go for cheaper.

But the second mirror? It sold for 11,000 taels.

Behind the platform, Pang Yukun's face was flushed with excitement. "All that wealth these nobles have hoarded—finally, they're coughing it up."

Xiao Ming laughed and said, "Let's call it justice, then."

As the poet Li Bai once wrote: "A goblet of fine wine costs ten thousand coins, a jade plate of delicacies worth a fortune." That was how lavish life was for the powerful in the Tang dynasty. It was the same in Great Yu.

It wasn't unusual for nobles to spend thousands of taels on a single banquet, while common folks survived on scraps.

Years of exploitation by wealthy clans had drained the people dry. They seized land, extorted taxes, and crushed the commoners to enrich themselves.

So Xiao Ming had no guilt selling a mirror—worth maybe three taels of silver—for prices thirty times that.