

Solving Middle Age Crisis by Intelligence System

Chapter 6: Chapter 6: Paid Work

Leaving the factory area, Qi Yun called Li Zhuoyue.

"Old Li, can you make another 2300 of those boxes for me this morning? It's quite urgent."

The person on the other end responded, then quickly communicated with someone nearby before returning to say, "No problem, send me the address, and I'll have someone deliver them to you around eight o'clock tonight."

"Alright, thanks!"

With only two semi-automatic machines at his shop, agreeing to finish by tonight definitely means he's rushing the work for me.

Li Zhuoyue joked, "Just saying thanks is useless, aren't you going to treat me to hotpot?"

Qi Yun laughed heartily and responded cheerfully, "Of course!"

After hanging up, he called Wei Yong next.

As soon as the phone rang once, Wei Yong's slightly anxious voice came through: "Old Qi, how did it go? Did you close the deal?"

Qi Yun's lips curled up, feeling a bit excited too, as this business deal could bring him at least a month's worth of income.

"Yes, the other party needs 2200 boxes. You should get a few people to start washing the apples now, and the boxes I ordered will be delivered to your warehouse tonight."

"Really?! Old Qi, you've done your ol' brother a huge favor this time!" Wei Yong's voice was trembling with excitement.

Qi Yun timely reminded him: "Don't celebrate too soon. Make sure the quality is guaranteed, otherwise, if we can't fulfill the order, don't blame me."

"You can absolutely trust the quality!" Wei Yong assured confidently, patting his chest, "I won't hire outsiders; later I'll call my own family to help."

"That's fine, I won't be going to the stall tonight; I'll also come over later to help."

...

After organizing everything, Qi Yun got on his electric motorcycle and headed home, feeling ravenously hungry after a busy half-day.

At home, he cooked some noodles, paired with that fiery lady, and settled a simple lunch.

After eating, he went over to Little Yellow Hair's store.

He saw Old Wang with a slicked-back hairstyle, leaned back in a recliner, watching a female dance streamer with an intriguingly complex expression on his face.

The father-son pair's hobbies are quite similar.

The difference is, Old Wang doesn't spend a penny on those female streamers, benefiting for free.

As the year's end approached, many workers living in the urban village were returning home, so Old Wang's fruit and vegetable store wasn't getting much business, letting him stay at the shop these days.

Seeing Qi Yun coming in, Old Wang gave him a calm glance: "Not delivering food today?"

"Um, got some things to do today." Qi Yun replied, also settling last night's bill for the groceries.

"Can Wang Bin help me with some work this afternoon?"

"Sure, I'll keep an eye on the store." Old Wang didn't ask further, feeling assured about Qi Yun's integrity after a year of acquaintance.

Little Yellow Hair behind the counter perked up upon hearing this.

Ever since he realized his beloved female streamer's gender, he became disillusioned with the internet, no longer seeking love online, leaving him feeling quite empty inside.

"Where are we going, Brother Qi?" Little Yellow Hair put on his coat, eagerly stepping out.

Outside, Qi Yun mounted the electric motorcycle, turned to look at Little Yellow Hair sitting at the back and asked, "Did you bring money?"

"I have five thousand bucks, what, do you need payment to work with you?"

Qi Yun, cigarette in mouth, spread his hands: "Loan me a bit, I'll repay you tomorrow."

Without another word, Little Yellow Hair took out his wallet and handed a stack of reds to Qi Yun.

The electric motorcycle quickly vanished around the street corner.

Arriving again at Wei Yong's warehouse, Qi Yun now not only had the purchase contract in his pocket but also an invoice.

At the warehouse entrance, several large water tanks were set up; Wei Yong was pouring apples into them.

Besides him, there were three women.

Seeing Qi Yun arrive, Wei Yong quickly greeted him with a smile, yesterday's worries long gone.

He casually wiped his hands on his clothes, took out a cigarette from his pocket, offered one to Qi Yun, and helped light it.

"I've called my wife, daughter, and sister-in-law for help, definitely ensuring the apple quality."

Qi Yun nodded, got off and walked over to the water tanks.

He'd seen Wei Yong's wife and daughter before; during busy summers, he'd often help sell fruits in the evenings.

The other woman who looked about 28 or 29 should be his sister-in-law.

"Qi Yun's here, this time you've been a great help, we must thank you properly later." Wei Yong's wife greeted politely.

Qi Yun waved his hand, laughing, "Sis, we're friends, no need to be so formal."

The sister-in-law also looked over, her gaze showing a hint of something different.

Noticing her gaze, Qi Yun confidently met her eyes and smiled politely.

"Come on, Binzi, let's get to work." Qi Yun rolled up his sleeves and bent down to help.

After waiting for a while with no movement behind him, he turned bewildered, seeing Little Yellow Hair standing there dumbfounded, eyes a bit evasive.

Qi Yun hesitated, then followed his gaze, noticing Wei Yong's daughter unpacking boxes in the corner.

Understanding dawned.

"C'mon, Binzi, let's get to work!"

Little Yellow Hair snapped out of it and hurried over.

As Qi Yun washed apples, he stole glances at Little Yellow Hair, whose hands were clumsy and eyes frequently wandered towards Wei Yong's daughter.

He chuckled internally.

Both are close in age; Wei Yong's daughter has a sweet look, having just gotten into Shizi University this year.

Though Little Yellow Hair graduated from Lanxiang, he's fairly well-off, not lacking in means.

But for a girl freshly into college, she's not yet mature, often not prioritizing material wealth.

So, he figured Little Yellow Hair didn't have much of a chance, likely ending up in a similar plight as his last 'brotherhood' affair.

In subzero weather, tap water felt icily penetrating, even with rubber gloves, the chill couldn't be kept at bay.

Seeing Qi Yun take part in the work, Wei Yong advised, "Old Qi, you don't have to do this, go handle your business."

"Yeah, Qi Yun, you guys should rest, it's alright for us as family to manage, it's not right to have you do this." Wei Yong's wife echoed.

Qi Yun smiled, "No worries, I brought help; if you're really bothered, just prepare some hearty dishes for tonight."

On hearing this, Wei Yong grinned, "Alright then, I'll have your sister-in-law whip up a couple of hearty dishes; we've got a good bottle at home I've been saving, I'll bring it out to reward you today."

"..."

Swiftly they began working until around six o'clock, almost having washed all the apples. Then Wei Yong's wife took their daughter home to start dinner.

Qi Yun and the others tidied up the area, neatly placing the apples on boxes, then followed Wei Yong home for a meal.

Wei Yong also rented a place, not far away, in an old neighborhood right behind the warehouse.

Upon entering, the dining table was already laden with a feast.

Beer duck, braised fish, cured meat...

Ever since living alone, Qi Yun hadn't eaten such a bountiful meal in ages.

Chapter 7: Chapter 7: Money in Hand

Qi Yun threw himself into the meal, enjoying it to the fullest.

On the other hand, Little Blondie seemed absent-minded ever since he saw Wei Yong's daughter, as if his soul had been whisked away.

Wei Yong's sister-in-law didn't eat much either, and her gaze kept drifting intentionally or unintentionally toward Qi Yun.

Considering they still had to pack apples later, no one drank alcohol, and after the meal, they went back to the warehouse to wait.

On the way out, Wei Yong specifically looked for a black plastic bag and put the unopened bottle of Moutai inside.

On the way back to the warehouse, while Qi Yun wasn't paying attention, he quietly placed the bag in the basket of his electric scooter, covering it with a helmet.

Soon after they arrived at the warehouse, a box truck loaded with customized boxes arrived.

Qi Yun's customized gift box design was clever, with two clips—just put the apple inside and softly clip it shut.

Everyone worked together, busily until past four in the morning, and finally, more than two thousand boxes of apples were packed; there wasn't much left in the warehouse, roughly half a ton remaining.

"Then we'll head back first. Tomorrow I'll get a truck to load the goods, Old Wei, you come with me."

Qi Yun said goodbye to Wei Yong and his crew, hopped on his electric scooter, and rode back with Little Blondie.

On the road, Qi Yun, with a cigarette in his mouth, turned his head to Little Blondie, laughingly asking: "How about it?"

Little Blondie understood his meaning instantly, stammering out: "Not... not much, just added a WeChat."

Initially awkward, later in the night, he proactively approached the little girl for conversation.

Qi Yun couldn't help but sigh, indeed, youth is wonderful.

"I'll settle your wages tomorrow."

"Brother Qi, I don't want wages, could you take me out to play?"

Qi Yun turned his head to look at him: "Where do you want to go?"

Little Blondie blushed, somewhat shyly said: "I want... I want to go for a foot massage..."

"..."

Back at his place, Qi Yun parked the electric scooter in the courtyard, just about to charge it when he discovered the black plastic bag in the basket.

By the moonlight, he saw clearly what was inside, couldn't help but show a wry smile.

"Old Wei, this guy..."

After a quick wash, it was nearly five in the morning by the time he lay down on the bed.

Despite being physically exhausted, his mind was still very excited; with a thought, a blue screen appeared again.

[Today's Intelligence (White): An angler named Old Zhao by Qingshui River caught an extremely rare golden carp,

such carp is valuable in the ornamental fish market. Old Zhao doesn't understand the market, planning to sell it cheaply.]

White intelligence...

After these days of exploring, Qi Yun had roughly guessed.

White likely corresponds to those kinds of intelligence with limited value, but guaranteed to make money.

While red intelligence is somewhat special, whether one makes money, how much more or less, all depends on how you operate.

"Tomorrow morning, first deliver the goods, then go take a look by the river."

Having made up his mind, Qi Yun's spirit instantly relaxed, and within minutes, the room echoed with steady snores.

...

The next day.

Qi Yun contacted the driver of the truck that delivered the boxes last night, asking him to bring two more trucks to Wei Yong's warehouse to load the goods.

After about an hour, they loaded all the goods onto the trucks, then Qi Yun and Wei Yong each got on a truck headed to Nanhua Textile Factory.

On the road, Qi Yun messaged Manager Sun, informing him they were delivering the goods.

Upon reaching the factory gate, he waved to the security guard, who opened the gate, directing the trucks to a warehouse.

Qi Yun jumped off the truck, walked over to Manager Sun, who was already waiting: "Manager Sun, the goods have been delivered, please inspect them."

Manager Sun replied with a smile: "Mr. Qi, thank you for your hard work."

As they talked, the two walked side by side to the truck, where the textile factory workers had started unloading the goods orderly.

Manager Sun randomly picked a few gift boxes, checked them, then nodded satisfactorily: "Mr. Qi, the quality of the items is very good, I can tell you put a lot of effort."

"Haha, it's what we should do, as long as you're satisfied."

Soon, workers finished unloading all the apples from the three trucks.

A worker approached to report to Manager Sun: "Manager, a total of 2250 pieces."

Upon hearing the number, Manager Sun looked at Qi Yun puzzled: "Weren't we supposed to have 2200 pieces?"

Qi Yun smiled and explained: "The extra 50 pieces are a gift to the factory."

Manager Sun was slightly taken aback, then chuckled, adjusted his glasses, saying: "Since it's Mr. Qi's goodwill, I'll accept it on behalf of the staff."

"Come to my office, I'll ask the finance department to transfer the payment right away," he said, gesturing invitingly.

"Alright," Qi Yun responded, then signaled Wei Yong to come along.

Wei Yong shook his head slightly, saying hesitantly: "Old Qi, I'll skip that, I'll wait outside."

Qi Yun nodded, didn't insist, and followed Manager Sun to the office.

The two had tea, within half an hour, Qi Yun's phone received a transfer notification.

He glanced at it, then got up to bid farewell: "Manager Sun, I won't disturb you any longer, let's chat next time."

Manager Sun also stood, shaking hands with Qi Yun: "Alright, keep in touch, hoping for more collaborative opportunities."

Walking out of the office, Qi Yun saw Wei Yong standing by the truck, smoking.

Seeing Qi Yun coming out, Wei Yong quickly stubbed out the cigarette, hastening over: "Old Qi, it's done?"

"Yeah, let's talk back at home."

The two rode the same truck back, while the other two trucks had already left after delivering the goods.

Once off the truck, Qi Yun paid the driver 1200 yuan for the transport, 400 yuan per truck, and also gave him a pack of cigarettes.

The driver grinned widely, quickly bowed to thank him: "Thank you, Boss Qi, if you ever need me, just call."

Qi Yun waved his hand smilingly, watching the driver leave.

Inside the warehouse, Wei Yong hurried to bring Qi Yun a chair, smiling broadly.

Qi Yun chuckled, started explaining the accounts to him: "I'll be straight with you, sold to the textile factory at 80 yuan per box, total received 176,000 yuan."

"Based on your saying 11 yuan per kilogram purchasing price, your cost is about 125,000 yuan."

"Total expenses for transport and invoicing were 6600, the cost for customizing gift boxes was 18400, so the profit from this trip is 26000, we split it half each, how about it?"

Upon hearing this, Wei Yong stood up from his chair instantly.

Waved his hands quickly: "Old Qi, what are you saying! If it wasn't for you helping, this batch of apples would have been stuck with me, no telling how much loss I'd take.

You made money because you're capable and have connections, the money is rightfully yours.

Just stick to what we originally agreed, I'm satisfied if I break even, I don't want any extra money; otherwise, I'd feel bad."

Qi Yun patted his arm, signaling him to sit down.

Then took out a cigarette to give him one, he also lit one, taking a deep puff, slowly exhaled the smoke ring before seriously saying to Wei Yong: "Old Wei, don't be a stranger, we're friends.

I used to have a principle in business, that is must be win-win, only then business can last."

...

Chapter 8: Chapter 8: Stealing His Father-in-Law's Fish

Finally, Qi Yun transferred 138,000 to Wei Yong, and he ended up with two boxes of apples before he left.

Back home, Qi Yun washed his face.

He opened Peng Ge's WeChat and transferred 12,000 to him, then changed the remark 'Peng Ge 12000' to just Peng Ge.

He took a notebook from the bag under the bed, on which all his debts were recorded, with a total of 320,000 remaining.

He crossed out Peng Ge's name in order and let out a long sigh of relief.

Currently, he still has 800 in cash, and 26,000 in the card.

Of which, 18,500 is reserved for paying for gift boxes, and 5,500 is to repay Xiao Huang Mao, including his day's wage.

Qi Yun's eyes moved to the next name on the paper, Old Feng 20,000.

He found the other's WeChat and transferred 2,000, then left a message saying, "Sorry bro, this is all I can do for now."

After putting away the notebook, he grabbed the two boxes of apples and the bottle of Maotai that Wei Yong had given him and went out the door.

Passing by the store, he went in to say hello to Old Wang, leaving a box of apples.

"Uncle Wang, I'm not setting up my stall these days, no need to send vegetables to me today."

Old Wang's gaze moved from the long legs of the female broadcaster to the gift box on the table, replying indifferently, "Got it."

Qi Yun wasn't offended, big shots are always aloof.

He turned his head to look at the idle Xiao Huang Mao nearby, "Binzi, want to go out and play?"

Xiao Huang Mao's eyes immediately brightened, first glanced at Old Wang, seeing he didn't object, then eagerly put on his jacket and followed Qi Yun.

The two got on the electric bike and headed towards the edge of the city.

"Qi Ge, why did you transfer 5,500 to me? Didn't you say no wages, are you taking me for a foot massage?"

"Wage is wage." Qi Yun took the cigarette from his mouth, turned to glance at him, "Aren't you afraid your old man will find out and beat you if you go for a foot massage?"

Xiao Huang Mao looked indignant, "He himself often goes to Sister Xia's place for massages, what's wrong with me going for a foot massage, why beat me?"

"You rascal."

Qi Yun laughed and cursed, these twenty-something guys are full of energy, having those thoughts isn't unusual.

In the evening, I'll take him to a proper place to have fun. Once he experiences it, he probably won't be interested anymore.

The two rode along until they reached Qingshui River. Though it's winter, some parts of the river aren't completely frozen.

Qi Yun parked the electric bike by the roadside, invited Xiao Huang Mao to carry things, and the two walked along the riverbank.

"Qi Ge, weren't we going for a foot massage? Why come here?"

Qi Yun's eyes scanned around, responding absentmindedly, "Who goes for a foot massage in broad daylight, let's handle some proper business first."

Xiao Huang Mao oh-ed and didn't ask further, obediently following behind.

Perhaps due to the cold weather, there weren't many fishermen by the river, after half an hour they finally met one.

This person looked robust, but judging by his age, he was about the same as Qi Yun, evidently not the 'Old Zhao' mentioned in the system intelligence.

Qi Yun went up to offer a cigarette, asked warmly, "Brother, how's your catch?"

The middle-aged man took the cigarette, moved the lid of the bucket by his foot, indicating him to look.

Upon looking, it was crystal clear.

Seeing the man shiver uncontrollably, Qi Yun couldn't help but think he really was more addicted to fishing than talented.

"Hey, I'm asking, did someone catch a golden carp here yesterday?" Qi Yun continued to ask.

The man lit the cigarette and replied, "Yeah, my father-in-law did, he only catches one in a week, yesterday he even bragged about it to me."

"I had my wife go to his house and steal the fish last night, so mad he didn't come fishing today."

"Now I'm thinking of catching a couple more and going home to make a pot of fish soup, bringing him some."

After hearing, Qi Yun exclaimed, having such a son-in-law is Old Zhao's blessing.

"Hey, brother, I'm renovating my house and want to keep some fish, the golden ones bring wealth, sell me that fish."

The man, puffing on the cigarette, glanced at him, "Talking about selling, if you're fond of it, I'll just give it to you, a fish ain't worth much."

Upon hearing, Qi Yun patted his arm and gave a thumbs up, "That's the spirit!"

He then went to Xiao Huang Mao, whispered a few words, and took out car keys and 200 out from his pocket.

Xiao Huang Mao nodded, put down his things, and quickly left.

"Today there's really no catch!" The man sighed, lifted the fishing rod and started packing, "I need to go back and make dinner for my daughter, come with me to get it at my place."

"Sure!" Qi Yun nodded with a smile.

His home wasn't far, just within nearby rows of bungalow courtyards.

On the way, the two chatted briefly, the man's name was Liu Meng, originally from Three Provinces, stayed in Jiang Province after retiring from the army, usually worked at construction sites, and fished here every day during the winter break.

Upon arriving at Liu Meng's house, he cheerfully welcomed Qi Yun to sit and turned around to bring a steaming cup of buckwheat tea.

"You have some water, I'll go get the fish for you," he said as he walked to the backyard.

Qi Yun took out his phone and sent Xiao Huang Mao a location.

Soon, Liu Meng returned with a plastic washbasin, a golden carp swimming inside.

This fish was even more beautiful than he imagined, about twenty centimeters long, should weigh over a kilogram.

Under the room's light, the scales glittered with a peculiar brilliance, as if the whole fish was coated in gold.

"Brother, you're really giving me such a beautiful fish?" Qi Yun asked Liu Meng.

Liu Meng casually waved, "I don't like keeping fish, just like eating them, if you like it, take it away, no big deal."

Qi Yun nodded with a smile, Liu Meng might not be top at fishing, but he's indeed very generous.

Just then, Xiao Huang Mao came in from the yard, holding a nearly half-meter-long black fish.

"Qi Ge, how's this? It's the biggest at the market," he said.

Qi Yun took it, weighed it, must be five or six kilograms.

With a smile, he handed the fish to Liu Meng, "I can't take your fish for free, you like fish, I'll trade you with this one."

Liu Meng frowned, "What's this for, a fish is just a fish, why bother?"

Qi Yun quickly explained, "Meng Ge, it's my first visit, it's a gift, if you don't take it, I wouldn't have the heart to take your fish."

Upon hearing this, Liu Meng could only sigh and reluctantly accept the fish.

"Alright, you two have some tea, I'll handle this fish, stay for lunch," he said.

Qi Yun waved his hand in apology, "Can't stay for lunch, I have something later, will hang out next time."

"Alright then, since you have an appointment, I won't keep you, take the basin, so the fish won't die later."

Qi Yun didn't refuse, signaled Xiao Huang Mao to take the basin, and the two left.

"Meng Ge, no need to see us out, keep in touch when you have time."

As they left the yard, Xiao Huang Mao glanced at Qi Yun's hands and suddenly said, "Qi Ge, you forgot the box of apples."

Qi Yun smiled without answering.

Through simple interaction, he felt Liu Meng was a good person, worth befriending.

However, since he mentioned the fish was for keeping at home, he didn't directly tell the value of the carp, otherwise the person might have thoughts.

Just consider it a favor owed, since a long time awaits, he'll find a chance to repay him later.

The two arrived at the ornamental fish market, after some bargaining, the golden carp was eventually sold for 2000 yuan.

Xiao Huang Mao watched in astonishment, mouth agape, "Qi Ge, how did you know the fish was valuable?"

"You guess."

Qi Yun acted mysteriously, making Xiao Huang Mao curious, amazed at earning 2000 yuan so quickly, anyone would be surprised.

But his curiosity didn't last long, when he saw Little Fang in a tight skirt at the ad shop, the question on his lips vanished instantly.

Chapter 9: Chapter 9: Collecting Scrap

Li Zhuoyue had hotpot with us, and returning to the rental apartment, it was already past ten at night.

Little Yellow Hair eagerly hoped to go for a foot spa, but ultimately it didn't happen as he wished.

The reason was at the dinner table earlier, he mustered up the courage to have a few drinks with Xiao Fang, and then he passed out drunk. Qi Yun struggled greatly to drag this guy back...

Lying in bed and taking out the phone, he was greeted by two messages.

One was sent by Old Feng: "Buddy, I know things aren't going well for you now, no rush to pay back the remaining money."

The other was sent by Peng Ge: "Come over to my house for a drink tomorrow evening, Old Feng and the others will be there too. If you don't come, I'll personally pick you up."

Qi Yun helplessly replied with: "Alright."

He set the phone down and within two minutes, fell into a deep sleep.

When he opened his eyes again, it was morning.

With a thought, a familiar light screen appeared.

[Today's Intel (White): Uncle Li living in Building 3 of Star Wish District is preparing to clear junk from his home,

amongst which there is an old pen wash made by a famous artist from the late Qing to the early Republic era, valued at approximately ten thousand in the antique market]

Ten thousand!

Qi Yun's heart skipped a beat, more thrilling than any ten thousand he had earned before.

Now he works himself to exhaustion every day, delivering meals during the day, selling fried rice at night, saving just barely a ten thousand each month through frugality.

This intel is nothing less than a strong stimulant for him.

"Going directly to buy it definitely won't work, being too direct will cause them to be suspicious."

He lit a cigarette, and after a bit of thought, had an idea.

...

Today's weather was nice, the sun hung high, warming people comfortably.

In Star Wish District, Qi Yun rode a tricycle, carrying several sheets of waste cardboard in the cargo.

To look like an authentic junk collector, he specially removed the fried rice advertisement from the tricycle.

In front of Building 3, two elderly men were sitting there playing chess, focused intently.

Qi Yun stood waiting quietly beside them, until they finished a game before smilingly asking: "Grandpas, do you have any junk or odds and ends to sell at home?"

One old man, perhaps having lost the previous round, was in a bad mood and waved impatiently: "Not selling, not selling, quit bothering us."

The other old man put down his teacup and laughed heartily: "Old Li, you can't handle losing, hahaha."

Qi Yun didn't mind, still smiling: "Alright, then I won't disturb your chess game, grandpas."

Upon hearing the words 'Old Li', he guessed that the Uncle Li mentioned in the intel was likely right in front of him.

With a turn of the eye, he got on the tricycle and began wandering nearby, the little loudspeaker hanging at the front lets out a magic chant: "Collecting junk~"

Each time he passed by Uncle Li, he would glance here irritably.

After ten minutes, he lost another game, angrily tossing the chess pieces: "No more!"

He turned his head and glared at Qi Yun who wasn't far: "Hey kid, can't you go elsewhere with your shouting?"

"Haha, did I disturb you? I'm really sorry, grandpa," Qi Yun smiled apologetically and promptly turned off the persistent little loudspeaker.

The granddad beside him laughed and advised: "Old Li, come on, what's there to be upset about, let's continue in the afternoon."

Uncle Li stood up, casting a disgruntled look at Qi Yun: "Collecting junk, right? Follow me upstairs."

"Alright!" Qi Yun responded and quickly followed.

Uncle Li lived on the second floor, although the residence was aged, the interior displayed a quaint, antique aesthetic.

The ebony screen in the living room itself appeared quite valuable.

"It's this box, take it all away," Uncle Li pointed at a corner near the door, indicating a cardboard box as large as a washing machine.

Qi Yun bent down and rummaged through the box with his hands.

All he found were old books and magazines, nothing of the old pen wash.

Feeling somewhat anxious, but maintaining a calm demeanor.

"Grandpa, do you have any other junk to get rid of? I'll take them all together, don't worry, I'll offer a good price."

Uncle Li sat on a chair to the side, coldly snorted: "Just this box, take it or leave it."

This old man really had quite a temper.

Qi Yun was contemplating extracting more information when suddenly a dog's bark came from the staircase.

Soon, a graceful lady holding a snowy white Bichon came up.

"Oh, it's you, big brother?"

The newcomer was indeed the woman who lost her dog the other night.

Qi Yun didn't expect to meet her here, smilingly responding: "Ah, I'm collecting some junk around here."

The woman walked into the room with the dog, her face breaking into an enthusiastic smile: "What a coincidence, come have a sit and drink some water."

"Xiao Fei, do you know this kid?" Uncle Li looked at the woman, puzzled.

Xiao Fei turned to the old man explaining: "Dad, Dudu lost the other night, it was this big brother who helped find him."

Uncle Li nodded, his expression towards Qi Yun softened slightly.

"Hold on, I've got some clutter in the study, originally planned to take it to the market when I have free time, you can take it all."

In a short while, Uncle Li brought out another cardboard box from the study and placed it in front of Qi Yun.

Qi Yun quickly stepped forward to assist, opened the box, inside were some old ink cartridges, yellowed writing guides, and several brushes.

At the bottom lay a seemingly inconspicuous pen wash, covered in a layer of dust, its color dull.

Yet in Qi Yun's view, the old pen wash emitted a faint glow.

Inside, he was startled, discovering a new feature of the system.

"Grandpa, these brushes look pretty good, for everything, I will offer you two hundred yuan altogether, does that seem fair?"

Uncle Li nonchalantly nodded: "Alright."

Seeing the agreement, Qi Yun inwardly rejoiced, pulling out two hundred yuan in cash from his pocket to hand to the other.

After moving everything outside the door, he had no intention of staying long, politely declining Xiao Fei's invitation.

The tricycle took two boxes straight to the nearest junkyard.

Only sold those old books and magazines for fifteen yuan, the rest were unwanted even if given away.

Riding the tricycle back to the apartment courtyard, Qi Yun wiped the old pen wash briefly with a towel, hopped on an electric scooter and headed to the antique market.

The market was more of a street than an actual market.

Flanked by rows of storefronts, the sides of the street also had vendors selling their wares.

A wide assortment of curious and quaint items adorned the area, looking through shop windows one could see all sorts of porcelain, art, jade objects filling the space.

"Qiuyue Pavilion," Qi Yun found the shop name appealing, so he went straight inside.

Inside, a corpulent and balding middle-aged man sat behind the counter, legs crossed, fiddling with a decent string of Buddha Beads.

Hearing footsteps, he casually raised his head, inspected Qi Yun from top to bottom, then swapped to an enthusiastic smile: "Brother, here to hunt for treasures or bring some good stuff?"

Chapter 10: Chapter 10: Earning Another Ten Thousand Yuan

When it comes to running an antique business, the key lies in the power of perception.

It's not just about assessing the item but also evaluating the person.

Whether the visitor is a seasoned expert, a clueless outsider, or someone carrying treasure but unaware of its value...

With just a glance, an experienced antique dealer can make a rough assessment.

The owner, Shi Feng, has been in this trade for years and is quite adept at its intricacies.

From the moment Qi Yun stepped in, Shi Feng knew this was an outsider; his attire lacked the typical finesse found among antique experts.

His manner and gait reflected a casual ease, unlike those steeped in antiques, whose every gesture exudes calm stability.

An imperceptible gleam of shrewdness flashed in Shi Feng's eyes as he greeted with a smile, "Brother, feel free to look around. There's plenty of good stuff in my shop."

"The New Year is approaching; if anything catches your eye, I'll give you a 20% discount, my friend."

As soon as he spoke, Qi Yun sensed a touch of greed in his tone.

With a faint smile, Qi Yun retrieved an old brush washer from his coat pocket and placed it on the counter.

He spoke unhurriedly, "I'm not here to buy. See if you're interested in this."

Shi Feng's gaze instantly fixated on the brush washer on the counter as he reached out to inspect it carefully.

"Brother, judging by its craftsmanship and material, this brush washer does have some age."

"However, such brush washers are plentiful in the market, and yours isn't perfectly preserved; it has a few flaws."

As he spoke, he subtly observed Qi Yun's expression out of the corner of his eye.

"You see, these scratches considerably affect the quality of this brush washer..."

Qi Yun just quietly listened to the other party picking out various faults without responding.

Though he didn't know much about antiques, he grasped a simple truth: the more you say about things you're unfamiliar with, the more likely you are to reveal weaknesses.

After all, the system had already given an appraisal. If the other party tried to undervalue it, he simply wouldn't sell.

After rambling on, Shi Feng finally offered a price.

"Brother, for this item, I can offer you at most eight hundred bucks. How does that sound?"

Qi Yun chuckled inwardly, finding this guy quite greedy.

But he didn't get angry, calmly holding up one finger.

"A thousand?"

Shi Feng's right cheek twitched slightly, struggling to suppress the smile stretching across his lips.

"Well, honestly, this thing is at most worth eight hundred, but seeing you're upfront..."

His words were cut short by Qi Yun.

"Ten thousand."

Shi Feng's smile froze instantly upon hearing the figure of ten thousand.

With a forced laugh, he said, "Brother, you must be joking. This thing isn't worth that much."

As he spoke, he gently placed the brush washer back on the counter, expressing his disbelief at accepting such a price.

"Alright then, I'll ask around elsewhere." Qi Yun wasted no time with chit-chat and made a move to retrieve the brush washer.

Seeing this, Shi Feng felt a pang of anxiety.

Did he misjudge? Could this fellow be an expert?

He knew full well that, despite the slight flaws, the brush washer was made by a significant figure from the late Qing dynasty and could definitely fetch ten thousand.

Moreover, such items were small treasures and easy to sell.

Sure, it's business, and who doesn't want to earn a bit more?

With Qi Yun about to pack up and leave, Shi Feng quickly grasped his hand, saying, "Brother, honestly, I wasn't deceiving you. This brush washer isn't worth ten thousand."

"How about I offer you a sincere price, three thousand! How's that, fair enough?"

Qi Yun remained silent, exerting more force in his hand, indicating his intent to leave.

Shi Feng hurriedly held him back, with a pained expression, his sparse hair visibly swaying.

With raised volume, he exclaimed, "Five thousand! Brother, five thousand bucks is my absolute limit!"

Qi Yun relaxed his grip, noticing the ashtray on the counter, he took out a cigarette, offered one to Shi Feng, and lit another for himself.

After a deep drag, he calmly said, "If you genuinely want it, pay ten thousand and take it. If I come across something good later, I'll bring you business again."

Shi Feng took the cigarette, momentarily stunned.

Looking at Qi Yun's composed demeanor, he realized that this person was undoubtedly an expert.

Awkwardly, he chuckled, "Seems my eyes failed today. Since you're straightforward, let's go with your price—consider it making a new friend!"

Only then did Qi Yun smile satisfactorily and nod, "Alright."

After both signed the agreement, Shi Feng tucked away the brush washer and transferred ten thousand bucks to Qi Yun's bank card.

Upon leaving, Shi Feng added him on WeChat, reminding, "Bro, if you have more good stuff, don't forget to reach out to me."

Outside Qiuyue Pavilion, Qi Yun promptly transferred the ten thousand bucks to Lao Feng, while renaming his contact to 'Lao Feng 8000'.

Despite Lao Feng mentioning there was no rush to repay, Qi Yun knew Lao Feng was under a lot of stress too. Business hadn't been good in recent years, with two of his hot pot restaurants closing down.

"...Sigh~"

Seeing that it was getting late, Qi Yun rode his e-bike back to his rental and then hailed a cab to Peng's house.

Passing by a neighborhood fruit store, he picked up some strawberries and cherries that women and kids enjoy.

The last time he visited Peng's place, he lived in a 200-square-meter mansion in the Vanke estate, but now he's switched to a regular three-bedroom apartment.

Life is unpredictable; many people around him have experienced significant changes over the past few years.

Carrying the fruit, Qi Yun followed the signs to Peng's apartment building.

He went upstairs and knocked on the door.

Before long, Peng's familiar booming voice resonated, "Hey, you finally made it, been waiting for you!"

Peng was the same as ever, warm and hearty, though his face showed traces of weariness and life's rigors.

Qi Yun smiled as he stepped inside, handing over the fruits, "Didn't know what your wife and kid enjoy, just grabbed something casually."

Peng patted his shoulder, laughing, "You're thoughtful, come in and have a seat, Lao Feng and the gang are all here."

In the living room, the table was already laden with food and drinks, Lao Feng chuckling as he rose to pat Qi Yun's arm.

Old Xu, with a Zhonghua cigarette in his mouth, sat relaxed alongside Qiang, who sported a Rolex, both with a subdued expression.

Lao Feng eased the atmosphere with a laugh, "Come, we've been waiting for ages, have a seat! Old Peng, now everyone's here, let's get started!"

Qi Yun nonchalantly smiled and took the empty seat beside Lao Feng.

Peng personally filled everyone's glass, raising his cup, saying, "It's been ages since we had drinks together, my wife and kid are visiting her relatives today,

so I called you all over, rare as it is, let's skip the chatter and toast!"

Everyone raised their glasses and drank at one go.

Rounds of drinks later, conversations drifted to past times, with everyone reflecting on the challenging years.

The gathering wound down in the deep hours, as the several liquor bottles ran dry.

At that juncture, Old Xu, blushing and seemingly silent until then, suddenly fixed his gaze on Qi Yun and slowly uttered, "Qi Yun, aren't you planning to share something with us?"