

The Mightiest Little Peasant Chapter 22

In the afternoon, Tang Hao went to the medicinal herb market.

His shopping list this time was a lot longer with more than thirty items.

The medicinal herbs in the Scripture of the Divine Herbalist all had archaic names. All the names had changed in the present day and they were hard to find. Some had even gone extinct. Tang Hao went several times around the market and only managed to find about twenty-odd items.

Fortunately, he managed to purchase the essential ingredients. He found equivalent substitutes for those that were not available.

After rounding up all the ingredients, he then went to buy lingzhi and other medicinal herbs. His backpack was stuffed to the brim.

He rode his little three-wheeled motorcycle out of the medicinal herb market and prepared to return to Tang Village.

Next to the medicinal herb market was the antique street.

When Tang Hao passed by the street, he heard someone calling him. "Little Brother Tang!"

Tang Hao was puzzled. He thought he must have misheard. When he turned around to look at who it was, a black sedan stopped nearby. One of its windows rolled down and a head poked out of the window. It was Elder Ma.

"It's Elder Ma! What a coincidence!" Tang Hao said.

“Yes! What a coincidence! Little Brother Tang, did you just come from the medicinal herb market?” Elder Ma asked.

“Yep!”

Elder Ma smiled, then thought for a bit and said, “Little Brother Tang, since I rarely get to meet you, how about you follow me and gain some knowledge?”

Tang Hao hesitated. He wanted to decline at first, but he thought about the issue for a bit. ‘Antique appraisal is a secretive business. It might be fun. I don’t have any urgent issues at hand anyway, I don’t mind tagging along.’

“Alright!” Tang hao nodded and agreed.

“Then, Little Brother Tang, follow my car. It’s not too far away.” Elder Ma smiled.

After that, the car slowly rolled forward and stopped next to the antique street.

Elder Ma got out of the car. He was neatly dressed in a traditional Chinese suit and looked young and energetic.

The driver got out of the car next. He was a middle-aged man of about forty-something years of age.

“This is my son, Ma Wenyan. This is the Little Brother Tang that I mentioned to you before.” Elder Ma introduced them to each other.

“So it’s Divine Doctor Tang! Excuse me for my lack of manners!” Ma Wenyan behaved equally as refined as his father Elder Ma.

“You flatter me!” Tang Hao said urgently.

“Let’s go, Little Brother Tang!” Elder Ma led the way. “There’s coincidentally a trade fair today. I’d like to bring you to take a look.”

“Trade fair? Is it a ghost market?”

Elder Ma laughed. “No! You’ll see when you get there.”

Tang Hao did not speak any further and followed Elder Ma.

They entered a shop in the middle of the antique street. Someone from inside the shop saw Elder Ma and greeted him politely. “Elder Ma!”

Elder Ma nodded and went farther into the shop. After passing through a threshold and walking through a long and winding corridor, they reached a hall.

The hall was dimly lit. Several tables were arranged next to the walls while several stools were placed in the center. When people saw Elder Ma enter, they stood from their seats and greeted him.

“Let’s sit down!” Elder Ma waved his hands.

The people saw Tang Hao standing behind Elder Ma. “Hey, Elder Ma! You brought a disciple today?”

Elder Ma smiled. “No, this little brother here isn’t in this business. He’s just here to widen his knowledge.”

“Oh,” the man replied and looked elsewhere.

“Let’s sit down!” Elder Ma picked a few stools and indicated Tang Hao to sit down. He retrieved a pocket watch and looked at it. “It’s starting,” he said.

Several people came into the hall. They were all in traditional Chinese suits. The one leading the way was a thin man in his fifties. He had a thin handlebar mustache on his face and looked somewhat like a mouse.

He swaggered into the hall. When he saw Elder Ma, he cried, “Hey! You’re here, Elder!”

Elder Ma frowned and replied, “Boss Zhou!” He seemed like he did not have a good impression of this person.

“Please show us your wisdom today, Elder!”

Even though this Boss Zhou said so, his tone of voice was full of mockery and had no hint of respect in it.

Tang Hao also noticed that. He assumed that these two were rivals.

“Who is he?” Tang Hao discreetly asked Ma Wenyan.

“His surname is Zhou, and his nickname is Bucktooth. His antique shop has been our biggest competitor in the last ten-odd years,” Ma Wenyan replied.

Tang Hao nodded at the realization.

A while later, one of the ceiling lights lit up. Some people came in a single file from an inner chamber. They were all dressed in black, and each of them was carrying an item covered in black cloth. They placed the items on the tables that surrounded the hall.

“It’s starting!” Elder Ma said.

When all the items were in place, the people removed the black cloth and revealed the items underneath. They were all antiques of various kinds, such as terracotta figures, paintings and jade carvings.

There were a total of twenty-five items.

Some of the items looked ancient. Some of them still had dirt on them, as if recently unearthed.

“These items are all collected by dirt-skimmers, and they put it up for auction here exclusively for antique shop owners. All these people here are the shop owners of the major antique shops on this street.” Ma Wenyuan told Tang Hao in a low voice.

Tang Hao was confused. “What do you mean by dirt-skimmers?”

He did not lower his voice and everyone heard that. The other antique shop owners knew that Tang Hao was not in the business, so they did not think it was anything out of the ordinary. As for Bucktooth Zhou, he gave him a side-eye and laughed.

“Why is there a blind greenhorn here? I say Elder Ma, your disciple has a lot to learn!”

Elder Ma was expressionless. “This little brother here is not in the antique business. I brought him here so that he can gain some knowledge.” After that, he walked to one side and inspected a porcelain bowl.

“Dirt-skimmers are those people who don’t run an antique shop but go to rural villages to collect items from the locals. Some of them even buy their items from grave robbers,” Ma Wenyan said.

Tang Hao nodded and finally understood.

He also knew that ‘grave robbers’ meant those who stole items from ancient tombs.

Tang Hao had never seen anything like this before. He curiously looked at the activity all around him.

Suddenly, he furrowed his brows. He noticed that there was something weird about these items. They had some different intensities of qi surrounding them.

He did not feel the flow of qi when he was standing farther away, but he could feel it when he went close.

He could feel it even better when he laid his hands on the items.

“Right. These antiques have been around since ancient times. They would have accumulated some qi over the centuries and millennia. The oldest ones would have the most intense qi.”

Tang Hao understood after he thought about it.

Elder Ma picked up the porcelain bowl in front of him. He inspected it carefully for a while, then placed it on the table. “I offer one hundred and fifty thousand yuan for this bowl!”

The other people crowded around after hearing Elder Ma offer a price. They took turns to look at the bowl and a few others offered competing bids.

“I offer one hundred and sixty thousand!”

“One hundred and seventy thousand!”

“Two hundred thousand!” Bucktooth Zhou yelled as he squeezed through the crowd.

Elder Ma’s expression changed. He glared at Bucktooth Zhou coldly. “It’s yours!”

“Thank you for your generosity, Elder Ma!” Bucktooth Zhou laughed as he picked up the bowl. “An item from the royal kilns of the late Qing dynasty. The quality isn’t that good but it should fetch a pretty decent price.”

After Bucktooth Zhou made his offer, no one else topped with a higher bid. The porcelain bowl was finally his.