

# Power and Wealth

## Chapter 117 – Pearls, Opening Mussel!

Zhejiang Province, Zhuji City.

It was a rainy day and drizzling. But the rain seems to be stopping soon.

Dong Xuebing alighted from Zhuji train station with a big Merry Supermarket bag. He was walking fast and keep adjusting his clothes. He felt very uncomfortable. The humidity at Zhuji was very high and cold. Dong Xuebing was used to the cold and dry weather in the North. He was walking along the road and quickly found a small restaurant by the roadside.

“Boss, give me the menu.” Dong Xuebing sat down at an empty table.

“Coming.” A fat middle-aged woman walked over with the menu.

Dong Xuebing picked two dishes and said: “Give me a local soup too. It’s too cold.”

10 minutes later, all the dishes were served.

The soup was clam soup. Although Beijing people called these as clams, it was actually mussel. Pearl mussels. Other than a palm-size mussel, there was nothing else in the soup. Dong Xuebing was curious. He used his chopsticks to open the mussel. The mussel was full of peals. Dong Xuebing took a bite of the mussel flesh and then spit it out. It was too tough. How can anyone eat this shit?

The lady boss who was sitting at her counter saw him, and laughed. “That mussel is not for eating. You just drink the soup.”

Dong Xuebing’s face was red with embarrassment. “What about the pearls?”

“Are you here for a holiday? You can pay people to string the pearls for you and bring it back as a souvenir.”

“Oh, then this soup is also considered a form of pearl gambling?”

“You can say that. If you are lucky, you might be able to find some good pearls. You

want me to serve another bowl of soup?”

“No. This is enough for me.” Dong Xuebing knew this person was talking nonsense. He was reading up on pearl gambling on his more than 10 hours train ride. He knows that these mussels are low-grade mussels. One would be considered damn lucky if pearls worth 20 RMB were found in it. These mussels produce worthless pearls. “Boss, can I ask you something? Do you know any pearl gambling places near here? How much will it cost to gamble pearl?”

The female boss looked at him: “There should be a pushcart two streets away from here. The price is about 200 to 300.”

Dong Xuebing replied: “Is there any places that sell better mussels? Like those 2,000 to 3,000 RMB types?”

“Oh, then you have to go to the Pearl breeding farms. But they don’t do pearl gambling there. They will open up the mussels themselves and then sell the pearls according to grades. Pearl gambling here is mainly small roadside stalls. The grades are not high.”

Dong Xuebing chatted with the female boss for a while and got a better understanding of Zhuji’s pearl gambling.

The rain had stopped, and Dong Xuebing left the restaurant and got into a taxi.

The driver asked: “Where to?”

Dong Xuebing said: “Bring me to the nearest pearl breeding farm.”

The driver sped up and asked: “You are from Beijing? Are you here for a holiday?”

“Yes. I am here to buy some pearl mussels to try my luck.”

“Oh, you want to buy mussels .” The driver thought for a while. “Then we should go towards the west. The two pearl farms nearby are not in season yet. Their mussels are not ready for harvest. The breeding farm on the west side might be further away. I was staying nearby the farm and saw them preparing to harvest the pearls a few days ago.”

Dong Xuebing replied: “Ok. Let’s go to the west side then. Thank you.”

About 20 minutes later, Dong Xuebing reached his destination. He paid the fare and quickly alight. He looked around and carried his bag tightly. His bag looks ordinary and old fashioned. But Dong Xuebing purpose picks this bag. There was a password box which contains 440,000 RMB, in the bag. Dong Xuebing was determined to raise

1 million on this trip. This was why he withdraws all his savings.

There were a few white-colored buildings in the distance. As Dong Xuebing got closer, he saw 5 to 6 breeding farms.

Dong Xuebing walked up to the metal gates. There was no one there, and he continued into the compound.

“Hey! What are you doing?” A man, covered in mud, stood up from the breeding farm. He shouted at Dong Xuebing: “Who allows you to enter?”

“I am here to buy pearls!” Dong Xuebing frowned as he looked at that man. “Where is the boss?”

“Buy pearls?” That man looked at Dong Xuebing from top to toe. “I am the boss here. What pearls do you want? Pearl powder?”

You are the boss of this farm? Dong Xuebing was surprised. He knew the owners of pearl farms were earning more than 1 million RMB annually. They should be either in suits and ties or at least look like a boss. But this person in front of Dong Xuebing looks like a hill billy. Even the roadside food seller in Beijing looks more like a boss than him.

At this time, 3 workers walked over from the northwest farm. “Boss, everything is ready. Are we opening the mussels now?”

Dong Xuebing finally believed this person is the boss of this farm. He asked: “Do you sell pearl mussels here? How much are you selling?”

The boss shakes the mud off his gloves. “We don’t sell mussels. If you want to buy pearls, come back the day after tomorrow. We still have not open mussels .”

What I wanted are unopened mussels. Dong Xuebing followed the boss and asked: “What color is this batch of mussels?”

That boss replied impatiently. “I already said we don’t sell the mussels. Get out of here!”

“If the color of this batch of the mussel is good, money is not a problem.” Dong Xuebing does not like this boss’s attitude. He knew that he looks too young and doesn’t look like a wealthy person. That’s why he was treated this way. If it were a middle-aged man with a bulging tummy, the boss attitude would be different. Dong Xuebing looked at the boss and opened his bag to show the boss his password box. “Even if you don’t want to sell, there is no harm for me to take a look, right? As for

the prices..... We can discuss that later?”

That boss was surprised, and he frowned. “Come with me.”

Dong Xuebing followed the boss. There were rows of buoys from the shore to the center of the lake. The buoys were close to each other and covered the whole area. Along the coast, there were two small boats. On the boats, there were nets of mussels. From the pile of mussels on the shore, those nets should be able to hold at least 100 mussels each. There were at least 1,000 mussels. These mussels were bigger than they one at the restaurant. He could tell that these freshwater pearl mussels were of better grades.

After they got closer, the boss told one of his worker: “Open up one and see.”

That worker nodded and took out a smaller mussel from the net. He then picked up a kitchen chopper from the mud. He inserted the chopper into the small opening of the mussel and then twist it. Crack! The mussel was opened, and Dong Xuebing could see the mussel flesh and parts of a gold color pearl. The worker reached into the meat and dug out 9 pearls of different shapes and sizes. He placed the pearls in a plastic pail. Freshwater pearls are different from seawater pearls. Seawater mussels can only produce one or two pearls.

This was pearl gambling?! Dong Xuebing got excited. It was fascinating.

That boss walked over and took out the biggest pearl. He placed the pearl in a device to measure it. “Hmmm..... Not bad.” This device was designed to measure the diameter of the pearl. There was a handle for the user to grip, and with one button, it will secure and measure the pearl. “Half of these can be used to make jewelry, and the remaining can be made into pearl powder. Xiao Er. We will open the mussels, and Xiao Liu will do the sorting.”

Fullness, roundness, brightness, and size will determine the grade of the pearl. Although golden pearls were considered top grade pearls, the small pearls or out of shape pearls were also worthless. Just like the mussel that was just opened. More than half of the pearls in it cannot be used to make jewelry.

“Oh.” The boss turns and looks at Dong Xuebing. “How many mussels do you want?”

Dong Xuebing smiles. “Let me look around first.” Although these pearls were valuable, Dong Xuebing was not tempted. He was calculating in his mind. He had used 8 BACK at Zhou Guoan’s house that day and still have 2 times left. He had also saved up all his BACK these few days, and there were still 10 times left.

The boss and his worker start to open the mussels with choppers.

Crack! A palm-sized mussel was opened, and there were 11 white pearls in it. The value of an mussel was not based on the number of pearls. It depends on the size of the biggest pearl and whether if the pearl was round and bright. The biggest pearl will fetch the highest prices. That's why this mussel was not considered good as the biggest pearl was less than 10mm.

Crack! Another one.....

Another one.....

The fifth one.....

The eighth one.....

10 minutes had passed, and many mussels were opened. Not a single pearl was more than 10mm!

It was not because this batch of mussels was not good. It was because it was rare to find pearls above the size of 10mm. It was like finding acicular in crystals.

The ninth mussel ..... The biggest pearl was close to 1.3 cm.

Tenth mussel ..... These were all tiny pearls.

On the 11th pearl.....

“Eh! Boss! This pearl is big!” The worker shouted.

Dong Xuebing and the boss looks over. They saw the worker digging out a big golden pearl. “This pearl is at least 1.5 cm. The quality is good.” The pearl was measured using the device. It was flawless. It was a top-grade golden pearl!

That boss smiles. “Good..... Good.....”

That's it!

The prized pearl had finally appeared. Dong Xuebing immediately shouts BACK!