

# Power and Wealth

## Chapter 266 – Appraisal experts!

Five days later. Afternoon.

Hai Bing Bath Parlor's Utility room.

Dong Xuebing was panting as he carried a stack of towels. “Xiao Shi, the guest rooms' towels are running low. We need to wash them quickly.”

“Ok. You go ahead first.” Xiao Shi took out two clean bedsheets. “I will deliver these bedsheets to the guest rooms.”

“Oh, bring a bag of dirty laundry on your way back. That side might be running out of clean clothes.”

Xiao Shi nodded and went out. “Ok.”

Over the past five days, Dong Xuebing stayed in the bath parlor washing towels. It was tiring, and he had not been so tired before. Although he is getting impatient, he still endured it. Other than working, he monitored the bath parlor silently and took note of the possible places where the relics could be hidden, the locations of the offices, the identity of their boss, etc. But Dong Xuebing's role as a washer in the laundry room does not allow him to get more information.

If this drags on, even if the stolen relics were hidden there, it would be relocated. Dong Xuebing needs to think of a solution!

Dong Xuebing walked along the corridor towards the back of the parlor when someone called him.

It's Crew-cut. “Xie Hao put down the towels, and follow me.”

Dong Xuebing looked at him nervously. “Where are we going?”

“The guest in room 303 wants a massage, but we got no more masseurs. You need to be one.” The Crew-cut ordered.

“But, I have not learned massage before.”

“It’s just some pressing and knitting of the muscles.”

Dong Xuebing has no choice but followed the Crew-cut upstairs. At the end of the corridor, the Crew-cut pointed to a room and gave Dong Xuebing some instructions on how to give a massage. It’s just a back massage, and the duration is forty minutes. After that, the Crew-cut left after Dong Xuebing went to knock on the door. He entered the room after the woman inside asked him to go in and closed the door behind him.

A woman in her late thirties is lying face down, reading a magazine.

Dong Xuebing looks at her emotionlessly. “You called for massage services?”

The woman nodded and looks at Dong Xuebing. “I want a strong massage, and you need to use more strength.”

“Ok.” Dong Xuebing went to the washroom to wash his hands before sitting down on the bed.

The woman is wearing a white bathrobe and nothing underneath. She has got a nice figure and curvy. She is not very pretty, but she has a mature seductive look. Dong Xuebing was relieved as massaging her is better than massaging a middle-aged man.

Dong Xuebing reached over and started massaging her shoulders.

Hou Qing stopped reading the magazine and threw it aside. “Young man, you are quite strong. How long have you been in this line?”

Dong Xuebing replied. “Not too long ago.”

“What’s your name?”

“Xie Hou.”

Dong Xuebing was not in a mood to chat with her, as he is still thinking of how to find the stolen relics.

Dong Xuebing just answered Hou Qing’s questions calmly, until Hou Qing asked. “How is your boss doing recently?” She saw Dong Xuebing in a daze and added. “Is the boss still Boss Wu or someone else?”

Dong Xuebing glanced at Hou Qing and replied. "I have not met the boss, and only know the person in charge of the parlor is Manager Ma."

Hou Qing nodded and did not continue.

Dong Xuebing becomes interested. "Sister, you know our boss?"

"Hehe, I had met him twice, but it is not very close." Hou Qing relaxed and closed her eyes. "What is Manager Ma busy with recently?"

Dong Xuebing had started his massage on Hou Qing's lower back. "Manager Ma is often not around and will visit the parlor every two to three days. Maybe he still needs to manage other businesses for the boss." Dong Xuebing tried to gather some information about the boss of the parlor from Hou Qing but could not get anything out from her.

Forty minutes is over.

Hou Qing sat up and adjusted her bathrobe. She smiles. "Young man, you are quite good with your massage. I feel good."

"Thank you."

"What time is usually not crowded at the parlor?" Hou Qing asked.

Dong Xuebing blinked. "Before midnight, the parlor is quite crowded. But after 1 am, this place will be quiet."

Hou Qing smiled and looked at Dong Xuebing. "Ok. I will call you at night if I need your services. What is your number tag?"

"Huh? I do not have any number tag. I am temporarily called to do massage because all our masseurs are busy."

"Alright. Anyway, I remember your name. Xie Hao, right? Ok. I will ask you if I need it." Hao Qing gave Dong Xuebing a 100 RMB bill as tips. "Here."

Dong Xuebing starts to let his imaginations run wild. Call me after 1 am?! Damn! Why are you looking for me in the middle of the night?

After leaving the room, Dong Xuebing continued with his work. He returned to the utility room to wash bedsheets and towels. He continued working until around 8 pm when the night shift staff took over. Dong Xuebing and Xiao Shi returned to their rooms and laid on their beds. Dong Xuebing is sleeping on the upper bunk, while Xiao

Shi is sleeping on the lower bunk. Xiao Shi had been working at the parlor before Dong Xuebing and knew a lot of other colleagues. But Dong Xuebing noticed that the rest of the people prefers to speak to him, instead of Xiao Shi.

Half an hour passed.

An hour passed.

Everyone in the dormitory was still awake, chatting about women.

Dong Xuebing is not interested in this topic and is thinking of ways to move up the ranks and find the stolen relics. But after five days, he could not find a solution. Sigh... seems like I was too naïve to think that I can find the relics after I had infiltrated into the parlor. I cannot even get any information after five days. Maybe I should try my luck in the manager's office... but it will be dangerous!

Around 9 pm.

The dormitory's door opened suddenly, and the Crew-cut entered. "Xiao Shi! Xiao Shi!"

Xiao Shi was already sleeping and asked sleepily. "Brother Liu, what is it?"

"Get dressed and follow me. Hurry! Manager Ma wants to see you!" The Crew-cut shouted.

Xiao Shi got up nervously and didn't know why he is being called to the manager's office. Dong Xuebing was surprised and noticed the rest of his roommates were discussing among themselves.

"Why is Manager Ma looking for him?"

"That's right. If Manager Ma is going to promote that thief?"

"Thieves?" Dong Xuebing was shocked. "What did Xiao Shi do?"

A young man on a lower bunk nodded. "Xiao Shi had stolen something in one of the southern provinces and came here to hide."

No wonder everyone in the room dislikes Xiao Shi. Dong Xuebing asked. "What did he steal? Money? Phones? Or break into someone's house?"

The young man shook his head. "I am not sure, but I heard it is a few antiques."

Dong Xuebing's eyes lit up and felt he had discovered an important clue.

About 10 minutes later, Xiao Shi returned to the room alone. The rest of the roommates asked him why Manager Ma looked for him, but Xiao Shi kept quiet and shook his head. The rest of the roommates had treated him badly, and he refused to speak to them. After a while, Xiao Shi got out of his bed and went to the bathroom.

Dong Xuebing saw it and quickly followed. "Wait... I need to use the bathroom too."

In the corridor, Dong Xuebing asked softly. "What are you called into the office?"

Xiao Shi is closer to Dong Xuebing, compared to the rest of the roommates. He thought for a while and said. "Manager Ma asked me to appraise a few antiques." He paused for a while and continued. "I had dealt with antiques in the past, and the manager might have thought I know about the values of antiques. But I don't even know those items, let alone appraise them. If I know how to appraise antiques, why would I be here working in the laundry room?"

Antique?

Appraise?

Dong Xuebing was excited when he heard this and asked. "What sort of antiques?"

Xiao Shi shook his head. "There are vases, bottles, and a few others, which I don't even know what they are called."

Dong Xuebing took a deep breath. His blood was boiling with excitement. He had gotten an important clue from Xiao Shi and Manager Ma's interaction. Why did they get Xiao Shi to appraise antiques? Even if he had stolen antiques before, he is not an expert. It will be easier to get an appraiser from an antique company to appraise those antiques. The only explanation is the stolen relics from the Provincial Museum is with them, and they are worried to let those experts appraise them. That's why they need to get someone who knows about antiques within the company to appraise them.

Another possibility is the antiques are bought from the people who stole from the museum by Manager Ma's boss, and he is worried that the relics were fake. Liu Shen Jade's suit might be easy to identify, but the rest of the items will be hard to appraise. Manager Liu needs someone to verify the authenticity of the rest of the relics now!

Yes!

This must be the reason!

Dong Xuebing knew this is an opportunity for him to enter the inner circle. He must not miss this opportunity!

When they were about to enter the bathroom, Dong Xuebing saw the Crew Cut walking out from the corner of his eyes.

Dong Xuebing reacted quickly and pretended not to see him. He told Xiao Shi. “I made and sold counterfeit antiques in the past.”

Xiao Shi asked curiously. “Really?”

“Yes. The technique is passed down from my parents’ generation.” Dong Xuebing said.

The Crew-cut looked at Dong Xuebing and said. “Xie Hao!”

Dong Xuebing pretended to notice him and walked over quickly. “Brother Liu.”

The Crew-cut looked at Dong Xuebing and asked. “You made fake antiques before?”

“No... no... I was talking rubbish.” Dong Xuebing laughed awkwardly and did not admit it.

The Crew-cut gave Dong Xuebing a stare. “Follow me!”

In an office.

The Crew-cut brought Dong Xuebing into an office, and Ma Wentao and a few men in suits were inside.

Ma Wentao frowned when he saw the Crew-cut entering the office. “What do you want?”

The Crew-cut quickly replied. “Manager Ma, I overheard this guy saying he was in the antique trade.”

“Oh?” Ma Wentao took a glance at Dong Xuebing. “Really?”

Dong Xuebing waved his hands nervously. “No... I was talking nonsense earlier.”

The Crew-cut shouted at Dong Xuebing. “Just speak the truth! We are not going to send you to the police station! What’s there to be afraid of?!”

Dong Xuebing did not reply.

Ma Wentao looked at Dong Xuebing and said. “I remember your surname is Xie, right? Xiao Xie, I had bought a few antiques earlier. If you can check the authenticity of these antiques, you will be promoted to be a lobby manager, and I can give you what you want. Don’t be afraid, ok?”

Dong Xuebing hesitated for a while and nodded.

Ma Wentao continued. “Do you know about antiques?”

After being forced, Dong Xuebing ‘finally’ told them the truth. “It was a long time ago. I had worked for a few relatives to make counterfeit antiques and cultural relics for sales. After that, we are wanted by the police, and I went into hiding at Brother Bao’s workshop.”

Ma Wentao understood why Dong Xuebing refused to admit. He is afraid of getting arrested. “That means you know about antiques, right?”

Dong Xuebing scratched his head. “A little.”

Ma Wentao thought for a while and waved to the Crew-cut to ask him to leave. Only Ma Wentao and a few bodyguards remained in the office. “Xiao Xie, I have a few antiques with me, and I want you to take a look.” Ma Wentao looked at a man in a suit, and that man took out a few boxes from a cabinet. Ma Wentao continued. “Don’t be nervous. If you can identify these items correctly, you will follow me in the future.”

The man opened the first box on the left.

Dong Xuebing looked at that item and was disappointed. This is not one of the stolen relics. But Dong Xuebing immediately understood that Ma Wentao is testing him. The stolen relics cannot be shown to outsiders easily, and he is using other antiques to test Dong Xuebing. If Dong Xuebing can appraise these antiques, he will prove his capabilities. He will have an opportunity to see the stolen relics later. Dong Xuebing walks over and starts to examine that antique.

This antique is a broken porcelain container and seems old.

But Dong Xuebing, who had been dealing with antiques, knew the appearance does not mean anything. There is a technique in the antique trade that is called age faking.

Dong Xuebing felt Manager Ma is going to test him and should not be using real antiques. He organized his words in his head and made a wild guess. “This should be a fake. It might look old, but it is from a method called age faking. Look here and here... it is too obvious.”

Ma Wentao frowned and asked his men to open the next box.

It looks like a rosewood bracelet. The surface is smooth and looks like it had been held in someone's hand for years.

Dong Xuebing thought for a while. For someone to be holding it for years, it should not be fake and should be one of Ma Wentao's prized antique. "This is rosewood, and the color is real. This should be authentic."

Ma Wentao asked his men to open the last box.

It is an antique coin, and there are signs of corrosion on it. The words "Zhi Zheng Zhi Bao" is written on it.

Dong Xuebing knew it is not easy to fabricate a fake ancient coin because the cost is high. He pretended to examine the coin for a while and said. "This is an authentic coin and should be from the Ming Dynasty. This coin is quite rare and should worth a lot." Dong Xuebing said and looked at Ma Wentao.

WTF?! Ma Wentao's face had changed and was smacking his lips impatiently. "Alright. You can go back now!"

Dong Xuebing paused for a second. "Errr... I got which wrong?"

The man standing beside Dong Xuebing sneered. "You are all wrong! You dare to claim that you know about antiques?"

Dong Xuebing argued. "Impossible!"

Before Ma Wentao brought these three items here, he had checked its authenticity with an antique company. That man saw Dong Xuebing refusing to leave and went over to drag him out. Dong Xuebing does not want to miss this opportunity and quickly ask which part he said was wrong.

That man smacked his lips and said. "You don't know anything, and you dare to make fake antiques? That porcelain container is an authentic piece and has great historical value, but it is not worth a lot. That rosewood bracelet is fake, and the lacquer is painted on it later. The material is not rosewood and is only a wood that looks like rosewood. It is not worth anything. That coin is fake! Look at the wordings! The wordings are all crooked, and you dare to claim that coin is from the Ming dynasty?! Alright! Stop wasting time and get lost!" This man is the one who sent these items to the antique company for validations.

Dong Xuebing listened to him and cursed in his heart. Damn! I got all three items



wrong!

But it is fine! I still have another chance!

BACK two minutes!

Everything in front of him flashed!

“Xiao Xie, I have a few antiques with me, and I want you to take a look.”

Ma Wentao asked his men to take out some items.

Time had returned to two minutes ago!

“Don’t be nervous. If you can identify these items correctly, you will follow me in the future.” Ma Wentao looks at Dong Xuebing with anticipation.

Dong Xuebing took a deep breath and picked up the porcelain container. “When we make fake antiques, we will not make it to this extent. From the markings, it should have been from quite long ago, and cannot be fake from age faking. However, this piece might be old, but it is not worth any money.”

Ma Wentao narrowed his eyes slightly. “Show him the next piece!”

The man took out the rosewood bracelet.

Dong Xuebing picked it up and played with it in his hands. “The lacquer is painted on later, and we used this method frequently in the past. This is to make the bracelet looks aged, and if this is rosewood, not many people will bear to do this. This is most likely a fake and is worthless.”

Ma Wentao’s heart skipped a beat. “Next.”

Dong Xuebing looks at the coin. “This coin?! The corrosions on it are stick onto the coin from other copper items. When I was making fake antiques, I had used this method too. But the words are all crooked and does not look like an authentic antique coin.”

Dong Xuebing finished his appraisal of the three items.

The few men in suits look at each other in shock.