

## Amazing Son-In-Law Chapter 5721 - 5740

When Charlie stood waiting for Claire at the airport, Jacob and Elaine had already been taken to the Police Station.

Elaine couldn't help but wildly wave at Jacob from the police car. Helplessly, the police had to bring another car to separate the two and take them back.

As Charlie watched Claire's plane preparing to land, he still didn't see Jacob and Elaine. He sent them messages, but received no reply. He wondered what kind of trouble these two had gotten themselves into again.

Luckily, Charlie didn't hold a high opinion of these two, so he didn't really care whether they showed up or not. If they did come, they could all ride together back to the city. If not, he and Claire could simply take a taxi.

In the afternoon, Claire's private plane touched down at the airport. Charlie waited for about half an hour until she completed customs clearance and walked out, pushing a luggage cart.

When she spotted Charlie from a distance, she quickened her pace, a joyful smile spread across her face.

Charlie hurried over and as he approached Claire, she abandoned the cart and threw herself into his arms, acting playful. "Husband, missed you so much!"

Holding her tightly, Charlie smiled and replied, "I missed you too, my dear. Thankfully, Miss Joule's project encountered some issues, otherwise, would have considered going to the United States to find you."

Claire smiled and relayed a message from Miss Joules. "She wanted me to tell you that she feels sorry for keeping you there for so long.

When she comes to China next time, she wants to invite you to dinner to show her gratitude.”

“Okay...” Charlie nodded, his smile widening. “By the way, your parents were supposed to come and pick you up, but | can't seem to reach them. Should we just take a taxi back to the city?”

“You can't reach them?” Claire asked anxiously. “Could something have happened? We should make sure they're okay before taking a taxi.”

“I don't think anything serious could have happened. They were arguing at home before | left, so maybe they had a fight.” Charlie explained.

Claire nodded helplessly and suggested, “They're always like this, fighting over small things every three days and big things every five days. They argue all day long.”

With that, Claire picked up her phone and said, “Let me call my mom and check. if there's nothing wrong, we can just take a taxi back.”

“That sounds reasonable.” Charlie agreed. “It's better to call and ensure our peace of mind.”

Claire nodded and dialed Elaine's number.

Meanwhile, Elaine was being reprimanded at the police station by the traffic officers.

There were two separate rooms, one for Jacob and one for Elaine.

Elaine looked defiant and angrily exclaimed, “Officer, it was Jacob, that jerk, who illegally parked on the highway. What does it have to do with me? That jerk is already in custody, you can do whatever you want with him, even throw the book at him. I just want to go to the airport to pick up my daughter!”

The traffic officer helplessly responded, “If you hadn't gotten physical, would he have parked on the highway? Technically, both of you are at fault in this matter!”

Continuing, the traffic officer added, “Regarding your situation, he will mainly be fined and have points deducted, receive criticism and education. It's not severe enough for detention or imprisonment, let alone execution...”

“We need him to understand that no matter the circumstances, he can't stop the car on the highway, especially in the overtaking lane. It's too dangerous! If there really is an emergency, he should at least turn on the hazard lights and pull over to the emergency lane, while also placing a warning triangle 100 meters behind the car as regulations dictate.”

After stating these points, the traffic officer glanced at Elaine and continued, “And you, even if something significant happened, couldn't you have waited until you were off the highway to get physical? If there was genuine danger, you would have been at risk too, right?”

“We need to prioritize safety in everything we do, don't we? Even if you have a grudge, you should seek revenge in a safe environment. Getting physical on the road is dangerous!”

Hearing this, Elaine fumed, “He cheated on me! I don't care about ensuring safety, I wouldn't even care if we both died!”

The traffic officer sighed, “Oh, why can't you understand? Both of you are driving nice cars. If something really happened, the chances of dying are low. But what if you end up seriously injured, lying in bed for ten or eight years? How would you two handle that? Arguing in the ~ same hospital room?”

Elaine waved her hand dismissively and declared, “I don't care! My style is to seek revenge for any grudges, and it has to be done immediately. In ancient times, I would be considered a warrior queen!”

“Ah...” The traffic officer felt completely helpless. “Fine, let's call your daughter and have her come pick you two up and take you home. Maybe she can mediate your relationship!”

With that, the traffic officer handed Elaine her phone.

Just then, the phone rang, and Claire's photo appeared on the screen, along with the word “daughter”.

The traffic officer, seeing that it was Elaine's daughter calling, quickly urged, "Answer the call!"

Elaine took the phone and pressed the answer key. Before she could speak, Claire anxiously inquired, "Mom, where are you and dad? Is everything okay?"

Elaine, feeling upset, muttered, "Nothing, we just got arrested and taken to the police station by the traffic officers."

The traffic officer quickly interjected, "Oh, you can't say 'arrested, our main concern is ensuring your safety...'"

On the other end of the line, Claire asked in surprise, "Why did you go to the police station? Did you violate traffic rules or get into an accident?"

Elaine indignantly complained, "Your dad got heartbroken!"

"What?!" Claire couldn't comprehend those words for a moment and asked in astonishment, "My... My dad got heartbroken? What does that mean, mom..."

Elaine sighed and choked with grievance, "My daughter, let me tell you, mom can't live like this anymore. Mom might as well find a wall and bang her head against it..."

Claire quickly comforted her, "Mom, please don't get too upset. Tell me where you are, and Charlie and I will come right away!"

Elaine was too busy crying and didn't answer. The traffic officer next to her swiftly took the phone and said loudly, "Your parents fought each other directly on the highway, and now your mom's emotions are extremely unstable. You should come and see them at the Highway Traffic Police Station!"

After speaking, he stared at Elaine, afraid she would actually hit the wall. He also felt annoyed, thinking, "This is bringing back a troublemaker..."

On the other end of the line, Claire heard Elaine's crying and quickly consoled her, "Mom, please don't worry. We'll come right away!"

With that, she hung up the phone and turned to Charlie. "Husband, my mom and dad are at the police station. She cried and said my dad got heartbroken. What's going on? Do you know?"

Charlie listened and felt a headache coming on. Shaking his head, he sighed, "I think it's because of Matilda's upcoming marriage..."

Claire asked in surprise, "Aunt Matilda is getting married? Is that what's causing all this?"

"Yes," Charlie nodded. "Next week, she's marrying Professor Riley from Aurous Hill University of Finance and Economics. Your dad hasn't been in a good mood lately, probably because he can't accept it. Maybe that's why my mom and dad had a falling out."

Claire couldn't understand and asked, "Matilda is marrying someone else. Isn't that a good thing? My dad won't have to worry about those ~~ things anymore."

Charlie sighed, feeling the weight of the situation. "But your mom doesn't know that Matilda is back. Dad has been afraid to tell her..."

"Think about it, when Matilda returned, mom was suffering in the detention center. Dad was having a great time, and as soon as mom was released, he wanted a divorce. I'm afraid that once mom connects all these clues and figures out what's going on, she won't just let it go..."

## Chapter 5722

Claire lacked experience in matters of love, rendering her incapable of fully comprehending the emotional turmoil that ensues when caught in a romantic entanglement. However, with Charlie's guidance, she began to grasp the gravity of the situation.

She couldn't help but sigh, "Truth be told, my father's behavior was quite reprehensible when Matilda first returned. He showed no

concern for my mother's well-being and was solely fixated on Matilda. He even invited her over for dinner. If I were my mother, I would undoubtedly be livid.”

Charlie interjected, “Let's not dwell on these matters here. We must make haste and proceed to the traffic police station.”

“Alright!” Claire nodded, then seized Charlie's arm and said, “Darling, their lives shouldn't be in immediate danger at the traffic police station. Moreover, the presence of the authorities will likely prevent any altercation from escalating. There's no need to rush.”

Charlie inquired, “So, what do you propose?”

Furrowing her brows, Claire replied, “We need to contemplate how to resolve their predicament... If my mother has already discerned the underlying situation, then this fight is likely just the beginning. If we do not address the root cause, matters may escalate once we return home...”

A sudden realization dawned upon Charlie as he concurred, “You understand your mother's temperament best. If we fail to resolve this issue, our family will never find peace.”

Out of frustration, Claire stomped her foot and anxiously implored, “Darling... What should I do?”

Charlie pondered for a moment before addressing her query, “You mentioned the possibility of Mom wanting to divorce Dad after this incident. Do you think Dad shares the same sentiment? Considering they can't coexist peacefully, wouldn't it be better to capitalize on this opportunity and initiate a divorce? That way, we can avoid future conflicts.”

Claire interjected anxiously, “But what about Dad's living arrangements after the divorce? Given Mom's temperament, he wouldn't be able

to stay at home. He's in his fifties now and finding accommodation might pose a challenge. Would you consider leaving the house?"

Continuing, Claire expressed her concerns, "Moreover, let's be realistic, they're not exactly young. If they were to divorce now it might invite ridicule. Starting anew would be daunting, especially at their age..."

"They'll lack the support system they once had, and taking care of each other would become increasingly difficult. Have you considered the implications? If they do divorce, they could become sworn enemies. As their daughter, navigating between them would be incredibly challenging. How would we manage to coordinate..."

Charlie contemplated for a moment and responded, "So, you mean they cannot get divorced and must continue living together, completely disregarding this incident."

"Yes," Claire firmly nodded. "If we can feign that this incident never occurred, that would be ideal."

Charlie wryly smiled, "Your father's temperament is manageable, so that should not pose a problem. However, you know your mother's disposition. How could she simply let it go?"

Anxiously, Claire pleaded, "Darling, this is where your intelligence and wisdom come into play! Many influential individuals refer to you as Master Wade, and you have resolved their intricate predicaments. Our family's issue pales in comparison. Can't you think of a solution?"

She clung to Charlie's arm, beseeching him pitifully, "Darling... Please, think of a solution. I truly do not want them to get divorced..."

Matilda is already planning to marry someone else, and even if my father divorces my mother, he will not have any promising prospects for remarriage..."

"Moreover, considering my mother's personality, she will assuredly live a solitary life. You see, initially, they could have supported and

cared for one another, but now they will both end up alone, devoid of companionship for the rest of their days. How wretched..."

Charlie stroked his chin and stated, "Wife, it's not that I am unwilling to help, but this issue is genuinely challenging. I cannot simply brainwash your mother and make her forget about it, can I?"

Claire urged, "Please, dear, consider this thoroughly. I'm sure you'll come up with a solution!"

Charlie furrowed his brow, contemplating for a moment before responding, "There's a way, albeit with a low success rate, but it requires full cooperation from your end. We can't afford any slip-ups, or all our efforts will be in vain. Can you handle it?"

"I'm up for it!" Claire affirmed resolutely, then inquired, "What's your plan, dear?"

Charlie replied, "I don't have a concrete plan yet. We'll have to play it by ear. Let's head there first and see how things unfold."

The two of them departed from the airport and hailed a taxi to the traffic police station. Upon entering the premises, they spotted their car parked within the yard.

Charlie instructed Claire to proceed inside while he carried her luggage and followed closely behind. Inside the room, Elaine was crying and shouting, "I have been married to him for so many years, endured countless hardships, and now he is secretly involved with his old flame. Officer, is it wrong for me to give him a few good hits?"

The traffic police officer was on the verge of exasperation but maintained his patience as he replied, "Madam, I have told you numerous times. What he did was indeed wrong and morally reprehensible. He should face societal and moral condemnation. If you were angry and gave him a few hits, I can understand. However, I must emphasize that fighting on the highway is not permissible, alright?"

Elaine furiously declared, "I knew I should have confronted him right then and there, regardless of whether it was on the highway or at the United Nations!"

"Ah..." The traffic police officer sighed, "Alright, I understand your sentiments. I will refrain from commenting further. After all, today we are ~~



here to penalize your husband. He has already received point deductions and a fine. For now, you should calm down. Your daughter will come to pick you and your husband up later, alright?"

Gritting her teeth, Elaine seethed, "He's a scoundrel, not my husband!"

"Alright, alright..." The traffic police officer placated her, "I mean Mr. Wilson's case has already been handled. You can return home soon."

Elaine retorted, "You're not arresting him for adultery?"

The traffic police officer helplessly explained, "That is not a crime, and besides, we are traffic police officers. At most, we can inform the local police station to coordinate..."

Elaine exploded, "I do not need any coordination! I want him to be arrested!"

As soon as Claire entered the traffic police station, she heard Elaine's voice. She followed the sound and was intercepted by a traffic police officer who inquired, "Whom are you looking for, madam?"

Claire hurriedly replied, "I am looking for Elaine. I am her daughter..."

The traffic police officer heaved a sigh of relief and quickly responded, "Oh, you have finally arrived! Your mother has been threatening to commit suicide. We have sent three different individuals to persuade her, but to no avail"

## Chapter 5723

'Upon hearing the traffic police utter the distressing words about Elaine's suicidal intentions, Claire's heart raced with anxiety, and she pleaded, "Please, take me to see her!"

The traffic police responded urgently, "Hurry, follow me!"

Without wasting a moment, the traffic police guided Claire to the room where Elaine was located.

Unbeknownst to them, Charlie had been trailing behind, setting down the luggage at the entrance before catching up. He intercepted the

two and inquired, "Officer, where is Mr. Wilson, who arrived with Ms. Elaine? Can I see him first?"

The traffic police asked curiously, "And who might you be?"

Charlie explained, "I am his son-in-law. I was thinking that while my wife persuades her mother, I can go and reason with my father-in-law.

Once everything is settled, we can all return home together."

The traffic police exclaimed, "Ah, I see!"

He then motioned to a colleague and said, "Carter, come here and escort this gentleman to Mr. Wilson's room!"

Carter promptly replied, "Sure thing!"

Charlie entered the room where Jacob was located.

As soon as he stepped inside, he laid eyes on Jacob, disheveled and smoking heavily in a chair. Another traffic police officer was attempting to reason with him, saying, "Why didn't you inform your wife when this issue arose? You claimed that your relationship with your ex-lover was not a secret. So why keep it hidden from your wife for so long? If you had been honest with her from the start, this wouldn't have happened, right?"

Unaware of Charlie's presence, Jacob continued to smoke, uttering, "I... I didn't want any unnecessary trouble."

The traffic police chuckled, "Come on, as men, if everything is truly fine, we would want to flaunt it to our wives when we return home. So why keep it a secret for so long? Is it because you had ulterior motives?"

Jacob was momentarily speechless.

Just then, the traffic police looked up and spotted Charlie and his accompanying colleague. He exchanged a questioning glance with his colleague.

The colleague explained, "Jacob's son-in-law is here. Let them have a moment to talk."

Jacob suddenly lifted his head and spotted Charlie. He rushed over, his voice trembling, "Charlie! My dear son-in-law, you've truly saved me this time!"

The two traffic police officers swiftly exited the room, leaving Charlie and Jacob alone.

Charlie asked helplessly, "Dad, what on earth is going on?"

Jacob exclaimed in frustration, "Ah! It's that Stanley Finch from my Calligraphy Association. He planted Matilda's wedding invitation in my car yesterday!"

“I could have ignored it, but he had the audacity to call me today just to remind me about it, as if he wanted to take credit for it!”

“And as a result, Elaine was sitting beside me and saw the invitation. She started questioning me about when Matilda would return. | didn't say anything, but she asked if we were having an affair. | denied it, but she seemed to have suddenly become astute and figured it out.

Then she began attacking me on the highway...”

After recounting the events, he looked at Charlie, pleading for assistance.

“Dear son-in-law, give me some advice. What should | do now? Elaine is not only furious with me, but she also wants to attend Matilda's wedding and confront her about when she'll be back. Isn't she trying to tarnish my reputation in Aurous Hill?”

Charlie sighed and said, “Dad, | warned you that this situation could blow up. But you didn't believe me.”

Jacob explained, “It's not that | didn't believe you, | just hoped for the best...”

Charlie inquired further, “So, how do you propose we tackle the situation now? | can try to prevent Morn from attending the wedding. Even if she does manage to come, | can sill figure out a way to keep her from causing a scene. But the real question is, what's your plan moving forward? Do you want to leave, or do you wish to stay?”

Jacob's gaze dimmed abruptly. He sighed heavily. raising his palms in resignation.

“| should've pursued a divorce lona ado. | could've already started a life with Matilda. But if we were to divorce now, where would | go? Would Elaine even allow me to stay at Thompson First? Would she evict me from the house? I'd be left with nowhere to go. | couldn't even bear the shame of moving in next door with my mother and brother.”

With a deeper sigh, Jacob continued, “I'm certain they wouldn't let me off easily.”

Charlie asked, “So you don't want a divorce, right?”

Jacob smiled bitterly, “Ah, at my age, its better to avoid divorce... If I divorce because of this, not only will | lose everything, but it will also

tarnish my reputation. How will Claire look at me in the future? How will | face her?"

He continued, "People say that when a better option comes along, you can discard the old one. But now that my better option has run off with someone else, if | abandon the old one, I'm finished. This deal has been a colossal failure..."

Charlie clicked his tongue, "Dad, let me tell you the truth. Not getting a divorce is actually the most difficult solution. You don't want to divorce, you don't want to move out, and you don't want others to point fingers at you or for Claire to hold any grudges against you. The key to resolving this lies in helping Mom overcome this obstacle completely. With her vengeful nature, do you think it will be easy?"

Jacob suddenly felt as though lightning had struck him. He lowered his head and murmured, "It won't be easy... Dear son-in-law, how about you lend me some money, and I'll go into hiding for a while..."

Charlie asked, "How long is 'a while'? If you run away, do you think Mom will forgive you? If you run away, your acquaintances won't disappear. Knowing her, she will undoubtedly expose your wrongdoings and condemn you in front of everyone. Then you'll never be able to return."

'With a reassuring tone, Charlie proposed, "However, if coming back isn't an option, there's another avenue. | have connections overseas, particularly in the Middle East. | know a friend who holds considerable sway there, he is a warlord in his own right. What do you think about relocating to his fortress?"

Jacob replied, "I don't plan on never coming back... | just want to lay low and avoid the spotlight until the storm blows over. But ultimately, | have to return... Besides, now that you mention it, | feel like | shouldn't leave. If I go, she'll just blabber about this matter."

After saying that, he looked at Charlie with a pleading gaze and asked, “Dear son-in-law, how can we help Mom move past this? If you can help me overcome this obstacle, you'll be my savior. From now on, | won't even blink without your approval!”

Charlie sighed and said, “If we truly want to resolve this peacefully, | have a plan. If you fully cooperate with me, there might be a chance to salvage the situation. But | can't guarantee that it will definitely work. If it does, we can all leave this place and return home with joy. If it doesn't, then you'll have to fend for yourself. | don't have any other solutions.”

Upon hearing this, Jacob immediately asked, “Dear son-in-law, what are the chances of success with this plan?”

Charlie casually replied, “Fifty-fifty.”

Jacob's expression fell, and he said, “I understand. You don't have confidence in it either.”

Charlie responded, “I said it's a fifty-fifty chance. If it succeeds, we can all go home and live happily. If it doesn't, | won't just stand by and watch. I'll help you find an apartment in the city, and you can move out temporarily to let Mom calm down. If she truly wants to cause trouble at the senior university or the calligraphy and painting association, Claire and | will do our best to stop her.”

After hearing this, Jacob tightly held Charlie's hand and choked out, “Dear son-in-law, with your words, | can find some peace in my heart! Tell me, what's the plan?”

Charlie replied earnestly, “Dad, if we're going to execute this plan, you have to be prepared to give it your all, even if it means risking everything.”

Jacob firmly declared, “I'm prepared. I'm prepared to give up everything. As long as we can overcome this obstacle, I'll do whatever it takes!”

He then voiced his doubts about Charlie's plan and hastily asked, "Dear son-in-law, if this plan fails and I have to move out, can you find me a good neighborhood? And can I still drive the Cullinan?"

Chapter 5724

Charlie stood in stunned silence, his father's actions leaving him speechless. It seemed as though he was on the verge of being thrown out of the house, yet he clung to his desire for opulent mansions and flashy cars.

With a sense of helplessness, Charlie reminded him, "Dad, if this plan fails, I won't be able to afford a luxurious house for you, let alone give you the Cullinan..."

Jacob instinctively asked, "Why not?"

Charlie explained, "Don't forget, even if you leave this family, I'll still be here. If I rent a luxurious mansion for you and give you Cullinan, Mom might hold a grudge against me. I need to protect myself. If I provide you with a modest place, at least I can defend myself if Mom blames me. After all, I can't let you become homeless, can I? Otherwise, I'd be guilty of abandonment, wouldn't I?"

Jacob looked at Charlie, who seemed sincere, and let out a long sigh.

He patted Charlie's shoulder and said with great pain, "I understand, I understand. If I were in your shoes, I wouldn't want to offend Elaine either..."

Charlie replied, "Dad, I'll do everything I can to help you this time, but remember, there's no turning back now. We have to go all-in and give it our best shot. If we fail, we'll face the consequences together."

Jacob gritted his teeth and said, "Alright! I'll do as you say!"

On the other side, when Claire entered Elaine's room, she found her mother engaged in a heated argument with a traffic police officer, her eyes lined with anger. I just don't understand, why can't they affect all the cheaters 7 vily 72

The traffic police officer helplessly replied, "Why, why... I can't answer that. It's not up to me..."

Just then, Claire called out, "Mom!"

Elaine caught sight of Claire and burst into tears. She embraced her daughter tightly and cried, "My daughter, you're finally here. Jacob, that scoundrel, betrayed me with his old flame behind my back. I don't want to live anymore!"

Claire quickly attempted to console her, saying, "Mom, don't think so drastically. From what I know about Dad, he wouldn't do something like that..."

"Wouldn't he?" Elaine wailed, "His old flame returned after leaving over thirty years ago, and he never mentioned a word to me. They even worked together at the Senior University without my knowledge. Can you call that work? It's just an excuse to have an affair! Who knows if they secretly lived together as a couple! It's been so long, I don't know how many times I've been made a fool of!"

Claire hurriedly tried to defend her father, "Mom, Dad isn't that kind of person. Don't drive yourself crazy over this..."

"Am I driving myself crazy? It's like sporting a single cockroach. Once you see one, there must be thousands more lurking somewhere!" Elaine exclaimed.

Then, a thought struck her, and she slapped her thigh in frustration, “Damn it! Weren't they both on the Senior University's cultural exchange trip to South Korea?!”

With newfound determination, she grabbed her phone and began searching for news about the cultural exchange trip to South Korea. |

Adding Matilda's name to the search, she discovered numerous news articles. After all, it was a city-organized cultural exchange event, and it was customary to list the participants in the news releases.

Elaine found evidence that Matilda had indeed taken part in the exchange, fueling her anger. She cried out, “This... This wasn't a cultural | exchange, they went on a trip to betray me!”

She looked at Claire and lamented, “My daughter, I'm so furious! Jacob betrayed me with Matilda behind my back, and yet | used to mock

Christopher for wearing the ‘green hat. Hannah was sent to the coal mine not long after, but Jacob, that scoundrel, has been having an | affair with Matilda for God knows how long!”

Claire pursed her lips, searching for the right words, and hastily said, “Mom, Matilda should be a decent person. They wouldn't stoop so low...”

Elaine paused and asked, “Claire, have you met Matilda?!”

“Um... Mom... I... | haven't...” Claire suddenly realized her mistake and didn't know how to explain herself.

Elaine pressed on aggressively, “If you haven't met Matilda, how can you vouch for her character?”

Claire was momentarily speechless.

Elaine broke down, crying, “Claire, are you also helping him deceive me? Are you?!”

Claire was at a loss, unsure of how to salvage the situation. Just then, Charlie pushed open the door and entered.

As soon as he stepped in, he spoke up, “Mom, Claire hasn't met Matilda, but | have...”

“What?!” Elaine was surprised to see Charlie and immediately questioned him, “You... Have you met Matilda? Did Jacob take you to meet



her?”

Charlie nodded and honestly replied, “Dad took me to meet her...”

Elaine was furious, scolding, “Then why didn't you tell me?! | called you a good son-in-law and treated you like my own son, and Jacob made a fool of me. You didn't say a word! Charlie! You... You've disappointed me!”

Charlie remained calm and quickly explained, "Mom, it's not what you think. | did know about Matilda's return, and | did meet her with Dad.

But Dad and Matilda genuinely have a platonic relationship. The reason Dad didn't tell you, and didn't let me tell you, was primarily for your sake.”

“You bastard!” Elaine's profanity slipped out without thinking.

But as soon as the words left her mouth, she nervously closed it.

In the past, she would often speak to Charlie without filtering her thoughts. She would say whatever was on her mind, and she wouldn't feel satisfied unless she had said ten or eight sentences a day. But now, the situation had changed.

Now she relied on Charlie for everything, from food and shelter to daily necessities. Without Charlie, nothing would function. So, after accidentally swearing at Charlie, she genuinely feared angering him.

Hence, she hastened to add, “Charlie, I'm not targeting you. I'm targeting Jacob, that scoundrel. He claims he did it for my sake, but how could that be?!”

Charlie sighed and began to explain. He said, “Mom, you don't know the whole story. Matilda has had an extraordinary career in the United States for the past thirty years. She and her late first husband co-founded one of the most prestigious law firms called Smith Law

Firm. You can look it up online. It's definitely one of the top law firms globally, worth billions of dollars. Their annual profits from representing major companies in lawsuits amount to hundreds of millions of dollars.”

Matilda was actually a very modest person. Her classmates in China had no idea about her accomplishments in the United States. It was as if she had vanished from the face of the earth after going abroad. Thus, Jacob, Elaine, and their old classmates remained unaware of Matilda's achievements overseas.

It was only after Matilda returned to China that she revealed her accomplishments to Jacob. As a result, everything Charlie said was true, without any exaggeration.

In the past, Elaine had always felt inferior to Matilda. So, upon hearing about Matilda's success, she couldn't help but feel a twinge of discomfort and said somewhat unnaturally, “What does her success have to do with me? Just because she's successful doesn't mean she can be with my husband.”

Charlie shook his head and continued to explain, “Mom, you don't understand. Matilda's husband passed away, and she and her son inherited the family fortune and the law firm. Even if they split it with her son, they would still receive billions of dollars. And why did she come back to Aurous Hill? It wasn't for Dad, it was for her true love.”

Chapter 5725

“True love?!” Elaine exclaimed, “What are you trying to say?”

Charlie replied earnestly, “Mom, Matilda came back to China because of her true love, her current fiancé.”

He continued, “Her fiancé's name is John Riley. I did some research on him. He is a renowned economist who was specially invited by Aurous Hill University of Finance and Economics from the United States. He used to work on Wall Street and was a top-notch professional. He could easily become the CEO of any Fortune Global 500 company.”

Elaine scoffed, "just a worker, a professional manager!"

Charlie said, “Don't underestimate professional managers. Look at the CEO of Apple, for instance. He earns around 100 million US dollars a year”

Elaine's eyes widened in shock at the amount. She couldn't fathom earning over 100 million dollars in just one year.

Charlie continued, “Although Professor Riley may not earn as much as the CEO of Apple, he still makes around 30-50 million US dollars a year. Do you know what that means? He can earn 100,000 US dollars in a day if he wants to. But he values integrity and doesn't want to make money in Fortune Global 500 companies, so he came to Aurous Hill University of Finance and Economics to teach.”

He continued, “Now you understand why Matilda came back to Aurous Hill, right? She didn't come back to rekindle her old relationship with Dad. She came to pursue love because her true love came to Aurous Hill to teach.”

Elaine was immediately convinced by Charlie's words. Although she knew Matilda was getting married, she suspected there was something unclear between Matilda and Jacob when she first returned. Now, hearing Charlie's explanation, it turned out that Matilda came back to Aurous Hill not to find Jacob, but to find her current fiancé?

In confusion, she asked Charlie, "Is what you're saying true?"

Charlie looked at Elaine and asked, "Mom, let me ask you a question. Do you think, given Dad's current situation, he can attract a wealthy woman worth over 1 billion US dollars, who would come all the way from the United States to rekindle their old relationship with him?"

He continued, "Although he is Claire's father, although I am his son-in-law, although what I'm saying may be disrespectful, I still have to say it. Mom, do you think Dad is worthy?"

With this soul-searching question, Charlie left Elaine speechless.

Was Jacob worthy?

To say that he was worthy? That would be too much praise for Jacob.

With his appearance, there probably wasn't a retired woman with a pension of over 5,000 dollars who would look at him.

Elaine couldn't help but scoff, "Hmph! He's worth nothing! Who else would even look at that weakling Jacob, let alone someone worth over a billion dollars? She's a wealthy woman!"

"Absolutely!" Charlie seized the opportunity, "Frankly, given Dad's current state, if Matilda were to spare him another glance, her thirty years in the States would be for nothing! She's well-acquainted with Wall Street, accustomed to excellence. How could she possibly admire an old failure like Dad? Thirty years in the US. and she returns without a thought to help the poor? Is that fair?"

With a heavy sigh, Charlie continued, "Let me tell you, the only one who could ever like Dad is you..."

Meanwhile, Jacob, listening in from outside the door, felt like his face was ablaze with humiliation, his heart wracked with anguish. He knew Matilda, worth over 100 million, had returned for him.

It was a pity he lacked the courage to divorce Elaine and be with her. He had thought he could take it slow, maybe have a silent standoff ~~ with Elaine, hoping she'd initiate a divorce. Then, he could naturally be with Matilda.

But Matilda, whom he had assumed to be a constant, turned out to be a variable. She wasn't waiting around forever for Jacob. She had found someone better, someone more committed, more suitable for her, and she had moved on.

Yet, Jacob understood that Charlie's mockery in front of Elaine was a form of rescue. Even if it meant bearing the brunt of the blame, he had to accept it.

As Elaine absorbed Charlie's words, her competitive spirit flared up. She retorted defiantly, "Don't think Matilda is the only one who scorns ~~ him, | despise him too! If he hadn't done what he did to me back then, how could | have mustered the courage to marry him after such a disgraceful act? | was left with no choice!"

Jacob's heart ached even more, his soul steeped in sorrow, "Even Elaine claims to be coerced... What have | become?"

At this moment, Charlie immediately agreed, saying, "Mom, | think you're right... You are brave and straightforward, not afraid to love or hate. It's a pity that you married such an unworthy man in your life. It's such a waste! Such a waste..."

Elaine's eyes welled up with tears, "My dear son-in-law, you've touched a chord in my heart! just told off the traffic police, declaring that in ancient times, I, Elaine, would've been the number one heroine. Why did I end up marrying such a waste?"

Quickly regaining her composure, she continued, "I see myself as the protagonist in The Legend of the Condor Heroes. And Jacob? He's nothing but the waste, clueless about martial arts. It's one thing not to have skills, but to lack wit? What a complete buffoon!"

Charlie nodded in agreement, "Precisely! So, Mom, why hold onto this anger? You suspect Dad's involvement with Matilda, but it's clear

he's not up to par. Even if Dad desired it, he wouldn't stand a chance. By dwelling on this, aren't you only causing unnecessary turmoil for yourself?"

Elaine's anger towards Jacob had already eased a lot, but she suddenly realized something was wrong and said, "Then why did he hide Matilda's return from me? Why didn't he tell me directly?"

Charlie sighed, "Ah, Dad didn't tell you because he wanted to protect you. When Matilda first came back, she kept saying she wanted to invite you and Dad for a meal together. Dad didn't want you to be hurt by meeting Matilda, so he didn't tell you. | was there at the time."

Elaine frowned and asked, "Why did Jacob take you to see Matilda?"

Charlie explained, "At first, Matilda told Dad that she was returning to China. Dad didn't want to get involved, but when | heard about her situation, | thought her son might be a potential big client. So, | asked Dad to help me introduce myself. That's why Dad took me to meet her and her son."

He continued, "You may not know, but when Matilda returned to China, her son also came back. Her son's name is Paul, and he is the head of Smith Law Firm. He moved their law firm to Aurous Hill and was also looking for someone to help with feng shui when choosing the location. Dad introduced me to him, and he did become my client. | earned over millions from that deal."

Charlie added, "Matilda later arranged for both families to have a meal together. She wanted Dad to bring you, me, and Claire, but Dad didn't agree. He was afraid that you would be hurt, and he also worried that Matilda would feel superior to you and you wouldn't be able to handle it."

Elaine's heart sank as soon as she heard those words. It was hard for her to believe that Matilda was thriving so well. They were talking about billions in net worth, far surpassing her own by a significant margin. Bitterness welled up within her, mixed with a hint of fear. If she were to come face to face with Matilda and inquire about her current situation, how would she respond?

Matilda was unlike Hannah, where Elaine could find solace in her own superiority. Matilda surpassed her in every aspect. She was more beautiful, more refined, more knowledgeable, and even had a better physique. Comparing herself to Matilda was like comparing a chicken to a peacock, no advantage to be found.

Initially, Elaine consoled herself with the thought that she could at least steal Matilda's man. But now, upon closer examination, she realized that Jacob, whom she considered her trophy, was likely insignificant in the eyes of others.

At that moment, Charlie couldn't help but let out a sigh and said, "Oh, Mom, you have to understand Dad's good intentions just imagine, if you were to meet Matilda and she sincerely thanked you while clasping your hand adorned with million-dollar emerald bracelets, how would you react?"

Elaine instinctively asked, "Why would she thank me?"

Charlie earnestly replied, "Of course, she would thank you for taking Dad away from her. Its because you took Dad away from her that she was able to go to the United States alone and meet her first husband there, and together they built a multi-billion-dollar renowned company..."

"If you hadn't taken Dad away from her back then, she might have ended up like you now, struggling at the bottom, tormented by the Wilson family. How could she have the elevated position she holds now? Don't you think she should be grateful to you for rescuing her from the depths of despair?"

Elaine's heart was completely defenseless after hearing this.

In her mind, she cried out, “What in the world is this! Why is Matilda flourishing like this! She shouldn't have fled to the United States thirty years ago, enduring a lifetime of struggle due to her inability to adapt to the foreign environment...”

“She's in her fifties now. She should have experienced unemployment, abandonment by men, and even suffered from serious illness. She should have been cast aside by capitalism and reduced to washing dishes in the back kitchen of a Chinatown restaurant! How could she create a globally renowned law firm with her husband and amass a fortune worth billions! | despise it!”

With this thought, much of her hatred towards Jacob dissipated.

At that moment, Charlie pressed on, determined to secure victory. “Mom, | understand you must have suspicions about Dad's exchange trip to South Korea. It's hard to believe my words alone. But if you take a moment to search for relevant news and check the list of exchange participants, you'll find a person named Mr. Riley. He's Matilda's fiancé. They're both part of the exchange program, so Dad is simply accompanying them. With Matilda also involved, there shouldn't be any cause for concern.”

Elaine reflexively revisited the webpage she had just looked at, and indeed, there was Mr. Riley's name.

Charlie's words swiftly assembled into a compelling chain of evidence.

Seeing her expression, Charlie continued to press on, saying, “Mom, I'll tell you the truth. Dad informed me about Matilda's upcoming marriage right away, even discussing with me whether or not to inform you. But you see, Matilda is doing so well now, and her future husband is quite remarkable...”



“They chose the most exquisite venue for their wedding, the Sky Garden in Aurous Hill, with its exclusive aerial garden that's beyond the reach of ordinary people. She didn't just invite Dad, but our entire family. Dad thought it through and concluded that it's better not to tell you, as it would only cause you great distress. That's why he kept it a secret all this time. But unexpectedly, you stumbled upon the wedding invitation, leading to this scene.”

With a sigh, Charlie spoke up, “Mom, if you're really considering it, then let's attend their wedding together as a family. It might help put your mind at ease. What do you say?”

Elaine instinctively blurted out, “No, no, no! | have no interest in going!”

Internally, she muttered in dismay, "Matilda is such a formidable woman, and her fiancé seems exceptional too. | can't measure up to her in any aspect, and Jacob can't measure up to her fiancé either. What were Jacob and | doing all these years? Are we both going to embarrass ourselves?”

Observing her refusal, Charlie tactfully mentioned, “Dad mentioned that you were contemplating attending. He also assured me that he wants to be completely transparent this time and won't keep any secrets. If you decide to go, he won't object and will accompany you.”

“I've already decided not to go,” Elaine replied awkwardly. “Your dad threw the invitation away on the roadside. What's the point of going now?”

Charlie chuckled, "Mom, have you been watching too many movies where heroes return and throw grand banquets, hiring hundreds to check invitations? Remember, you and Dad are old classmates and acquaintances of Matilda. Even without the invitation, on the wedding day, you'll stand at the entrance, and they'll warmly welcome you in.”

Elaine waved her hands dismissively, “I truly have no intention of going. It's been decades since we last saw each other. What's the point?”

It's just unnecessary.”

Charlie sighed, “No, Mom, I genuinely believe you should reconsider. There's a significant rift and misunderstanding between you and Dad. If it isn't resolved, our family's future might be affected. Dad just confided in me, expressing that he'll support whatever decision you make regarding attending.”

Letting out a sigh, he glanced towards the door and said loudly, “Isn't that right, Dad?”

Jacob, with a flushed face, hurried in and looked at Elaine, stammering, "W-Wife, I made a terrible mistake. I shouldn't have kept this from you. From now on, I swear I will never hide anything from you again, and I'll do everything in my power to make it up to you. So, I've decided that when they have their wedding, our whole family will attend. I'll be open and honest, facing your concerns head-on..."

His voice choked up as he continued, “Oh, wife, you never had to doubt me. How could someone like me, a failure, ever be worthy of someone like Matilda? I... I'm not even fit to shine her shoes! In her presence, I'm nothing more than... I'm nothing more than a piece of dirt”

As Jacob uttered these words, he lacked the courage to say the rest. However, he had reached a decisive moment, victory was within reach.

He held back his tears and said in a trembling voice, “In her presence, I... I, Jacob Wilson, am... Am just... Am just a piece of dirt!”

Chapter 5727

Jacob, despite his lack of talent and real abilities, had always possessed an inflated sense of self-worth throughout the years. He had never admitted to being inferior to anyone in the presence of his wife and daughter.

So, when he suddenly spoke up in front of them and bluntly declared himself to be worthless, both Elaine and Claire were taken aback. Such words had never escaped Jacob's lips in decades. And Jacob himself had no desire to mock himself in such a way.

But before coming here, Charlie had repeatedly emphasized that he must utter this sentence, and it must be said, as it was the key to overcoming this crisis. Because Charlie firmly believed that this sentence was the crucial factor in navigating this ordeal.

After Jacob uttered these words, it felt as if his heart was bleeding. It was as if he were stomping on his own face, desperately trying to crush it, all to break down Elaine's suspicions of him. He confessed that he was worthless, that his beloved would never look at him the same way again. This feeling inflicted immense pain and insecurity upon him.

But he knew that there was no turning back once the arrow was released. Matilda was already lost, and he couldn't afford to lose Elaine as well

So, when Jacob saw the shocked expressions on Elaine and Claire's faces, he had to adjust his mindset and persevere, "Someone as esteemed as Matilda would only turn up her nose and walk away when she sees someone like me. How could there possibly be any dirty secrets between me and a worthless person like me?"

After saying that, he looked at Elaine and continued, "Wife, someone like me, a worthless person like me, in this world, if you don't want me, who else would? No one else would look at me, so how could I possibly be labeled a cuckold?"

Elaine, witnessing Jacob belittling himself and the pain etched on his face, wholeheartedly believed Charlie's words. In that instant, she felt guilty and remorseful for Jacob.

So, Jacob had been concealing this from her all along, just to spare her from being hurt by Matilda. And after listening to Charlie, she also knew that the gap between her and Matilda was insurmountable. If they were to meet, it would take a long time to recover.

Observing Jacob's scratched face, her guilt intensified, and the scale in her heart tipped completely.

With tearfilled eyes, she choked, "Husband... Why didn't you tell me the truth when | asked you in the car? If you had told me the truth, how could | have laid a hand on you..."

Jacob heard these words and felt a sense of relief. He couldn't help but inwardly sigh, "Damn it, if only | had the wit and eloquence of Charlie, | would have told you long ago. | wouldn't have allowed you to scratch my face like this!"

But he sighed and replied, "Alas! My intention was never to let you know about these things. We are just ordinary people, how can we compare ourselves to the successful and the billionaires? So, | hope you will never learn about these things in your lifetime. This way, you won't be hurt or have a breakdown, and we can peacefully live our lives."

He continued, feeling somewhat relieved, "Charlie was right. | don't deserve a woman like Matilda. I'm not even in the same league as her. I'm just an ordinary, useless person who likes to show off and save face... You suspect that I've cheated on you, and | should thank you for thinking so highly of me. If anyone else were to hear about this, they would probably ask me, Jacob, are you worthy..."

After saying that, he looked at Elaine, choked up, and said, “Wife, | also want to thank you. In the eyes of others, | am a loser, a waste, a worthless person. But in your eyes, | have become a scumbag who can make a billionaire woman travel thousands of kilometers to rekindle our old flame... Wife, perhaps only you can look at me and cherish me like this in this world...”

Elaine listened to his self-deprecation and couldn't help but feel uneasy. She quickly interjected, “Alright, Jacob, stop calling yourself worthless. We are just ordinary people leading a simple life. They may live their lives of wealth, and while we can't compare to them, our lives are not bad either. | know my own limitations and understand that | can't compete with her in any aspect.”

Saying that, Elaine took the initiative to hold his arm and said, "Alright, what happened earlier was my fault. You were trying to take care of my emotions, and | misunderstood you. Please rest assured, | won't bring up this matter again. Let's pretend it never happened, and you don't have to bear any grudges against me, okay?"

Jacob, upon hearing this, felt an immense weight lifted off his shoulders. After surviving this ordeal, he sincerely said, “How could I hold a grudge against you? | definitely won't bear any grudges.”

Moved, Elaine nodded and said, “Good, let's go home. Our daughter has finally returned after being in the United States for so long. Let's not make a scene here any longer.”

Jacob nodded solemnly, tears welling up in his eyes, and said, “Okay! Let's go home!”

With that, the two of them lovingly linked arms and walked away.

Claire stood there in astonishment, while Charlie wiped off a bead of sweat. This was what it meant to face a life-or-death situation. It

seemed that it had genuinely worked. Elaine would surely never bring up Matilda again and would even go to great lengths to avoid encountering her. That way, what he had said wouldn't be exposed.

Claire, snapping out of her daze, whispered, "Husband, you're incredible! You managed to resolve everything!"

Charlie smiled awkwardly and said, "I had no choice. Sacrificing my own pride for the sake of family harmony."

Claire held onto him and happily said, "Sacrificing oneself for the greater good, husband, you've achieved something remarkable!"

Meanwhile, outside the traffic police station, the officers who had witnessed the intense fight couldn't believe their eyes when they saw the couple walking away arm in arm. They instinctively rubbed their eyes.

One of the officers asked, "You... You two aren't fighting anymore?"

Elaine quickly shook her head and said, "No more fighting. Sorry for causing trouble to the traffic police officer!"

She even gave a rare bow.

Jacob hastily interjected, "Officer, I assure you, I won't ever stop on the highway again!"

The traffic policeman nodded absentmindedly, "Good to know. You've only got three points left on your license. Take it easy, and make sure to study up once they're gone."

Jacob nodded vigorously, "I'll make sure to strictly adhere to traffic laws from now on. You won't have any trouble from me!"

The family of four departed from the traffic police station in succession. Charlie loaded Claire's luggage into the car.

Elaine spoke up, "Dear son-in-law, why don't you drive? Let your father rest in the back."

Charlie agreed and took the driver's seat with Claire beside him, while Jacob and Elaine settled in the back.

As they drove off, Charlie glanced in the rearview mirror and noticed Elaine tenderly touching the wound on Jacob's face, murmuring, "Darling, does it hurt? I'm sorry..."

Jacob felt deeply touched. Combined with her earlier words, his previous inexplicable sense of superiority dissipated entirely, and his attitude towards Elaine softened considerably.

He shook his head reassuringly, "It's alright, it doesn't hurt..."

Instinctively, he reached out to quietly hold Elaine's hand, eliciting a blush from her.

Elaine squeezed his hand tightly, her tone solemn, "You're my husband. You must never demean yourself like that again. Not under any circumstance. Do you understand?"

Jacob, whether genuinely moved or not, nodded fervently, eyes reddening, "Of course, my dear wife, I understand!"

## Chapter 5728

Charlie couldn't help but alter his perception of Elaine as he observed the transformation from tension to affection between the two.

Despite Elaine's numerous flaws, she was the one who genuinely cared and had real emotions in her marriage with Jacob.

As for Jacob, it seemed that he had never truly felt anything for Elaine. Every time he mentioned his past with Elaine, he would complain and grumble. But now, it appeared that Elaine might be his best option. Otherwise, with his personality and way of doing things, even if he had gone to the United States with Matilda back then, they probably would have gone their separate ways by now.

Jacob had an abundance of flaws for a man of his age. However, while other men his age might have three to five flaws out of twenty, or

even seven to eight flaws, he had at least eighteen.

So, looking at it from a different perspective, the only woman in the world who could tolerate him until now, apart from Elaine, was probably none other than Matilda. This was also thanks to Elaine's straightforward personality. If she was unhappy, she would scold, and if she was angry, she would fight. So when faced with Jacob's many flaws, Elaine could counteract the harm caused by his flaws with her fighting and scolding.

If it were someone with Matilda's personality, constantly confronted with Jacob's various flaws and internalizing the accumulated frustration, she would probably be driven crazy sooner or later, or even fall into depression.

Charlie believed that after today's hurdle, Jacob and Elaine's relationship should have significantly improved. At least when they returned home, they wouldn't have to worry about fighting or cold wars between the elderly couple.

On the side, Claire, who didn't witness the affectionate behavior of the elderly couple behind them, also realized that their relationship had indeed improved significantly after this incident. She felt grateful to her husband Charlie.

After Charlie drove onto the highway back to the city, he asked, "Mom and Dad, where should we eat tonight? Are we still going out?"

Elaine quickly said, "No, no... Claire's plane landed early, and after going through all that trouble, it's only a little after four o'clock. It's been a long time since our family had a meal together. Why don't we just cook and eat at home? It'll be more enjoyable!"

Jacob also agreed without hesitation, "I think that's a good idea! Claire hasn't been home for so long, she must miss the home-cooked meals. It's been a long time since our family had a good feast. Let's go to the supermarket together and buy some groceries and meat.



We'll show you our cooking skills tonight.”

Upon hearing this, Claire naturally agreed and happily said, “Dad and Mom haven't cooked together for a long time. Today, we can have a feast!”

Seeing that the three of them had reached a consensus, Charlie smiled and said, “Okay, let's head straight to the supermarket for a big shopping spree!”

Elaine sighed and said, “Ah, it's a shame, it's a shame...”

Curious, Jacob asked her, “What are you regretting, wife? What happened that makes you feel regretful?”

Elaine lamented with a regretful expression, “I regret that Lady Wilson is no longer in the supermarket, helping people pack their groceries. Otherwise, going to the supermarket would be an opportunity to enjoy her service.”

Jacob instinctively asked, “Wasn't Hannah detained recently? What happened with that matter?”

Elaine proudly smiled and said, “That woman lied and pretended to be pitiful, and she swindled so much money that she must have spent it all

She continued, “Originally, she didn't have enough money to refund everything, but it seems that Wendy is doing well now. The etiquette company she started is growing bigger and bigger. She managed to cover up some of the losses for Hannah, barely making up for it.”

Jacob asked, “If all the holes are filled, does that mean there won't be any trouble?”

Elaine said, “I heard from a friend a few days ago that the decision not to prosecute Hannah seems to be coming soon. They said that after the decision is made, she will be able to go home.”

Charlie said, “It should be a non-prosecution decision.”

Elaine nodded repeatedly, “Yes, that's the name!”

Afterwards, she expressed her dissatisfaction, saying, “That woman really got off too easily. She should have been arrested and sentenced to ten or eight years.”

Jacob couldn't help but sigh, “Alright, wife. Although Mom and Big Brother have done many excessive things, their lives are already miserable. Let's not hope for their downfall. My big brother and Harold haven't fully recovered yet, and they can't go out to work and earn money... It's fortunate that Wendy is still able to earn some income, otherwise their family would be in a difficult situation...”

He continued, fearing that his words might anger Elaine as he seemed to be favoring his mother and big brother's family, “I'm not defending them or trying to help them clear their names. The main thing is that our lives are getting better and better. Let's not hope for others to have a worse life, so as not to ruin our own blessings, don't you think so?” Elaine fell silent for a moment and said seriously, “Husband, I think you're right. Comparing ourselves to them would make me, Elaine, look narrow-minded. From now on, let's live our own lives peacefully. I won't bother with their affairs as long as they don't provoke us.”

Jacob breathed a sigh of relief and quickly praised her, “My wife, your mindset is truly admirable.”

Elaine, feeling a bit shy, said, “Oh, you're making me feel embarrassed.”

She added, “Today, we have to cook and welcome our daughter. How about this, tomorrow morning, I'll take down all those green hats hanging on the balcony and throw them away. I won't use them to spite Christopher anymore.”

Jacob was surprised and said, “Really, wife, your... Your change is a bit fast. I need some time to adapt...”

Elaine waved her hand and said, “Sigh, to be honest, I've wanted to take down those green hats for a long time. They don't look good hanging on the balcony, but I still had some resentment in my heart, so I didn't take them down. Since you said not to compare ourselves with them, I won't hold onto this grudge anymore and will take them down.”

Jacob sincerely exclaimed, “Wife, you have truly amazed me...”

Charlie and his family drove to the supermarket, and on the way, Peter, who had just arrived in Aurous Hill, finally reached his destination.

This time, he came to China with a Nordic passport, and after arriving in China, he could continue using his previous identity as Felix.

~ Charlie had asked Keagan Myers, who had connections, to help him solve his identity problem in China. His previous fake identity as Felix, had become a fully verified record.

After arriving in Aurous Hill, he only needed to go to a police station to report the loss of his ID card, and he would receive his new ID card in a few days.

As Peter walked out of Aurous Hill Airport, he was filled with mixed emotions. He had previously declined Charlie's offer to pick him up, partly because he didn't want to trouble him, and partly because he wanted to start fresh in Aurous Hill without leaving any hidden dangers. So, he hailed a taxi directly and went to Aurous Hill Antique Street to revisit his old stomping grounds.

He wasn't from Aurous Hill, and he had lived overseas since he was young. In order to bring the Apocalyptic Book to Charlie, he had lived in Aurous Hill for a period of time. He was somewhat familiar with Aurous Hill, and the most familiar place was the antique street where he used to work.

Moreover, his previous identity as Felix Cole was also related to the antique industry, so his current plan was to return to the antique street, find a place to settle down, and start his own business in Aurous Hill. After the taxi pulled up at Antique Street, Peter headed straight for the police station adjacent to the street. There, he completed the necessary paperwork, including providing his identity information and undergoing facial recognition.

He then obtained a reissued legal identification card for Felix Cole, along with a temporary ID from the police station. With these documents in hand, he could now proceed with checking into his hotel in Aurous Hill without any issues.

When Peter arrived at the antique street, it was almost time for the shops to close. He decided to take a stroll through the antique street.

The environment seemed unchanged from the time Peter had left, yet his return had been unexpected. Shortly after he set foot on Antique

Street, a vendor recognized him and exclaimed in surprise, “Oh! Isn't this the former manager Cole from Vintage Deluxe?! When did you come back?”

The environment here hadn't changed much, and the commercial situation remained the same.

Vintage Deluxe was still the largest store in the antique street. When Peter was the manager of Vintage Deluxe, the people who made a living in the antique street mostly knew him.

Peter couldn't remember who the vendor was, but seeing that the vendor recognized him, he politely said, “Hello, | just returned to Aurous Hill”

The hawker nodded and leaned in, asking in a hushed tone with a hint of gossip, “Manager Cole, if I recall correctly, you were dismissed by Miss Jasmine Moore of the Moore family, weren't you?”

Peter didn't appear flustered. He simply nodded and replied calmly, “Yes, | made some business mistakes and was dismissed by Miss Moore...”

The vendor nodded and said, “Nowadays, Miss Moore is not the same as before. Back then, Miss Moore was only in charge of Vintage Deluxe, but now she is the head of the entire Moore family. When you come back this time, you better not let Miss Moore know, or she might cause trouble for you.”

Peter smiled and said, “Although | was dismissed by Miss Moore, it was only a work-related issue. | don't have any other conflicts with her.

I think she shouldn't bother with me.”

He then said, “To be honest, I'm planning to find a shop in the antique street and start my own business. If you know of any good shops for sale, please recommend them to me.”

The vendor shrugged and said, “Business in the antique street is getting worse and worse. remember you used to come from Antique City. and you were probably running a shop selling antiques there, right? Why do you want to come to Aurous Hill now? Isn't that going

backward?” When Peter applied for the position of Vintage Deluxe manager, his resume mentioned that he had been setting up a stall in Antique City for over twenty years. At that time, many small merchants in the Aurous Hill Antique Street regarded him as an esteemed god, and his background became a widely spread rumor among them. Antique City could be considered the Jerusalem of the Chinese antique industry. Those who had experience in Antique City could easily dominate any antique street in any city in China. Peter had a rich background, and returning to the Aurous Hill Antique Street to do business seemed like a step backward In the eyes of outsiders. However, Peter didn't want to explain too much and simply smiled, “Since I'm here, | might as well make the best of it. Over the years, I've been to many places, but | still prefer Aurous Hill.” After saying that, he clasped his hands at the vendor and politely said, “I'll be back early tomorrow morning. If you come across any good shops, please keep an eye out for me. If things work out, I'll pay you a commission for your help.” The vendor readily agreed, “Sure, I'll keep an eye out for you.” Afterwards, he waved goodbye to Peter. Once Peter left, the vendor stopped closing his stall and took out his phone to make a call. After the call connected, he respectfully said, “Manager Carey, it's me, Tanner, the one who sells at the north side... I've been thinking about it and | think it's necessary to tell you something!”

## Chapter 5729

Manager Carey, the esteemed leader of Vintage Deluxe, held a prominent position In the bustling Antique Street. When Peter was appointed as the general manager of Vintage Deluxe, Manager Carey served as his deputy. While Manager Carey's professional abilities were average, he possessed exceptional interpersonal skills and had formed a strong network within the Antique Street.

After Peter was dismissed by Jasmine, Manager Carey temporarily assumed the role of general manager. It was part of Jasmine's strategy to have Manager Carey fill the position temporarily until a more suitable candidate could be found. Thus, Manager Carey's title transitioned from deputy manager to acting general manager. However, as Jasmine's relationship with Charlie grew closer, her status and power within the Moore family soared. She became the head of the entire Moore family, a wealthy billion-dollar dynasty, and her attention shifted away from Vintage Deluxe's affairs.

In comparison to the vast Moore family, Vintage Deluxe was considered a relatively insignificant business. Consequently, Jasmine no longer prioritized its operations. As a result, Manager Carey gradually shed the title of acting general manager and officially became the true general manager.

Within the Aurous Hill antique industry, Vintage Deluxe reigned supreme, with Manager Carey at the helm. He commanded respect and held considerable influence in the Antique Street.

In the present moment, Manager Carey struggled to recall the identity of the person who had called him, prompting him to ask directly, "What do you want?"

The voice on the other end hurriedly replied, "Manager Carey, do you remember Felix? He was the general manager of Vintage Deluxe when you served as the deputy manager..."

Manager Carey instinctively interjected, "You mean Felix Cole?"

Without hesitation, the caller confirmed, "Yes, Felix Cole. | just wanted to inform you that Felix has returned!"

Manager Carey Inquired, "Felix is back? Where did he go?"

The stall owner replied, "He's returned to Antique Street! | was Just about to shut down my stall when | spotted him entering the street. We exchanged greetings, and he mentioned his intention to open a shop here!"

“Really?” Manager Carey's voice brimmed with alertness.

After a brief pause, he inquired, “Are you certain it is Felix himself?”

The caller reassured him, “Absolutely!”

In a murmured surprise, Manager Carey pondered, "Why would he suddenly come back to Aurous Hill? If he Intended to open a shop, why not choose a different location? Why return to Aurous Hill?"

The caller swiftly added, “Manager Carey, could it be that Felix wishes to reclaim his position as the manager of Vintage Deluxe? | know shouldn't say this, but rumors are circulating that Vintage Deluxe has been struggling recently. The job posting for a general manager is still active on the recruitment website. With Felix's sudden return, you need to be cautious...”

Upon hearing this, worry crept into Manager Carey's mind. He recognized Peter's profound knowledge of antiques. With his discerning eye, Peter could effortlessly determine the true value of any item. He was akin to an expert with exceptional Insight in the antique industry.

Had it not been for the incident involving the bottle that offended Jasmine, Peter would never have been expelled from Vintage Deluxe.

In truth, If Peter had shown remorse and a better attitude, Jasmine, out of her compassionate nature, would have likely retained him.

However, at that time, Peter had already completed the task assigned to him by Bruce and had no intentions of remaining In Aurous Hill

He displayed no remorse towards Jasmine and even had the audacity to use his resignation as a bargaining chip. Consequently, Jasmine reluctantly dismissed him.

Thus, Manager Carey also harbored concerns that Peter's return might signify an attempt to reclaim his position as general manager.

Addressing the vendor, he instructed, “Continue monitoring Peter for me. If anything noteworthy occurs, inform me immediately. | will

ensure you are generously rewarded...”

The vendor promptly replied, “Of course, Manager Carey. Don't worry, I will notify you promptly if anything arises!”

After ending the call, Manager Carey swiftly summoned several Vintage Deluxe staff members to assemble in his office.

These individuals had been carefully selected and cultivated by Manager Carey during his tenure at Vintage Deluxe.

Though he had not achieved significant progress in the business itself, his accomplishments in personnel management were noteworthy. He had replaced anyone who failed to fully comply with his authority, leaving only those who colluded with him in engaging in various illicit activities, siphoning a considerable sum of money from Vintage Deluxe.

Their most common scheme involved purchasing antiques at a low price and selling them at a higher price. For instance, if an item was worth 500,000, they would acquire it for a lower price and then find a dummy buyer to purchase it from the store for around 700,000. The difference in price would line their pockets.

Similarly, if an item purchased for 100,000 several years ago had appreciated in value to 200,000, they would intentionally inflict repairable damage and sell it at a lower price, usually a few thousand, under the guise of it being a damaged item. They would justify it as a means to recoup losses, but the price difference would ultimately benefit them. Manager Carey employed a “sharing is caring” approach, ensuring that these staff members received their fair share of the profits. They formed a tight-knit group, engaging in various shady activities together.

In the present moment, Manager Carey gathered them and, with a grave expression, declared, “I have just received news that Felix Cole has returned...”



The staff members were taken aback by the revelation. Most of them were former employees who had previously worked alongside Felix, thus they were familiar with him. The remaining few had heard of his reputation through hearsay.

Upon learning of Felix's return, curiosity brewed within each of them, wondering about the sudden reappearance and his intentions.

Maintaining a serious countenance, Manager Carey proclaimed, "Others have informed me that Felix intends to acquire a shop in the Antique Street. However, I believe he has more than mere shop ownership in mind. Should he reconnect with Ms. Moore and seek to reclaim his position at Vintage Deluxe, we will find ourselves in significant trouble!"

One of the staff members swiftly interjected, "Manager Carey, wasn't Felix fired due to his offense against Ms. Moore? How could Ms. Moore possibly allow his return?"

Manager Carey responded coldly, "You know nothing. Businesspeople prioritize perpetual profits, not perpetual enemies! Peter possesses certain skills. During his time here, he brought in numerous valuable items, resulting in profits amounting to several million..."

"However, this year, our profit barely exceeds 100,000, scarcely covering our expenses. While Ms. Moore has not troubled us, it also signifies her indifference towards our existence. She keeps us here solely to safeguard Vintage Deluxe's reputation and prevent its closure. Since Ms. Moore lacks any emotional attachment to us, if a better candidate arises, why would she retain us?"

As Manager Carey's words resonated, the staff members nodded in agreement. Continuing, Manager Carey asserted, "Henceforth, each of you must remain vigilant and closely monitor Felix's every move within the Antique Street. This time, I will ensure that he finds no standing within these premises!"

## Chapter 5730

Peter found himself at the heart of Antique Street, unaware that he had already attracted someone's attention upon his arrival. He made his way to the entrance of Vintage Deluxe, the grand three-story building standing tall amidst the antique-style structures that filled the street.

At that moment, Vintage Deluxe was still open.

Antique Street had a unique arrangement where vendors would open their stalls in the morning and close them in the afternoon, while the shops would open later in the morning and close later in the afternoon. This way, the early market catered to customers with less spending power or those seeking bargains. Once they left, customers with more purchasing power would arrive at a leisurely pace.

Peter stepped into the center of Antique Street, right at the entrance of Vintage Deluxe.

Manager Carey had just concluded a meeting with a few colleagues in the back. He turned to them and asked, "Do any of you have plans for the evening?"

Everyone shook their heads and replied in unison, "No, nothing at all..."

Manager Carey nodded and suggested, "Since we have nothing to do, let's stay in the store and work overtime. We can order some spicy crayfish from the nearby lobster restaurant and grab some beer. Consider it our working meal."

In Vintage Deluxe, there was an unwritten rule that if the staff had to work overtime occasionally, they wouldn't receive extra pay, but the store would provide them with dinner. The manager could access a reserve fund of 30,000 per month from the finance department, which included the budget for overtime meals.

Manager Carey usually exhausted the entire reserve fund every month. Some of it was used to treat the staff to meals, winning their favor, while the rest was discreetly utilized for various invoices and forged documents for his own benefit

When the staff heard about the plan for crayfish dinner, they happily agreed. Most of them were single and had no plans after work.

Moreover, the workload was not too demanding, so they saw staying back and enjoying a free meal as the best option.

Just then, Peter hesitated for a moment at the entrance before pushing the door open and stepping inside. The magnetic sensor on the door emitted a pleasant chime, catching the attention of Manager Carey and a few staff members. They looked up to see Peter approaching them with a smile.

Manager Carey quickly composed himself and greeted Peter with feigned surprise, saying, "Ah! Manager Cole, when did you return?"

Peter smiled and replied, "I just arrived today..."

He added, "I am no longer the manager of Vintage Deluxe, so please refrain from calling me that."

Manager Carey smiled and insisted, "Nonsense! When you were here, I learned so much from you. It's only fitting to address you as a manager."

Peter noticed that Manager Carey now wore a nameplate that read "General Manager" and inquired, "So, Manager Carey, you are now the manager of Vintage Deluxe?"

"Yes," Manager Carey modestly answered, "After you left, we couldn't find an experienced manager like yourself, so I temporarily assumed this position."

He continued, "Oh, let me tell you, Master Cole, I have been quite idle in this role. You know my abilities. I thrive when working under someone like you, but as a manager myself, I am not cut out for it."

Manager Carey then turned to Peter and suggested, "If you plan to stay in Aurous Hill this time, Master Cole, why not consider returning to Vintage Deluxe? I can speak to Miss Moore and see if we can invite you back as the general manager!"

Peter had spent many years abroad and was not well-versed in the cunning and tactics of Chinese business. He believed that Manager Carey's words were genuine, so he quickly waved his hand and said, "No, no, please do not mention it to Miss Moore. I have no intention of returning to Vintage Deluxe this time..."

Unlike Manager Carey, Peter's words truly reflected his thoughts. However, Manager Carey perceived it differently. He thought that Peter, like himself, was merely pretending, and the more Peter denied wanting to return, the more Manager Carey suspected that Peter coveted his position.

Therefore, Manager Carey pretended to be curious and asked, "What are your plans In Aurous Hill this time, Master Cole?"

Peter honestly replied, "After years of wandering, | feel a bit weary. | Intend to venture into small business in Aurous Hill. Perhaps | will rely on Antique Street to make a living in the future. That is why | came to Vintage Deluxe to pay my respects. | hope Manager Carey can look out for me in Antique Street."

Manager Carey nodded without hesitation and reassured Peter, "Don't worry, Manager Cole. If you ever need assistance in the future, just let me know, and I'll do whatever | can to help."

Continuing the conversation, Manager Carey inquired, "By the way, Manager Cole, what kind of business are you planning to pursue? Will it involve toys, calligraphy and painting, or perhaps porcelain and antiques?"

Peter responded, "| don't have a substantial inventory at the moment. My plan is to initially establish a shop to acquire various items. Once I've amassed a sufficient collection, I'll begin selling them gradually. Additionally, given my knowledge in antiques and appraisal, | intend to offer part-time services for a fee. Appraising treasures could serve as an additional source of income."

Manager Carey nodded gently and smiled, "You possess expertise in collecting items and possess a discerning eye for appraisals. With your keen vision, | have no doubt that you will succeed in this business venture! | wish you a successful start and continuous growth In your endeavors!"

Peter expressed his gratitude and said, "Thank you in advance, Manager Carey!" Manager Carey waved his hand dismissively and said, "No need for such formalities."

He smiled and continued, "Master Cole, have you had dinner yet? | have some crayfish delivered and prepared a few dishes. Why don't you join us for a meal?"

Peter politely declined and replied, “Thank you, but it wouldn't be appropriate for an outsider like me to join you for a meal. Please enjoy your dinner, and | will explore the surroundings.”

Manager Carey smiled and said, “Very well, | won't insist. If you need anything, feel free to find me.”

“Okay.” Peter said, “Thank you, Manager Carey...”

Manager Carey courteously offered, “Allow me to see you off!”

Peter declined, saying, “No need, | can find my way out.”

As he watched Peter disappear from sight, Manager Carey's smile lingered on his face for a few more moments.

Once Peter was out of sight, Manager Carey turned around, and his smile instantly vanished.

He clenched his teeth and thought to himself, “This Cole guy is trying to assert his authority! He wants to collect antiques in Antique Street and conduct appraisals on the side? If he truly proceeds with that plan, where will | stand? He keeps saying not to Inform Miss Moore, but if he gains recognition in Antique Street, she might find out on her own. If she stoops to Invite him back, | will be utterly ruined!”

He immediately called over a few staff members and Instructed them, “Contact some trustworthy individuals tonight. If this Cole guy starts his business, take turns causing trouble for him! Also, find a way to produce counterfeit goods that are hard to detect. Let's see if we can deceive him. If we can make him lose money and lose face, it will tarnish his reputation in Antique Street!”

One of the staff members hesitated and said, "Manager, it's easy to trouble him with a few people, but deceiving him with counterfeit goods might not be so simple. Felix Is quite astute. He never missed a beat when he was at Vintage Deluxe.”

Manager Carey couldn't help but grin and said, "Damn it, deceiving Felix is no easy task. We need a first-rate counterfeiter who can fool him."

Then, he sighed and added, "There's only one person in Antique Street with that level of skill, and that's Zachary! He excels at creating the illusion of age!"

The man nodded and remarked, "There's no telling if Zachary is bluffing, but he's been cozying up to Don Albert lately. | doubt | can convince him to cooperate!"

Manager Carey reassured him, "Don't worry. | know Zachary quite well. I'll give him a call and see if he can assist us." With that, he swiftly retrieved his mobile phone and dialed Zachary's number. |

In the past, Zachary had to show deference to Manager Carey, addressing him as such. But now, with Zachary's newfound status, Manager Carey didn't dare to disrespect him. As soon as the call connected, he respectfully greeted, "Brother Zachary, it's me, Timothy Carey!"

Zachary grunted and inquired curiously, "Why is Manager Carey calling me?" Ever since Zachary aligned himself with Don Albert, he had severed ties with the people on Antique Street. Thus, he was taken aback by Timothy Carey's call.

Timothy Carey replied eagerly, "Brother Zachary, ever since you left the antique street, I've been hoping for your return. | always keep good tea on hand, ready to entertain you!"

Zachary chuckled, "Alright, Manager Carey, we're old acquaintances on Antique Street. If you need something, just ask directly. No need for formalities."

Hearing this, Timothy Carey awkwardly smiled and said, "You see through everything, Brother Zachary. I'm calling to seek your assistance.

I'm interested in acquiring something special, genuine imitations, preferably."

Zachary smirked, "Who are you planning to deceive?"

Timothy Carey hesitated, "Oh, no, no! | simply want to collect some. Since | can't afford authentic pieces, I'm content with high-quality imitations."

Zachary's tone turned serious, "Timothy Carey, let me warn you. | work closely with Don Albert, who highly respects Miss Jasmine Moore. If you dare to cause trouble in her shop, it won't end well for you. Consider yourself warned."

Timothy Carey hurriedly clarified, "Oh, Brother Zachary, you misunderstand! I, Timothy Carey, am devoted to Vintage Deluxe and Miss Moore. I'd never act against their interests!"

Unable to conceal his Intentions any longer, Timothy Carey quickly confessed, "Brother Zachary, let me be frank. | need your help to deal with Felix Cole from Vintage Deluxe. He's resurfaced after disappearing for a while, claiming he wants to open a shop here. Frankly, I'd rather not have him loitering around my establishment. | want him gone for the sake of peace and quiet."

"Felix..." Zachary muttered. He harbored vivid memories of Peter.

Though Felix possessed certain skills, what resonated most with Zachary wasn't his abilities but rather the fact that Felix had once slapped Jacob, Master Wade's father-in-law!

Knowing Jacob's character, Zachary surmised he likely still harbored resentment towards Felix. If given the opportunity to avenge that slap, Jacob might warm up to him.

Considering the potential benefits of aligning with Master Wade's father-in-law, Zachary promptly declared, "Since you've been honest with me, I'll oblige. I've had my own grievances with Felix for some time. Keep an eye on him and let me know when he opens his shop. I'll pay him a visit myself"

In the luxurious Thompson First villa, the family of four had just finished a sumptuous feast, relishing every bite and cherishing the moments of togetherness.

Unlike Charlie and Claire, who always maintained a harmonious relationship, Jacob and Elaine often engaged in bitter exchanges and icy remarks at the dining table, creating an atmosphere of tension and discomfort.

But this time, an unexpected change occurred. The two of them refrained from arguing or uttering a single harsh word throughout the meal. Moreover, they seemed to have shed their condescension towards each other. The atmosphere was surprisingly harmonious.

Elaine, in particular, had transformed her previously domineering and overbearing demeanor. She now eagerly served dishes to Jacob, offering him various delicacies. She embodied the role of a virtuous wife and loving mother to the fullest.

Jacob, who had once looked down upon Elaine and bemoaned his own reputation, had finally come to terms with his reality. Given his current appearance, it was understandable that Matilda showed no interest in him.

The fact that Elaine remained faithfully by his side was already a blessing. Thus, as he gazed at Elaine, his eyes no longer held the disgust and disdain of previous years. Instead, a hint of tenderness and gratitude shone through.

After the meal, Elaine, who was well acquainted with Jacob's habits, spoke up before he could rise from his chair. "Claire, help Mom clean up the kitchen later. I'll brew a pot of tea for your dad. He enjoys a cup after a satisfying meal."

Claire was taken aback and quickly responded, "Sure... Sure, Mom. You don't need to worry about the dining table. I'll take care of it."

Jacob, sitting on his chair, was also stunned.

Elaine personally making tea for him?



Did he deserve such treatment?

He immediately stood up and said, "Wife, you don't have to trouble yourself. I'll make the tea later..."

Elaine insisted, "You just finished eating. Take a moment to rest before getting up. I'll bring the tea to the living room coffee table for you."

With those words, Elaine gracefully left the kitchen.

Jacob couldn't help but fixate his gaze on her figure, feeling a surge of emotion that almost brought tears to his eyes.

In disbelief, he looked at Charlie, then glanced at Elaine as she walked out of the kitchen. His expression seemed to ask Charlie if he was dreaming.

Charlie, too, was amazed by the scene unfolding before him. It appeared that his mother-in-law was truly undergoing a transformation.

While marveling at this unexpected change, he quickly rose to help his wife clean up the dining table.

Claire hurriedly interjected, "Husband, Mom doesn't want you to do anything. Just sit and relax. I'll take care of it."

Charlie smiled and replied, "You've been away for so long. How can I simply sit and watch you work?"

Jacob, who had just recovered from his astonishment, couldn't help but sigh, "They say a harmonious family leads to success in everything. I never truly understood or felt it before, but now I do! A family without arguments, without conflicts, feels so good, so perfect! With such a harmonious family atmosphere, even if someone slaps you in the face outside, you'll come home with a smile on your face!"

Claire, seeing that Elaine had left, paused her dishwashing and earnestly addressed Jacob. “Dad! Thanks to Charlie for defusing the situation earlier. Otherwise, if Mom found out that you specifically went to the airport to pick up Matilda and brought her home for dinner while she was in the detention center, you would probably be begging the traffic police to arrest you!”

Jacob was taken aback and instinctively glanced towards the dining room. Not seeing Elaine, he nervously replied to Claire, ‘Claire, for the sake of our family harmony, you must keep all those things to yourself. The version of events that Charlie shared should be the only one, understood?’

Claire pursed her lips and muttered, “For the sake of family harmony, I won't tell Mom. But deep down, you should know not to do such things again!”

Jacob nodded repeatedly and promised, “Don't worry, Dad will never do it again.” Just as he finished speaking, his phone on the table suddenly rang. He glanced down and saw that the caller was Zachary.

He felt a tinge of surprise and mumbled, “This is strange. Zachary has been avoiding me for so long. Why is he calling now?”

Charlie, 100, was puzzled. Zachary had left Antique Street and started working for Don Albert, so he shouldn't have much contact with his father-in-law.

Why would he call at this moment?

“Though curious, Jacob picked up the phone and answered the call.

On the other end, Zachary respectfully spoke, “President Wilson, it's me, Zachary. Do you remember me?”

“Nonsense...” Jacob grumbled, “After all our dealings, how could I forget you? I've called you countless times before and couldn't get through. Why did you suddenly decide to contact me now?”

Zachary chuckled and quickly explained, “To be honest, President Wilson, I've quit the antique business. Now I'm working for Don Albert in Aurous Hill. You must know Don Albert, right? He has a good relationship with you.”

Jacob snorted, “Of course, how could I not know Don Albert? I had dinner at his Heaven Springs's diamond box a few days ago.”

With that, Jacob continued, “Alright, Zachary, enough with the formalities just tell me why you're calling.”

Zachary's voice was deferential as he said, “President Wilson, | have some good news to share. Do you remember Felix Cole from Vintage Deluxe?”

The mention of Felix Cole's name caused Charlie's heart to skip a beat, while Jacob felt a burning sensation on his face, as if he had been slapped once again.

He cursed under his breath, muttering, “Felix Cole? How could | forget him! He caused trouble for me at Vintage Deluxe and when I left, he had someone bring me back just to slap me in the face. | will never forget that grudge! If it weren't for him being driven out of Aurous Hill by the Moore family, | would have already avenged that day!”

Upon hearing his father-in-law's words, Charlie couldn't help but feel a sense of helplessness.

Although the sequence of events had gradually unraveled, Charlie was aware that the vase had fallen when his father-in-law, Jacob, was inspecting it in Vintage Deluxe. Yet, Jacob's behavior at the time was undeniably reckless.

Charlie realized that Jacob's initial reaction upon accidentally breaking the million-dollar vase wasn't to seek a solution but to abandon him as a scapegoat and flee the scene.

What was the point of enduring a slap?

Was the grudge really worth it?

However, Jacob held a different perspective. “I'm not exactly young anymore. It's utterly humiliating to be apprehended on the street by a group of ruffians. When those thugs caught me and dragged me back, they weren't gentle, they resorted to their fists. To be subjected to such treatment at my age... How can | swallow such indignation?”

Furthermore, based on the Intel he had received, Felix had vanished from Aurous Hill following the incident, leaving him with no opportunity for retribution, even if he desired it.

On the other end of the phone, Zachary's anger towards Felix was palpable upon Jacob's mention of him. This confirmed Jacob's suspicion, prompting Zachary to flatteringly assert, "If President Wilson wishes to seek vengeance, the opportunity is ripe!"

"There's an opportunity?" Jacob failed to discern the implication in Zachary's words but retorted angrily, "That scoundrel has been gone for ages. I doubt he's still in Aurous Hill. Where could he possibly exact my revenge?"

With an air of offering a treasure, Zachary hastily responded, "President Wilson, I have news to share. Felix has returned to Aurous Hill and intends to open a shop on Antique Street!"

"What did you say?" Jacob rose to his feet upon hearing this, his tone tinged with excitement. "That rascal Felix Cole is returning to Aurous Hill's Antique Street to set up shop? Is he gallivanting about, or is he struggling to make ends meet?"

In Jacob's estimation, Felix's return to Aurous Hill held two possibilities, either he had flourished elsewhere, returning to Aurous Hill to reclaim his honor after being expelled from Vintage Deluxe, or conversely, he had faltered outside, forced to return to Aurous Hill in search of sustenance.

If it was the former, then any hopes of retribution were likely dashed. But if it was the latter, then the opportunity for revenge might just present itself.

"I haven't personally encountered Felix." Zachary admitted, "But based on the information I've gathered, his prospects outside seem bleak.

It appears he's merely seeking refuge on Antique Street, engaging in minor commerce. He hasn't matured a bit since leaving.”

This prompted Jacob to burst into laughter. \*Haha! It seems this scoundrel is floundering outside, forced to return to Aurous Hill in search of employment! Truly, the heavens work in mysterious ways!”  
“If you desire to avenge the affront he inflicted upon you.” Zachary suggested, ‘I can assist you!”

Jacob eagerly agreed, “Excellent! Since you're in the service of the Don Albert, assemble a group of men tomorrow, track him down and teach him a lesson!”

Zachary, taken aback, questioned, “President Wilson, isn't that a bit excessive?”

Jacob snapped back, “Wasn't his assault on me equally excessive?”

Zachary hastened to clarify, “President Wilson, forgive me. What I meant was, since he has wronged you, the punishment should be commensurate. At the very least, he must be publicly shamed in Aurous Hill to the extent that he can no longer remain here in peace.

When he's reached his breaking point and seeks to flee, that's when we strike. It's akin to kicking a man when he's down. This will assuage your resentment, don't you think?”

Delighted, Jacob concurred, “You're absolutely right! Your plan makes perfect sense!”

“Unless you object, President Wilson.” Zachary inquired, “May I proceed with this course of action?”

“By all means!” Jacob replied without hesitation. “I'll follow your lead!”

Zachary grinned, “Very well, President Wilson. Await my triumphant report!”

“I shan't delay.” Jacob asserted. \*Keep me informed of any developments promptly.”

“Understood,” Zachary affirmed. “I'll devise a strategy and provide updates as they arise.”

“Excellent! | eagerly await your progress.” Jacob concluded, hanging up the phone with satisfaction.

Meanwhile, Charlie silently cursed within himself.

Zachary's cunning knew no bounds, he even remembered Jacob's grudge against Peter. Furthermore, he had received news of Peter's return to Aurous Hill on the very day of his arrival, showcasing remarkable efficiency. Yet, Zachary remained oblivious to Charlie's connection to Peter, otherwise, he wouldn't dare instigate trouble for him.

Meanwhile, Claire interrupted the conversation, setting aside the dishes. She addressed Jacob with conviction, “Dad, your actions at Vintage Deluxe caused quite the uproar. Breaking a million-dollar vase and fleeing the scene, | doubt even | could restrain myself from lashing out if | were the manager!”

Jacob retorted, “Fleeing was my prerogative, but he had no right to lay a hand on me. That was unjust.”

Claire shook her head in exasperation. “Dad, you mustn't allow Zachary to harass others. We cannot stoop to such disgraceful behavior!”

Impatiently, Jacob waved her concerns away. \*I know what I'm doing. You needn't worry about it!”

Chapter 5732

Charlie, who had been silent all along, had a whirlwind of thoughts racing through his mind at this moment.

He couldn't bear to witness Peter, the courageous hero who risked his life to retrieve the Four Treasures of the Study from the powerful Rothschild Family, being humiliated in a place like Aurous Hill Antique Street.

His first instinct was to call Don Albert and ask him to keep a close eye on the Antique Street. If anyone dared to cause trouble for Peter, they would be dealt with swiftly. But he also knew that Peter, a person who had weathered storms and fearlessly confronted the Rothschild Family, probably wouldn't want to be protected by others in a place like Aurous Hill.

This kind of person was skilled at problem-solving, and small issues like this should be a piece of cake for him.

After careful consideration, Charlie decided not to interfere too much for the time being. He would let Peter handle these local troublemakers in Aurous Hill on his own, while he observed from the shadows. As long as his father-in-law, Jacob, didn't go too far, he believed that Peter would be able to handle it.

So, he deliberately spoke up to Jacob, saying, "Dad, if Zachary comes up with any schemes, let me know. I can also provide you with some advice."

Jacob, unaware of Charlie and Peter's current relationship, thought that Charlie was also dissatisfied with what had happened in the past.

He patted his chest and said, "Good son-in-law, don't worry. If there are any developments in this matter, Dad will definitely keep you in the loop."

Claire couldn't help but murmur, "Husband, isn't Dad sensible enough? Do you have to involve yourself in this matter?"

"No," Charlie smiled and said, "just want to lend Dad a helping hand. This kind of thing should definitely stay within the bounds of the law.

Otherwise, if things escalate and Dad gets entangled and ends up in trouble, I won't have the ability to bail him out. Life inside jail is no

walk in the park, and Mom knows that firsthand.”

Jacob lacked wisdom, so he couldn't come up with a revenge plan. He simply wanted Zachary to bring a few people to Antique Street and beat up Peter. But now, upon hearing Charlie's words, he couldn't help but feel a tinge of fear.

He could only grumble helplessly, “Even if I can't beat him to a pulp, I should at least be able to give him a good slap. Otherwise, what was the point of enduring those slaps?”

Claire immediately chimed in, “You can slap him, but if he reports it to the police, you'll be charged with assault and battery. The punishment can range from 15 days of detention to several months in prison. Think about it.”

“I...” Jacob blushed and argued, “When they hit me back then, why didn't the police arrest them?”

Claire countered, “Then why didn't you report it to the police back then?”

“Report it?” Jacob said angrily, “I smashed their bottles, and they demanded over five million as compensation. I was afraid of paying up, so I ran away. You want me to report it?”

Claire looked at him and said sternly, “You didn't report it back then because you knew you were in the wrong, and they didn't have any valid reason to be blamed. If you go and attack them now, why wouldn't they report it?”

Jacob was momentarily speechless and could only look to Charlie, hoping for his assistance. He said with expectation, “Good son-in-law, you have connections with wealthy and powerful people through your feng shui consultations. If Zachary reports it to the police, can you help me find some influential connections?”

Charlie shook his head without hesitation and said, “I can't find any, not even a single one.”

He added meaningfully, “But I do have connections in the detention center. If you end up there, I can arrange for someone to take care of you inside.”

Sighing, Jacob reluctantly relented. Being a cowardly person, he didn't dare to endure the trials of the detention center like Elaine.



However, after a moment, he gathered his courage and clenched his fist, saying, “Its fine. Even if | can't beat him to a pulp, | at least want ~~ to give him a good beating. Otherwise, what was the point of enduring those slaps? | won't let him off the hook until | regain my reputation. How can | continue to hold my ground in Antique Street?”

With that, he didn't say much more and turned to leave the restaurant. Helplessly, Claire looked at Charlie and said, "Husband, please keep an eye on Dad and prevent him from causing trouble outside.”

Charlie nodded lightly. “Don’t worry, wife. | wil...” The two of them finished tidying up the restaurant, and when they emerged, Jacob was sitting on the sofa in the living room, sipping tea and watching TV. As for Elaine, who rarely smiled, she sat beside Jacob, constantly refilling his tea.

Seeing Charlie and Claire come out, Elaine quickly greeted them, saying, “Claire, Charlie, come sit for a while and taste the tea | brewed.”

The two of them exchanged glances and also took a seat on the sofa.

While pouring tea for them, Elaine smiled and said to Claire, “By the way, Claire, | forgot to ask you earlier. How much did Miss Joules give you for helping her in the United States?”

Claire felt a little uneasy and said, “Miss Joules gave me two million dollars.”

“Just two million?” Elaine was instantly disappointed and said with a sullen face, “Good son-in-law charges tens of millions or even hundreds of millions for his feng shui consultations. How long did it take you to help her? Going to help her, working so hard, and she only gave you two million? That's too stingy!”

Claire awkwardly said, “It's two million US dollars...”

“What? US dollars?!” Elaine suddenly exclaimed, “How much is that with the current exchange rate?”

Jacob quickly checked on his phone and blurted out, “The exchange rate today is 7.2...”

“Oh my!” Elaine excitedly said, “So, two million US dollars is over fourteen million yuan! My goodness, over fourteen million! Our family is going to be wealthy!”

Claire, who hadn't received such a large sum of money before, couldn't help but feel a little overwhelmed. She said, “I didn't expect Miss Joules to give so much. She had me open an account at JP Morgan in the US, saying it was for regular salary and subsidies...”

“But I received the two million US dollars from the Joules Group when I was about to board the plane. She said it was compensation for my hard work, but I didn't do much, so I can't accept so much money. So, on the way here, I was thinking about how to return some of it to her.”

Elaine couldn't contain her excitement and said, “My dear daughter, are you crazy? Are you? Since she gave it, just accept it and be at ease. If you return it, it's like spitting in her face!”

Claire furrowed her brow, replying, “Mom... What you're saying is quite distasteful... Is it really the same?”

“Absolutely,” Elaine declared firmly. “Wealthy people value their reputation. Refusing their gift would be seen as disrespectful. It's akin to a slap in the face.”

She quickly reassured, “Hold onto the money, dear, and don't be naive, alright?”

Claire replied frankly, “Mom, my trip to the United States didn't yield much, and the project hit roadblocks. There are ongoing disputes. Miss Joules's prior investment might be in jeopardy. How could I accept it? Besides, they have substantial resources. It's more trouble

than it's worth.”

“Ah!” Elaine scoffed, rolling her eyes. “This is the first time I've heard someone say money's too hot. If it were me, I'd carry not just two million but even a red-hot gold bar in my pocket!”

Adding quickly, “If you don't want it, at least transfer it to me. I'll put it in a fixed deposit for you, for your future children's education.”

Charlie chuckled at her suggestion. Only Elaine could propose such things. If she had the money, it'd be spent before the child arrived.

Knowing her mother's tendency, Claire said, “Let me reconsider. If the project gains momentum, I'll use it. If not, I'll return at least half.”

Elaine suggested, “Then return just half. How about transferring a million to me first? I'll invest it in a fixed term.”

Claire declined, “If I keep a million, it's for expanding the company. I'm at a crucial stage in my career. Investing in the business holds more significance than saving in a bank.”

Elaine seemed dissatisfied, “You don't trust me?”

“It's not about trust,” Claire explained patiently. “I have plans for the money. I aim to expand the company and establish a renowned brand.”

She then offered, “If you need money, I can give you fifty thousand as pocket money. It's yours to use as you wish.”

Upon hearing about the possibility of receiving \$50,000, Elaine's face lit up with a smile. “Alright! That sounds great! My daughter is incredible, with such strong career ambitions. With her striving to establish a renowned domestic design brand, our family's influence will only grow stronger, won't it?”

Inwardly, she couldn't help but marvel, “My son-in-law is a renowned Feng Shui master, and my daughter is a celebrated designer. With

two such successful figures in our family. it's like having two money-making machines. The possibilities are endless!”

On the sidelines, Jacob, taken aback by Elaine's unexpected windfall, couldn't contain his excitement. He coughed twice, itching to speak.

“Wow, girl, you're really making waves now! Dad couldn't be happier. How do you do it? Can't you let your old man share in your success?”

Claire agreed, “Sure, dad. I'll give you fifty thousand too.”

Grinning, Jacob accepted, “Thank you in advance, daughter!”

Claire promptly transferred fifty thousand to each of them.

Both parents were elated. Elaine gazed at her account balance and mused, “If you and your husband keep going like this, we might surpass the new Riley's in the future.”

Jacob remarked awkwardly, “Why bring up Matilda...”

Elaine clarified, “I'm just thinking. She's doing so well. How much does she have? Billions?”

Charlie estimated, “At least a billion USD...”

“Abillion...” Elaine muttered, calculating, “Five hundred projects of two million each...”

Charlie intervened, “Mom, comparing ourselves won't make us happier. Their wealth earns millions in interest annually. It's incomparable.”

Listening to his parents’ conversation, Charlie pondered the upcoming responsibilities. He realized that he had to serve as a witness for Matilda and John next week. Concerned that Elaine might get entangled in some trouble if left unattended, he decided to intervene.

“Dad, Mom,” Charlie began, “You've both been working tirelessly lately. Why not take a break and treat yourselves to a resort getaway?

Consider it a second honeymoon. Choose a destination, and I'll cover the expenses.”

Upon hearing Charlie's offer, Elaine's face lit up with delight. “Alright! That sounds fantastic! It's been ages since | traveled! Last time in the United States, | barely had any fun, and | got quite the hassle before leaving.” Glancing at Jacob, she playfully complained, “You didn't bother much during our wedding. Its alright if it wasn't lavish, but you didn't even take me on a honeymoon!”

Jacob chuckled, “You were the one calling the shots then. Where could | have taken you?”

Quickly adding, “But since our dear son-in-law suggested it, consider it our long-delayed honeymoon!”

Both Elaine and Jacob hadn't indulged in leisurely travel for a while. Jacob's exchange trip to South Korea, initially a blend of love and career, turned challenging due to Mr. Riley's overshadowing presence. The recent news of Matilda's marriage added to his discontent. A getaway seemed the perfect opportunity to lift their spirits.

Elaine, excited by the prospect, turned to Jacob, inquiring, “Where's the most fun?”

Jacob contemplated, “Europe? Or perhaps the Maldives or Mauritius?”

Elaine suddenly remembered something, blurting out, “Do you think Matilda will have a honeymoon? Where would they go?”

Jacob awkwardly replied, “I'm not sure...”

After a moment's thought, Elaine suggested, “Someone like Matilda would likely opt for a picturesque tropical island to bask in natural beauty. I'd rather not run into her. With her luxurious lifestyle, itd be infuriating to cross paths abroad.”

Jacob remarked, “The world is vast; chances of bumping into them are slim.”

Elaine, being serious, stated, “A determined person can overcome any obstacle. Let's avoid any mishaps. I've got an idea! Let's choose a destination so vulgarly opulent that we'd never encounter Matilda!”

Jacob questioned, "Where's such a place? New Malaysia? Indonesia? Thailand?"

Elaine scoffed, "Except Indonesia, in this day and age, Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand are passé. We need extravagance, not just vulgarity!"

Asserting firmly, she declared, "If we're going, it's Dubai! Matilda wouldn't dare set foot there for her honeymoon. It's perfect for shopping and indulging. My daughter's money is meant for luxury shopping abroad, after all."

Impressed, Jacob gave his approval, "You've got a point! Let's go to Dubai!"

Elaine turned to Charlie, probing, "What do you think, dear son-in-law?"

Charlie nodded in agreement, "Dubai sounds good. Let's book it."

Elaine, teasingly, hinted at the costs, "But Dubai's quite pricey..."

Charlie waved it off, "Mom, don't worry. I've got it covered. With Claire's gift and mine, you have enough."

Charlie waved off her concerns with a cheerful tone. "Mom, don't worry about it. Didn't Claire give you a hundred thousand dollars? Well, I'll give you another hundred thousand dollars!"

## Chapter 5733

As soon as Elaine and Jacob heard that Charlie was also giving \$100,000, they were overjoyed.

Elaine couldn't contain her excitement and exclaimed, "Wow, what a day! Good fortune keeps pouring in! I've heard that Dubai is a Shopper's paradise. It must be so satisfying to go there and shop till you drop!"

She turned to Jacob and asked, "Do we need a visa for Dubai?"

Jacob pondered for a moment and replied, "I don't think so."

"That's fantastic!" Elaine exclaimed, even more excited. "Let's not waste any time. We should pack our bags today and leave tomorrow!"

She was about to get up and head back to her room to start packing.

Jacob quickly stopped her and said, "Don't be in such a rush. We can't just leave like that. There are still many things we need to confirm, like flights, tickets, and hotels. We need to book everything in advance, and we should also do some research online to find out where to go and what to see in Dubai. We need to choose a convenient hotel and check if there are any attractions near Dubai so that we can plan how long we'll stay."

"You're right, you're right!" Elaine suddenly realized and praised, "My husband is so thoughtful! Why don't you start looking online now?"

Jacob replied, "We're not in a hurry for a day or two. Although there's usually not much going on at the association, I still need to take care of some things before going on vacation. I also need to inform Chairman Price. He's currently busy with some activities, and soon I'll be taking over as president. I need to be mindful of my influence in the association and not let them think that I don't take it seriously."

He continued, "Besides, I'm still waiting for Zachary to reply to me..."

Elaine curiously asked, "Why are you contacting Zachary? Are you getting back into antiques?"

Jacob waved his hand and said, "It's not that I'm contacting him, he's contacting me. It's a complicated matter that I can't explain in a few words, so don't worry about it. I'll urge him to reply as soon as possible tomorrow. Also, tonight I'll research Dubai and try to finalize everything in three or four days so that we can leave!"

"Okay!" Elaine, breaking her usual habit, didn't pry further or seize the opportunity to sarcastically criticize Jacob. Instead, she said

understandingly, “You're about to become the president, so you really need to pay more attention to your image. | don't have much to do usually, so you manage your time and we'll leave.”

Jacob smiled and said, “Okay, I'll come up with a rough plan for you to review.”

With that, Jacob eagerly stood up and said, “I'll go back to the room now. | need a notebook to check and take notes at the same time.”

Elaine instinctively stood up as well and said, “I'll go with you!”

In fact, Elaine wanted to take advantage of today to talk to Jacob about many things and convince him to move back to her bedroom.

They had been separated for a long time before. It was during their cold war period, when neither of them paid any attention to each other, so it was natural to live separately. But now that they had reconciled, there was no need to continue living apart.

However, Elaine thought carefully and realized that she couldn't bring up this matter herself. It would be embarrassing for her to do so. It would be best if Jacob took the initiative to move back.

If Jacob couldn't let go of his pride for a while, Elaine thought it didn't matter. She now thought more about Jacob's feelings.

It was normal for a man to care about his pride, so it would be better to wait for an opportunity for the two of them to go on a trip together.

When they were traveling and staying in a hotel, it would be natural for them to share a room. After the trip, it would be more natural for them to sleep in the same room again.

The next day, Peter, who was temporarily staying in a budget hotel near Antique Street, arrived at Antique Street early in the morning.

Although he had asked the stall owner to help him find a shop, he also knew that it was unlikely for others to help him. He had to rely on himself for everything.

Yesterday afternoon, he noticed that there were many shops in Antique Street that were listed for rent or transfer. It seemed that business



in Antique Street was not as good as before, and it was difficult to find someone to take over these shops.

Most of the shops were only able to continue operating because their leases and rents had not expired yet. But once the leases expired, given the current situation of operating at a loss, they would have to close down and return the shops to the landlords in order to get back the deposit held by the landlords.

Peter looked around and found a second-floor shop that was up for transfer.

The shop was called Treasure Pavilion, and its location was neither exceptional nor terrible-it was average. The size was decent, with each floor being about fifty square meters. The ground floor was being used by the current owner to sell agate and some lesser-known low-priced gemstones, while the second floor was used as a bedroom for the owner.

The asking price for this shop was \$150,000 in transfer fees, and the remaining three months of rent were included. After the lease expired, the owner could renew the lease with the landlord at a price of \$200,000 per year.

\$200,000 in annual rent was not expensive, but the \$150,000 transfer fee was a bit excessive.

So Peter said to the owner, "I remember this shop. When I was at Vintage Deluxe, this shop had already been open for quite some time.

I'm sure the contract you signed with the previous tenant was not \$200,000 per year, right?"

The owner replied, "I've been running this shop for almost ten years now. When I took over, I paid \$300,000 in transfer fees to the previous tenant, and the rent was \$250,000 per year. But as the business got worse, the rent kept decreasing until it reached \$180,000..."

“However, the landlord has had a change of heart and plans to raise the rent to \$200,000. | really don't want to continue with the lease anymore, so | don't want to renew with him. I'm willing to give a 50% discount on the original transfer fee, only asking for \$150,000 and including the three months of rent. This price is already very low.”

Peter nodded and knew that the owner's words, although not entirely true, were not to be questioned. The only thing that made him skeptical was the current value of the shop.

The original transfer fee only represented the market at that time, and the current price had nothing to do with the previous transfer fee. It was only related to the current market value, similar to the logic of stocks.

Based on the current business situation in Antique Street, it was impossible for a small shop like this to receive any transfer fee.

The reason was simple. With the business being so bad, many shops were operating at a loss. Most of the businesses had leases and rent that had not yet expired, so they had to continue holding on while trying to transfer the shop.

At the same time, they were prepared to hold on until the last moment if there were no takers. But once the lease expired, given the current situation of operating at a loss, they would not be able to renew the lease with the landlord for another year. They would have to pack up and leave, returning the shop to the landlord in exchange for the deposit held by the landlord.

Now, if they asked for a transfer fee, it was basically with the hope of making a little profit. Once the lease was in the last month, they would naturally give up the unrealistic fantasy of a transfer fee.

Peter noticed that the shop had very few items left, which indicated that the owner was already in the process of selling off remaining

inventory, trying to make some money back. But it would be impossible for him to invest in new inventory anymore.

Actually, Peter wasn't short of money. \$150,000 transfer fee was nothing to him. However, he also knew very well that in an area like Antique Street, where the shops were concentrated, there were no secrets among the businesses.

Everyone knew how each other's business was doing, when they started, the background of the owners, and whether there were any tricks in their business. Almost everyone could find out. If he managed to take over this shop today and the news got out before the contract was signed, the whole Antique Street would already know. If they realized that he had become an easy target, he would definitely become the subject of gossip and ridicule among the merchants on the street.

Moreover, he was planning to start his business by buying antiques and helping to appraise them. Once he was labeled as an easy target, no one would pay to have their items appraised by him. Therefore, if he wanted to establish himself in Antique Street, the first thing he needed to do was to get a good price.

So he said to the owner, "For the remaining three months of rent, | will pay you according to your actual rent. Your current rent is \$180,000 per year, which means \$15,000 per month. So for three months, it will be \$45,000 in rent. As for the transfer fee, | cannot give you anything..."

The owner was taken aback by this statement and said, "How can that be? | paid \$300,000 in transfer fees back then, real money, not a penny less. You should at least give me something in return."

Peter shook his head and said, "I'm sorry, but my funds are limited. After taking over the shop, I still need to restock. | really can't afford to

give you any transfer fee. If you insist on asking for a transfer fee, then I'll have to look elsewhere..."

The other party still extended their hand, insisting, "Just take a look."

Peter remained silent, turned, and walked out. The unexpected decisiveness of his departure left the other party flustered, realizing he had left without a trace, inducing a sudden panic.

His shop had changed hands six months prior. During this time, hardly anyone had inquired about it. Those who did often left upon hearing the transfer fee, some even abandoning goods due to the urgent need to transfer, demanding a half-price rent reduction.

Despite six months of hard work, today marked another loss of 90,000 in rent, with a net profit barely scraping 20,000. With diminishing stock, the store's dwindling inventory signaled an impending decline, resulting in a lack of recent business. Even occasional customers noticed the desperation to clear inventory, leading to slashed prices or worse. Continuing this trend would only exacerbate the next three months' struggles. Rather than prolonging the ordeal, swift action seemed prudent: finding a colleague to exchange remaining stock at a reduced rate to hasten closure.

Thus, he halted Peter and proposed, "Brother, don't rush off. Let's reconsider. If the 150,000 transfer fee seems excessive, how about 100,000?"

Peter turned back, his expression grave. "I won't pay any transfer fee."

The man grew anxious and blurted out, "You could offer me ten or twenty thousand as a gesture. My shop is profitable. You'd surely make a profit!"

Peter thought for a moment and said, "How about this, if you can vacate the shop for me today, I will give you an extra \$5,000 as compensation for your trouble. I will give you \$50,000 for the remaining three months of rent. I won't give you a penny more than that. If you think it's acceptable, call the landlord now and let's sign the contract together. Also, start packing up and find a truck to move your things. If you think it's not acceptable, then I'll just leave."

After saying that, Peter added, "To be honest, if | look around some more, I'm sure | can find a more suitable shop than yours. But for you, it's different. If you just sit here waiting stubbornly, you won't be able to attract a sincere customer like me. In this situation, if you're still determined not to cut your losses, then you should be prepared to take what you have to the end." Peter's words struck a chord with the owner, who cursed and said, \*I bought oil stocks more than ten years ago, and | still haven't recovered from it. When it's time to cut losses, | hesitate and don't want to take action. | could have saved something, but in the end, lost everything..."

With that, he gritted his teeth and said, "Alright, according to what you said, \$50,000. I'll vacate the shop for you today!"

Peter nodded and said, "Contact the landlord and let's sign the contract together." Before the landlord arrived, the news of Peter taking over the shop had already spread throughout Antique Street.

Timothy Carey from Vintage Deluxe didn't expect Peter to act so quickly, and he became anxious. He quickly called Zachary and said, "Zachary, Felix is moving at lightning speed. In just one morning, he has already secured a shop! Have you received any news about the items | asked you to find?"

Zachary also didn't expect Peter to be so efficient, so he said, "I'm still looking into the items for you. Felix's skills are higher than yours, and it's not certain that I'm better than him. Finding something that can intimidate him is not easy."

After that, he asked again: "Which shop did Felix take?"

After listening, Timothy Carey said anxiously, "Forget about the items for now. Felix has already secured a shop called Treasure Pavilion.

It is said that he didn't give a single penny in transfer fee!"

"Oh!" Zachary was surprised and said, "The owner of Treasure Pavilion is known to be difficult and stubborn. He actually transferred the shop to Felix without taking a single penny in transfer fee?"

Timothy Carey said, "It's true. It is said that he gave the owner of Treasure Pavilion \$5,000 as a moving fee and asked him to pack up and

leave today. This is an insult, isn't it? The owner of Treasure Pavilion didn't even lay a finger on him, and he actually agreed!”

“This guy Felix is something...” Zachary sighed and said, “Alright, I'll go to Antique Street this afternoon and meet this Felix!”

## Chapter 5734

“To avoid wasting the remaining three months of the lease, the owner of Treasure Pavilion swiftly sought out the landlord and brought in several peers to assess the goods.

Making the tough decision to cut losses is always a challenge, but once it's made, nothing is impossible to sever when the knife is swung.

The landlord was delighted, as he had found a new tenant. If the current tenant's lease expired with no one willing to take over, he would be burdened with the task of finding a new tenant and losing rent for every day the space remained vacant.

After the landlord arrived, he promptly signed an agreement with Peter and the other tenant to transfer the remaining three months of the lease. Peter didn't need to pay immediately: he only had to transfer the rent to the landlord before the new lease period began.

With the agreement signed, colleagues from Antique Street, who shared the same market niche as Treasure Pavilion, flocked to the store.

Merchants here had a penchant for inventorying their peers' stores.

When a fellow merchant decided to cease operations or no longer personally sell off surplus stock, it meant they were willing to sell it at a price below cost to their peers.

Items that were bought for a hundred could often be sold for seventy or eighty, making it a much more cost-effective option than sourcing new items from elsewhere.

The boss watched as his peers rushed in and cleared out all the goods in less than half an hour. He couldn't help but remark to Peter,

“Seems like it's necessary to cut losses when the time comes. In the past, just looking at this pile of goods would give me a headache, but

now that they're all gone, | feel much better. Even though | lost a considerable amount of money, it's ultimately a good feeling to get rid of them.”

Peter nodded in agreement and said, “As they say, out of sight, out of mind. When these things become a burden, even though they still hold value, they can only provide negative emotional value until they are sold and turned into cash. Each day of annoyance is an intangible loss.”

The boss nodded and said, “You're right! it's like the oil stocks | bought years ago. From the second day | bought them, every subsequent day was the best time to cut losses. Unfortunately, | was like an ostrich, burying my head in the sand and not caring about anything, foolishly waiting to break even. Over a decade has passed, and with inflation, I've lost at least ninety percent.”

Peter smiled slightly. Most people have this mentality, hesitating and always holding onto unrealistic fantasies. Such people are not suited for investment, as they never grasp the right time to cut losses or take profits.

With the goods nearly cleared out, the boss called a few friends to help pack up his remaining personal belongings and load them onto a small truck.

He then said to Peter, “These tables, chairs, and stools have been here for a long time, and no one wants to buy them. It's a shame to give them away. | don't think you'd be interested, but you can keep them temporarily during the transition. It'll take time for you to order new ones, and when they arrive, they can take these away.”

“Okay.” Peter nodded.

The boss continued, “By the way, | won't remove the store's signboard. If you don't like it, you can have it removed when you change it later.”

Peter smiled and said, “The word ‘Treasure’ is overused in the industry, but I'm lazy and don't want to bother coming up with a new name.

When I do change it later, I'll just replace ‘Treasure’ with ‘Selected’.”

Noon arrived, and Peter's new store was ready for business.

Instead of removing the signboard of Treasure Pavilion, he purchased a set of signage from the street and wrote the three bold and powerful Chinese characters “Selected Artifacts Pavilion” on temporary rice paper with a brush.

He decided to focus on collecting and appraising antiques. The word “Selected” would be fitting, as it conveyed the message of selection and discernment, while the word “Artifacts” would signify that the store housed valuable items. The former would inform customers that the store excelled in selecting and discerning.

After writing the characters, he climbed a ladder and covered them over the original signboard. He then wrote a notice with only the words, “We collect antiques from all over the world and appraise treasures from all directions.”

As soon as the temporary signboard and notice were hung up, Timothy Carey rushed over with a congratulatory flower basket.

Upon seeing each other, he exclaimed enthusiastically, “Ah, Cole, you're so efficient! You only came back yesterday evening, and now the store is already open at noon today!”

Peter smiled and said, “When you're running a small business, the faster, the better.”

Timothy Carey placed the flower basket near the entrance of Selected Artifacts Pavilion and said with a hint of reproach, “Cole, you're too modest. About half of the merchants on Antique Street are old acquaintances. Why didn't you inform everyone when you opened the new



store? They could have sent you a few flower baskets, and your presence would have been more impressive!”

Peter politely said, “Thank you for the offer, but I'm just starting a small business. It's not suitable to make a big fuss right from the beginning. Its better to keep a low profile.”

Timothy Carey nodded and smiled, saying, “You're too humble. With your abilities, you'll soon make a name for yourself on Antique Street.

Your Selected Artifacts Pavilion will undoubtedly be the most popular store here.”

Peter nodded and thanked him, “I appreciate your kind words.”

Just as they were talking, Zachary, sporting a smile, walked over. Seeing Peter and Timothy Carey at the door, he feigned surprise and

said, “Hey, isn't that Manager Cole? When did you come back?”

Peter also recognized Zachary.

He remembered Zachary because he saw him as the most resourceful vendor on Antique Street. He was clever, but in Peter's eyes,

Zachary's cleverness was not well-utilized. Moreover, he had a humble background and lacked influential connections, making it difficult

for him to stand out. However, as he looked at Zachary again today, he felt that this person's aura and demeanor were somewhat different. He had even

gained some weight and seemed to be doing well recently.

So, Peter smiled and asked him, “Zachary, are you still doing business on Antique Street?”

Zachary grinned, “I pop in occasionally. These days, I'm mostly following an older brother. Can't devote much time to the antique street.”

Curious, he asked, “Manager Cole, are you starting a new venture?”

Peter nodded, “Yes, a fresh venture. I'll be dealing with acquisitions and evaluations.”

“Appraisal of artifacts,” Zachary chimed in. “Live broadcasts of appraisals are catching on. With the right promotion, it could really take off.”

Peter, focused on rebuilding quietly in Aurous Hill, didn't fancy the idea of live streaming. He casually remarked, “Live streaming isn't as

easy as it seems these days. | missed the opportune moment to jump in. Nowadays, joining the live streaming scene without significant

investment hardly garners any viewership. With limited funds, I'm content with making modest gains.”

Impressed, Zachary complimented, “You speak like a true professional, Manager Cole.”

Adding, he inquired, “By the way, | have numerous contacts here who frequently handle shipments. Might | inquire about your budget? could explore opportunities to collaborate.”

Peter modestly replied, “I haven't saved much during this period of transition. | only have a few hundred thousand on hand. For moderately priced items, | should manage well. But for top-tier goods, | might have to pass.”

Understanding Peter's financial scope, Zachary pledged, “I'll scout out relevant resources for you and see if | can facilitate some transactions.”

Grateful, Peter expressed his thanks. "Much appreciated, Zachary!"

Zachary waved off the formality and turned to Timothy Carey, saying, “Manager Carey, kindly arrange a flower basket for Manager Cole. I'll transfer the funds to you later.”

Timothy Carey quickly responded, “Brother Zachary, no need for such formality. I'll handle the flower basket. You can count on me.”

Zachary nodded casually and suggested, “Let's sit down and enjoy a cup of tea when you both have the chance.”

With that, he walked away.

Timothy Carey, aware that Zachary would likely offer assistance to Peter, felt relieved. He turned to Peter and reassured him, "Manager Cole, you attend to your duties. I'll head back now. I'll ensure Brother Zachary's flower basket is delivered later.”

Peter, pondering the situation, smiled faintly and nodded. “Thank you...”

As he watched Timothy Carey depart, Peter sensed that something wasn't quite right.

Unaware of Timothy Carey's intentions to drive him away from the antique street, Peter couldn't reconcile why Timothy Carey, as the manager of Vintage Deluxe, would address Zachary in such familiar terms. Zachary, in his view, was merely a wandering figure in the antique street, akin to a low-end vendor. The disparity made Peter wonder if Zachary was facing some recent troubles. Reflecting on this, Peter couldn't shake the feeling that Zachary's sudden appearance had been orchestrated.

At that moment, Zachary strolled around Antique Street and entered the gates of Vintage Deluxe.

As soon as he stepped into Vintage Deluxe, Timothy Carey swiftly invited him to the VIP reception room at the back. He anxiously asked, "Zachary, how's it going? Do you have a plan?"

Zachary remained calm and said, "What's the rush? You're the general manager of Vintage Deluxe, and he's just opening a small store of a few dozen square meters. He doesn't even have a single item to sell in the store. What are you afraid of?"

Timothy Carey sighed, "Zachary, this Cole guy is decisive in his actions. Didn't you see? He took over the store, wrote the signboard, and opened for business all in one go. This person has some skills, better than those appraisers on Antique Street. If he continues like this for a month or two, his reputation will spread."

As he said that, he added, "To tell you the truth, the financial department of the Song Group has always wanted to eliminate my business.

It was Miss Moore who kept Vintage Deluxe despite all the opinions. It can be seen that Miss Moore has feelings for Vintage Deluxe, and she will definitely pay attention to the business situation from time to time. If she knows that Felix is back and doing well, she might entertain the idea of inviting him back!"

Zachary secretly sneered, "Your sources of information aren't reliable. If you, Timothy, are worried about someone taking your position, you don't need to fret about Felix. He was driven away in the first place because he offended Master Wade, who Miss Moore respects and

listens to. Miss Moore would never bring back someone who offended Master Wade. You're worrying too much.”

However, he didn't reveal this connection. After all, Timothy Carey needed his help, and by assisting Jacob in venting his anger, he could also make Timothy owe him a significant favor. It was killing two birds with one stone, and he couldn't be happier.

With that in mind, he smiled and said, “I wasn't planning to get involved in this kind of thing, but since you've had such good luck this time, and I have some free time recently, I'll see how Felix compares to me, Zachary, in terms of abilities.”

Then, he continued, “Felix only has a few hundred thousand, right? I'll find something that even someone like him will be interested in. I'll take all his few hundred thousand in one go. When he's left without startup capital, what the hell is he going to do with antiques?”

Timothy exclaimed excitedly, “That's brilliant! When the time comes, I'll discreetly spread the news, let everyone know that Felix lost money as soon as he returned to Antique Street. Let him lose money and lose face! Let's see how he can survive on Antique Street!”

Zachary nodded and said, “Timothy, how about I do you another favor?”

Eagerly, Timothy asked, “Zachary, what favor do you mean?”

Zachary said, “After I prepare the items, I'll bring them to you for appraisal. I'll let you know in advance how to evaluate the items, how to spot flaws and fakes. You set up surveillance, and when the time comes, stage a scene under the watchful eye of the cameras. When Felix takes a look, you release the video. You will be portrayed as having a keen eye for spotting fakes, while Felix will be portrayed as losing everything due to his blindness. With this comparison, when it reaches Miss Moore's ears, your position will be even more secure.

Timothy racked his brain but couldn't come up with such a brilliant idea that accomplishes two goals. He was instantly ecstatic.

His biggest criticism was that his professional abilities were insufficient to match the position of general manager at Vintage Deluxe. If this plan succeeded, it would be the ultimate counterattack against those doubts! Gratefully, he shook Zachary's hand and said, "Zachary, you're truly my savior! I don't know how to thank you!"

Zachary smiled and nodded, then said seriously, "Timothy, if this plan succeeds, remember that you owe me a significant favor."

Without hesitation, Timothy said, "Zachary, rest assured, if this plan succeeds, I'll do anything for you without batting an eye!"

Zachary nodded in satisfaction and then said, "Alright, you get back to work. I'll take care of everything."

Excitedly, Timothy said, "Zachary, how about having a cup of tea before you leave? I have some excellent tea leaves prepared!"

Zachary waved his hand and said, "The important thing is to take care of business. We can have tea after it's done."

With that, he walked out of Vintage Deluxe.

Once outside, he took out his phone and called Jacob.

As soon as the call connected, he exclaimed excitedly, "Chairman Wilson, I have a plan for what we discussed yesterday. When are you available? I want to report to you in person!"

Chapter 5735

At this moment, Jacob sits in his office at the Painting and Calligraphy Association, engrossed in planning a trip to Dubai.

Upon hearing Zachary's revelation of his concerns, Jacob's interest is piqued, and he quickly responds, "Come to the association to meet me. Visit my office for a chat!"

"Sure thing!" Zachary readily agrees, adding, "President Wilson, I'll be there in a moment!"

Jacob swiftly lowers his voice and reminds him, "And when you arrive, refrain from calling me President Wilson in front of others. Address me as Vice President Wilson. Understand?"

Aware of the protocol, Zachary nods. He knows the importance of proper titles, especially within the Calligraphy and Painting Association.

Calling Jacob "President Wilson" was a gesture of respect, but it wouldn't be appropriate within the association's formal setting.

So he smiled and said, "President Wilson, you can always rest assured that I, Zachary, will handle the matter!"

After ending the call, Zachary drove as fast as he could to the Painting and Calligraphy Association.

Upon his arrival at the association, Zachary noticed that there were only about a dozen people scattered across the workstations, yet each desk was cluttered with office supplies or personal items, which struck him as odd.

After inquiring, an employee guided him to Jacob's office. Knocking on the door, the employee informed Jacob, "Vice President Wilson, someone wishes to see you."

Looking up, Jacob spotted Zachary and gestured for him to enter.

"Alright, let him in, and you can return to your duties," he directed the employee.

"Understood, Vice President Wilson!"

With that, the employee ushered Zachary into the office, then closed the door and left.

Zachary greeted Jacob with a smile and took a seat in front of his desk.

Once seated, he couldn't resist his curiosity.

"President Wilson, | noticed there are plenty of workstations outside, but why is no one occupying them?" he asked.

Quickly lowering his voice, Jacob reminded him, “Don't call me President Wilson, call me Vice President Wilson...”

Zachary grinned mischievously and replied, “There's no one else around, so don't worry. Besides, | have a feeling you'll shed the ‘vice’ from your title sooner or later.”

Jacob feigned humility and responded, “Hey, let's not jump the gun. Until | officially shed the ‘vice’ from my title, I'll remain the vice president and won't overstep my bounds.”

He then tapped the table and continued, “Regarding your question about the empty workstations outside...”

Zachary nodded eagerly, prompting Jacob to explain with a smile, “This place serves as a sanctuary within the Painting and Calligraphy Association. There's no pressure here, and we don't burden our staff with excessive demands. They can come in the morning or afternoon as they please...”

“The space provides a conducive environment for socializing, men can catch up over coffee, and women can enjoy shopping with friends. Their only obligation is to offer a reason for visiting calligraphy and painting authors. Personally, | don't spend much time here...”

“I used to enjoy going to the Senior College to engage in idle chatter. However, the elderly members have lost interest in attending, and we haven't yet devised a new project to occupy their time.”

With a bored gesture, Jacob sighed, “But enough about that. Let's discuss the project you mentioned. How do you plan to proceed?”

Zachary grinned and quickly responded, “Today, | visited the antique street to gather information. Cole returned this time with several hundred thousand in funds. if he were to make a wrong investment and lose all that money, wouldn't it be disastrous? Not only would he

suffer financial losses, but it would also damage his reputation. He'd have no choice but to leave the antique street in defeat. That's where our revenge opportunity lies!”

Upon hearing this, Jacob's excitement surged.

Jacob pondered the implications. If he resorted to violence or hired someone to harm Peter, it could jeopardize the stability of the Calligraphy and Painting Association, especially with Cole being a prominent figure in the running for the presidency. Zachary's plan, however, seemed more strategic. It would inflict significant damage on Cole without implicating Jacob or endangering the association.

Eager to proceed, Jacob queried, “Is there a guarantee that Cole will be targeted for a punch?”

Zachary, exercising caution, responded, “President Wilson, openly discussing actions against someone like Cole could attract unwanted attention. I can't offer guarantees, but I know individuals skilled in deceiving experts.”

Intrigued, Jacob probed, “What do you mean by deceiving experts?”

Zachary elucidated, “In the antique trade, there's rampant deception. Street vendors peddle fake artifacts, claiming they're ancestral or unearthed treasures. These are crude forgeries aimed at naive buyers. Then, there are the masters of forgery who produce convincing replicas of genuine artifacts, deceiving even seasoned collectors.”

Expounding further, Zachary added, “These experts meticulously replicate items from past eras, transforming modern or Qing Dynasty imitations into seemingly authentic artifacts. For instance, they might pass off Qing Dynasty replicas as Ming or Tang Dynasty originals, inflating their value tenfold or more. One notable case involved a collector duped into paying millions for a faux chicken cup!”

With animated gestures, Zachary continued, “Imagine, President Wilson, if we procure such an item and present it to Peter, claiming it's worth hundreds of thousands. When Cole examines it, believing it to be worth a fortune, only to later discover it's a fake, won't that deliver a devastating blow to him?”



Jacob couldn't contain his satisfaction at the prospect of Peter's potential downfall. "Hitting him where it hurts, right in the wallet! Losing everything will be poetic justice! You never imagined you'd end up like this when you wronged me!"

His excitement tempered by caution, he inquired, "Zachary, could this be considered illegal?"

Zachary dismissed his concerns with a grin. "What's the crime? Antique sales rarely guarantee authenticity, and auctions worldwide operate similarly. Moreover, private transactions often involve buyer beware."

Relieved, Jacob pressed on, "Can you procure such an item?"

Zachary nodded knowingly. "I can, but the cost may vary. Realistic fakes fetch a hefty price. It's like counterfeit currency, the more convincing, the more valuable."

He elaborated, "If it's easily spotted as fake, it's practically worthless. But if it fools most people, it can fetch a decent sum."

To allay Jacob's financial concerns, Zachary assured him, "Don't fret, President Wilson. I'll foot the bill, no matter the cost."

Jacob's suspicions flared as he thought. "If it's not illegal, and you're covering the cost, does that mean all the proceeds from scamming Peter will line your pockets? What if you turn a 50,000 investment into 500,000? That's a 450,000 profit!"

Thinking of this, Jacob immediately said righteously, "I can't let you shoulder this alone, Zachary. I'll cover the expenses."

Although Jacob merely stated his intention to cover the expenses himself, the implication was clear: he aimed to monopolize the profits.

Zachary, astute as he was, swiftly discerned Jacob's underlying motive. However, Zachary's motive wasn't purely financial; he sought to

ingratiate himself with Jacob. He reasoned that by assisting Jacob in both relieving his frustration and earning money, he could potentially win even greater favor from him.

Thus, without hesitation, Zachary responded, “President Wilson, since you've provided the funds, I'll gladly relinquish every penny of the profits | accrue to you.”

Jacob replied with a smile, “Oh, come now, Zachary, don't be too modest. | simply can't allow you to toil for nothing after securing profits!”

With a cheerful wave of his hand, Jacob continued, “Alright, Zachary, I'll cover all expenses, and I'll offer you a 20% share of the net profit!”

Grinning, Zachary countered, “President Wilson, let's address matters as they come. | must remind you that once you've made a selection, payment must precede acquisition. When dealing with replicas, it's payment upfront and delivery, a contractual agreement. Let's proceed with selecting and purchasing...”

“If Peter doesn't take the bait, the funds will be squandered. Whether we can recoup it from others remains uncertain. You're shouldering the financial burden, hence, | must share this risk with you. it's imperative to be transparent about it.”

Jacob maintained his smile, “To be frank, Zachary, if left to my own devices, I'd certainly be uncertain. But aren't you the expert consultant? You're renowned throughout the antique street, not for deceit, but for your adept packaging and storytelling. | have faith in your judgment, and | believe the items you select will sufficiently deceive Cole...” He added, “Furthermore, even if luck doesn't favor us this time, it's inconsequential. He's not the sole financier. | trust in your capabilities to market and sell regardless.”

Jacob's reassurances left Zachary feeling somewhat disheartened.

He pondered to himself: “Mr. Wilson expects me to be truthful! Does this imply that even if he can't deceive Felix directly, he still intends to involve someone else in the deception to obtain the money? It's truly shameless...”

Zachary already regretted his decision to assist Jacob in seeking revenge.

Initially, he had merely aimed to extend a favor to Jacob and perhaps earn some goodwill. But now, it seemed that if this plan failed, he would be in for a significant financial loss. If he indeed persuaded Jacob to spend 50,000 on an item and attempted to defraud Felix of 500,000, failure would mean he'd have to fork over 500,000 to Felix.

Contemplating this, Zachary sighed inwardly: “This is so shady! Incredibly shady?”

Nevertheless, Zachary also understood all too well: “In such matters, there's no turning back, no remedy for regrets. Since we've come this far, we must press on, considering it a repayment of Master Wade's favor.”

Hence, he reassured: “President Wilson, fret not. Even if our endeavor to win over Felix falls short, I, Zachary, guarantee that you'll recoup at least double your investment, no matter the sum.”

By doubling down on his commitment, Zachary imposed a limit on his potential losses.

The objective was to swindle Peter out of hundreds of thousands, so the maximum investment in this scheme would be a hundred thousand yuan. Any amount exceeding that wouldn't be worthwhile.

You wouldn't spend a hundred dollars to acquire a counterfeit one-hundred-dollar bill and then attempt to pass it off at a store, would you?

That'd be ludicrous!

As for the 100,000 cost, Jacob would foot the bill. If Felix rejected the item, Jacob would receive 200,000 from Zachary. If the item found another buyer, Jacob would still turn a profit and avoid any loss.

Having received two 100,000 US dollars from Claire and Charlie just yesterday, Jacob had funds in his account and confidence in his heart.

He exclaimed cheerfully, “Zachary, you're indeed dependable! When should we proceed with the transaction? Let's not delay any further. I'm leaving for Dubai in two days. Let's aim to conclude this before my departure!”

Taking the gamble, Zachary responded promptly, “President Wilson, time is of the essence. Let's go right away!”

Jacob slammed his hand on the table, declaring, “Let's do it! Let's test him!”

## Chapter 5736

Zachary had been immersed in Antique Street for countless years, his vast network and connections far surpassing those of ordinary individuals. However, there were many prestigious resources that he had yet to fully tap into.

For instance, there were master craftsmen who specialized in creating high-end counterfeit antiques. They exclusively catered to antique dealers with affluent clientele and esteemed social and industry status. They held a disdainful attitude towards small-time figures like Zachary.

Even if Zachary had managed to locate them in the past, they wouldn't have spared him a second glance.

If these individuals were drug lords, Zachary would be nothing more than a minor player, lingering in nightclubs and peddling recreational drugs. But now, Zachary was different from before.

As Don Albert's military advisor, he possessed a network and status in Aurous Hill that far surpassed the average person. So when he called one of the senior master craftsmen, the latter was taken aback and eagerly invited Zachary to his workshop for a detailed

discussion. Thus, Zachary drove with Jacob to the designated location. The so-called workshop was actually a den for counterfeiting and modifying cultural relics and antiques.

Due to the disreputable nature of their work, the chosen location was quite intriguing.

Situated in a village beneath a highway bridge, it was only a few steps away from the neighboring Huizhou Province.

Zachary felt that Jacob's Rolls-Royce Cullinan would attract too much attention in this urban-rural fringe. Hence, he drove his own car and brought Jacob along.

Although the village was adjacent to the highway bridge, reaching the village from both the exit and entrance of the highway required driving on a bumpy and narrow county road for quite some time. Finally, they reached the village entrance.

At the entrance, a middle-aged man with a long beard awaited them respectfully.

Spotting Zachary, he greeted him with a smile. "Zachary, you've arrived! Just park your car at the village entrance, and let's head inside. It's not far, just a few hundred meters."

Zachary nodded and parked the car by the side of the road. He turned to Jacob and said, "President Wilson, let's go."

Jacob quickly lowered his voice and said, "Don't call me President Wilson. It's better to keep a low profile. When you introduce me later, just say my last name is Marks."

After spitting and muttering, "Pah, pah, pah, what the hell is Marks? Just say my last name is Murong, an antique dealer from Southaven."

Zachary nodded repeatedly and said, "Okay, Mr. Murong, right?"

"Yes!" Jacob smiled contentedly. "Compound surnames have a certain power to them. They exude a strong sense of superiority."

With the agreement settled, the two men stepped out of the car. The man had been waiting nearby and quickly approached, smiling. "Let's go, follow me."

Observing their surroundings, Zachary complained, "Teacher Ewing, why did you choose such a remote place? The road isn't easy to navigate, and the narrow village entrance makes it difficult for cars to enter."

Teacher Ewing smiled and replied, "Zachary, you don't understand. We deliberately chose this location. The two cars parked by the roadside when you arrived were arranged by us. This way, anyone passing through has to slow down, giving our people a chance to assess their background. If it's the police or undercover officers, they can secretly inform us, and we can make a swift escape."

Zachary suddenly realized and sighed, "You guys are truly cautious!"

"That's right," Teacher Ewing explained. "In our line of work, we easily make enemies. There are always disgruntled individuals who want revenge or report us to the police after losing money. We must remain vigilant, and this secluded location provides the best cover, easy to hide and difficult to find."

Pointing to the nearby highway bridge, he further explained to Zachary, "In fact, the quickest way to reach here isn't by driving off the highway and taking the county road. It's by parking the car on the highway bridge at a relatively low height, then climbing over the fence.

You'll be right here. Most of our regular customers use this method. I was worried you wouldn't find the place on your first visit."

Continuing, he added, "There's only one road into the village, with entrances in the north and south. Ordinary people looking at a map would think that blocking both ends would trap us like fish in a barrel. But if someone actually comes looking for us, we don't even need to leave the village. Our comrades on the road can stall them during the encounter. Meanwhile, we can climb up the highway bridge and escape."

Impressed, Zachary asked, "Do you climb up the highway from here and travel on foot?"

"No, we don't," Teacher Ewing smiled. "Just four kilometers ahead, at the exit of the highway you took, there's a service area. We have a

car parked there every day, with one of our comrades keeping watch. If any situation arises, they can speed over and be by the roadside in less than two minutes.”

Wide-eyed, Zachary couldn't help but admire, “I've heard that your team is the most professional in the south, but | never had the chance to witness it firsthand. Today, | finally get to see it. Truly impressive!”

Teacher Ewing quickly humbly said, “I dare not, | dare not. We, too, need to make a living, so we have no other choice.”

As he spoke, he inquired, “By the way, Zachary, why have you come to me today? What do you need?”

Zachary gestured to Jacob beside him and introduced, “This is my good friend, Mr. Murong. He specializes in the antique business in the Southaven area. | brought him here today to see if you have anything that might interest him.”

Teacher Ewing couldn't discern Jacob's background, but seeing Zachary's respectful demeanor, he assumed he must be a big shot. Thus, he respectfully said, “Oh, hello, Mr. Murong! I've often heard tales of the Murong family in martial arts novels. | never expected to meet someone with the last name Murong from Southaven. it's a pleasure to make your acquaintance!”

Jacob nodded and smiled, saying, “I'm pressed for time, so let's quickly see what you have.”

“Alright!” Teacher Ewing pointed to a farmhouse not far away and smiled. “That's our workshop, and all the good stuff is there. Let me take you there!”

They arrived at the farmhouse, which appeared unremarkable at first glance.

Teacher Ewing led them directly to an abandoned cattle shed. After removing the dry hay on the ground, a wooden board was revealed. Lifting the board, a downward passage was exposed.

It turned out that they used the cattle shed as an entrance, excavating the entire underground space beneath the courtyard.

Jacob followed Teacher Ewing down and couldn't help but marvel, "You all put in quite the effort. Digging such an extensive area!"

Teacher Ewing humbly replied, "Most of us in this line of work have experience with manual labor. Besides being skilled in tomb-robbing, we're also adept at excavation. This amount of work is nothing to us."

As they descended the stairs carved into the soil, they arrived in an underground hail. Though referred to as a hall, it was primarily due to its sizable area, roughly a hundred square meters. The environment inside, however, was rudimentary. To reduce labor, the height of the underground space was only around 1.8 to 1.9 meters. The bare yellow soil walls were supported by wooden beams, reminiscent of a coal mine.

Observing Jacob's concern, the guide smiled and reassured him, "Mr. Murong, don't worry. Though it may appear simple from the surface, it's actually quite secure. As the depth is shallow and the soil layer above our heads is only one meter thick, consider how much weight one meter of soil can exert. These wooden supports are more than sufficient. When we used to dig tombs ten meters deep, we utilized the same type of supports without issue."

Jacob felt somewhat relieved and carefully surveyed the surroundings.

Within the nearly hundred square meters of space, several workbenches were scattered about. Technicians diligently worked on various items that appeared to be antiques.



Zachary was taken aback by the grandeur of the place and turned to Teacher Ewing, saying, "Please, introduce Mr. Murong to your establishment."

"Certainly!" Teacher Ewing responded promptly. "Mr. Murong, our establishment is unlike others where counterfeit goods are produced. Everything we craft here is authentic, without a single fake."

With confidence, he lifted a bronze Buddha statue and presented it to Jacob.

"Take a look at this bronze Buddha. Freshly completed this week, its design follows the characteristics of Ming Dynasty bronze Buddha statues, boasting exquisite craftsmanship and authentic charm. However, despite its appearance, it's a bronze Buddha originally from the late Qing Dynasty or early Republic of China era, mimicking Ming Dynasty style..."

"The craftsmanship and detail are impeccable, but its previous owner didn't fully appreciate its value. It was passed down through generations, used merely as a household decoration and regularly polished, losing its aged patina. We acquired it, restored its antiquity, and now it appears authentically ancient... Present this in the market, and it could easily be mistaken for a Ming Dynasty artifact."

Unfamiliar with bronzes, Jacob inquired, "Would others believe it's from the Ming Dynasty if I sell it as such?"

Teacher Ewing smiled knowingly.

"We have our methods," he assured.

Picking up a copper base from the side, Teacher Ewing directed Jacob's attention. The base, weathered and aged, bore an inscription, "Xuande Year of the Ming Dynasty."

Pointing to the base, Teacher Ewing elucidated, “While our bronze statue may be only a century old, this base in your hand is a genuine Ming Dynasty artifact. Originally paired with something, now lost to history. However, when combined with our bronze statue, it forms a set...”

“Consider this base, genuinely from the Xuande period, enhancing the value of the entire ensemble. Crafted to emulate Xuande period bronzeware, this combination would impress over 95% of experts.” Curious about its worth, Jacob asked, “If this set were genuine, how much would it fetch?”

Teacher Ewing pondered briefly. “Bronze wares from the Xuande period are highly esteemed for their exquisite craftsmanship. Conservatively, they could fetch between one and two million at auction.”

Jacob pressed further, “And if | were interested in purchasing this set?”

Quickly, Teacher Ewing responded, “To be frank, Mr. Murong, in our line of work, we typically charge 30% of the market value for such items. Considering the conservative valuation at around 1.5 million, that would be 450,000.”

Jacob balked, “That's too steep. What if | end up losing over 400,000?”

Internally, he lamented, \*I need over 400,000 for this purchase. How much can | ask Felix for? Perhaps 800,000? He likely has the funds.” Teacher Ewing, sensing Jacob's hesitation, intervened.

“Mr. Murong, isn't pricing a bit inflated in our trade?” he mused.

Then, swiftly, he added, “I'm being transparent with you. The base alone cost 38,000. The bronze statue, 60,000, plus craftsmanship expenses. Normally, this ensemble wouldn't sell for less than 200,000. Since you're a friend of Brother Zachary, I'll offer a fixed price of

150,000"

Zachary interjected, "Mr. Ewing, we've known each other for a long time, but this is our first transaction. Let's start off on the right foot. Just consider this first order a favor for me. Let's keep it simple for Mr. Murong. The total comes to 98,000, right? 38,000 for the base and 60,000 for the bronze. We'll settle at 98,000 as friends."

"Friendship counts," Teacher Ewing agreed emotionally. "Of course, I'd like to extend a friendly gesture to Mr. Murong, but we have overheads to consider, and our craftsmen deserve fair compensation for their skills."

Jacob intervened, declaring boldly, "Since you've put it that way, let's settle on 100,000. Its fair enough."

"One hundred thousand..." Teacher Ewing's tone conveyed his disappointment. Despite their unseen presence, the craftsmen's skills held significant value. For such work, a master deserved at least 20,000 in payment.

Otherwise, why would they labor here for days without recognition?

It wasn't fair.

Though he nursed grievances, upon reflection, he decided not to push further. After all, he didn't know Mr. Murong personally, but

Zachary's success was evident. It was wise to maintain goodwill for future interactions.

Turning to Zachary, he spoke earnestly, "Brother Zachary, as your friend, I'll honor our relationship. Let's settle on ninety-eight thousand.

it's a favorable figure and sounds auspicious."

Jacob silently calculated, "Saving another two thousand... And this seems like a suitable deal. items valued at one or two million could be sold to Felix for four to six hundred thousand. That's standard practice, isn't it? If Zachary manages to find someone to expose this, his profit would be minimal, likely just a fraction of its value. 60,000 is a winning bid! This is the perfect ploy for our game."

With confidence, he agreed without hesitation, "Alright! it's settled!"

Chapter 5737

Jacob felt a surge of joy as he confirmed the authenticity of the bronze Buddha statue, a remarkable imitation from the late Qing Dynasty's Xuande reign.

With the statue and its base securely in his possession, he transferred 98,000 to Teacher Ewing. His mind filled with visions of Felix

purchasing the artifact at a staggering price of several hundred thousand.

Upon receiving the payment, Teacher Ewing glanced at the transaction details and noticed the name "Jacob Wilson" next to the 98,000 dollar record.

He felt a slight confusion and wondered, "Isn't this Mr. Murong? Why is he now using the name Jacob Wilson?"

However, he brushed off his puzzlement. It was common for those dealing with counterfeit antiques to adopt aliases. Hence, it seemed reasonable for someone to have multiple names.

With utmost care, he wrapped the bronze Buddha and its base, handing them over to Jacob. Politely, he inquired, "Mr. Murong, do you have any other requests? | have many other valuable items here. Allow me to introduce them to you."

Jacob waved his hand dismissively and replied, "No need for now. Let's begin with this one. it's our first collaboration, and I'm uncertain about the authenticity of your other pieces. Let me test this one first. If it proves satisfactory, will undoubtedly purchase more in the future."

Teacher Ewing couldn't help but feel a pang of disappointment upon hearing this. He thought to himself, "Zachary claimed he was a big-shot, yet he only spent 98,000. What kind of big-shot is he? Under normal circumstances, a customer with a single purchase of 98,000 'wouldn't even be allowed into my workshop."

However, mindful of Zachary's reputation, he held his tongue and could only politely respond, "Mr. Murong is right. It is necessary to verify and establish trust in our initial partnership. After you take this bronze Buddha back, remember not to show it to anyone lacking a deep understanding of antiques..."

“This item is designed to deceive experts. Of course, it won't fool those extremely knowledgeable individuals who have encountered numerous genuine pieces. If you wish to deceive ordinary connoisseurs, feel free to do so. | assure you, it will be effective.”

Satisfied, Jacob nodded to himself, thinking, “Isn't Felix precisely the type of connoisseur Teacher Ewing mentioned? He may not be a top expert, but he possesses more knowledge than the average person. It seems this item is tailored specifically for him!”

Impatient to proceed, he turned to Zachary beside him and exclaimed, “Zachary, time is of the essence. Let's depart swiftly.”

Understanding Jacob's urgency, Zachary replied, “Certainly, Mr. Murong. We can continue our conversation another day...”

With that, he addressed Teacher Ewing, saying, “Mr. Ewing, we'll take our leave now with Mr. Murong. We'll talk again soon!”

Teacher Ewing hurriedly responded, “I'll see you off!”

Accompanied by Teacher Ewing, the two men returned to their parked car at the village entrance. After bidding him farewell, they drove back to the city.

As the car revved into motion, Jacob, seated in the passenger seat, brimmed with excitement. He couldn't contain himself and eagerly asked Zachary, “Zachary, when do you think is the opportune moment for us to strike? | can't wait any longer.”

Zachary promptly replied, “Strike while the iron is hot. I believe today is the perfect day! I will find a trustworthy subordinate who will take this item to Felix's shop and allow him to examine it closely. Since Felix has recently returned to Antique Street, he desperately needs a profitable deal to boost his morale and enhance his reputation. Therefore, he won't miss the opportunity to acquire this bronze Buddha.”

Jacob nodded eagerly and said with a smile, “I concur. Today is the most suitable day because | will be departing for Dubai on vacation soon. I'm simply waiting for this matter to be resolved before | leave. If you can handle it today, I'll purchase a ticket for tomorrow morning and fly directly to Dubai!”

Zachary assured him, saying, “Don't worry, President Wilson. We will get this done today.”

He then added, “However, please be patient. We need to execute our plan this evening, just before Felix's shop closes.”

Curious, Jacob inquired, “Is there a particular reason for that?”

Zachary explained, “You see, despite Felix opening his shop for business, he doesn't have any items on display. This means it will be challenging for him to attract customers. Even if someone wishes to sell something, they wouldn't choose a shop with an empty inventory, right?”

“Therefore, | speculate that regardless of what time he closes, he probably won't have made any sales. Imagine, after guarding the shop all day without any business, he will feel somewhat disheartened. However, just as he is about to close, the sudden arrival of a potential customer will come as a pleasant surprise. Subconsciously, his guard will be slightly lowered...”

“Another reason is that no matter how good the lighting is at night, it will never compare to the daylight when it comes to examining items. It's not that his shop lacks brightness, but after straining his eyes all day, fatigue sets in as darkness falls. At this point, his eyes will be tired, and he may overlook certain flaws that he would have noticed otherwise.”

Continuing, Zachary elaborated, “In addition to these two reasons, | need one of my subordinates to come up with a story. Think about it,

why would someone be willing to sell an item worth millions for just a few hundred thousand yuan? There must be a convincing reason..."

"So, my idea is to find someone who claims that their grandfather recently passed away, and they secretly took this bronze Buddha from their home while their siblings were not paying attention. They simply want to keep it low-key and sell it quickly for cash, so they dare not openly trade or participate in an auction..."

"With a guilty conscience, they will be willing to sell it at a low price. This logic is flawless. When Felix considers it, he will believe that he has struck gold, encountering a desperate seller with a valuable item on his first day of business. As long as he can acquire the item at a reasonable price, it will be a grand opening for him!"

"Everyone knows that starting a business is challenging, especially when you begin from scratch and gradually build your foundation. Achieving instant success is the best strategy and a perfect start. In that moment, he will feel that his luck has arrived, and he'll be over the moon!"

"This person, they fear nothing except overconfidence! Once they become overconfident, it's all over!"

"Consider why casinos make money. They allow first-time customers to win small amounts, giving them a taste of victory in the gambling hail. This makes them feel chosen, invincible, and destined for success in every situation."

"Once they reach this extreme state of blind self-assurance, no matter how much money they have, they will lose it all in the casino. If you want their money, you can take it all. If you want their house, you can win it. If you want their wife, you can win her. If you want their children, you can win them. Even if you want their life, you can win it!"

After expressing this, Zachary smiled and looked at Jacob, asking, "President Wilson, with all these factors aligned, along with the

valuable item in your possession, is there any chance that Felix won't fall into the trap?"

Jacob laughed and said, "This is a flawless setup, one trap after another. It's impossible for him to escape it! | believe Felix is destined for failure this time!"

Zachary smiled and said, "So, don't worry. | will arrange the necessary manpower, and we will ensnare Felix in our trap this evening!"

"Excellent!" Jacob exclaimed excitedly.

Simultaneously, he couldn't help but sigh, "Damn it, it would be even better if | could witness Felix falling into the trap! But if Felix recognizes me, he will undoubtedly grow suspicious."

Zachary assured him, saying, "Witnessing it is simple. | will have someone bring a live streaming device. It will be inconspicuous, even if you give him a hundred pairs of eyes, he won't find it. Take your phone, for example. You know the SIM card slot, right?"

"Yes," Jacob nodded. "You mean the place where you use a needle to open it? What about it?"

Zachary replied mysteriously, "Nowadays, there's a device that can hide a camera inside that needle hole. Moreover, this camera can be connected to a phone. It can livestream the footage captured by the camera in real-time through the phone's network. The person | found will simply place the phone aside after entering Peter's shop, and he won't suspect a thing. The camera on the side of the phone will record him without his knowledge. We can watch the livestream on our phones from the car."

Jacob exclaimed, "Wow, such a thing exists? Can a camera really fit into such a small needle hole?"

Zachary chuckled and said, "For things like this, if you can imagine it, someone can make it happen."

"Amazing!" Jacob exclaimed, giving a thumbs up. "This is incredible! | can personally witness Felix falling into the trap with my own eyes!"



Because Zachary had promised to do a favor for Timothy from Vintage Deluxe, he and Jacob agreed to meet in the parking lot outside Antique Street around seven in the evening.

Afterwards, Zachary first dropped Jacob off at the Calligraphy and Painting Association, then handpicked a clever subordinate. He instructed the subordinate to familiarize himself with the lines and plot, and to bring some items to Vintage Deluxe.

The chosen subordinate quickly met with Zachary in his office. Once they met, Zachary explained in detail what the subordinate needed to do that evening, going through every detail.

Zachary had a keen eye for people. Although the chosen subordinate had never done this kind of thing before, he quickly caught on. In no time at all, he memorized the entire script and could perform flawlessly.

Once Zachary was sure the person had no issues, he called Timothy.

When Timothy answered the phone, he asked, "Zachary, how's the progress on the thing we talked about?"

Zachary smiled and said, "Everything is arranged. The items and the person have been found. In a little while, around six-thirty, I'll have him bring the items to your shop. You must personally receive him and handle the items yourself."

Timothy hurriedly replied, "Zachary, don't worry. I have everything prepared. The surveillance is set up and working perfectly, with no issues in the camera, recording, or exporting."

After that, he quickly asked, "By the way, Zachary, can you give me a rundown of the script? How should I speak and present myself to 'seem professional?'"

Zachary said, "I'll give you the lowdown now. Get a pen and paper and take note of the key points. Don't forget."

"No problem!" Timothy was excited and quickly grabbed pen and paper, listening and taking notes.

Halfway through, his mouth was already wide open in surprise. By the second half, he even put down the pen and paper, holding the phone with his face and shoulder. He couldn't help but applaud and exclaimed, "Zachary, you're truly amazing! How did you come up with such a plan? This guy Cole is doomed."

Zachary chuckled and, after explaining the entire plan, instructed him, "Remember, you must not tell anyone about this, not even your employees. When news spreads on Antique Street that Felix Cole suffered a big loss and was beaten up, you should act as if you |

suddenly realized something, retrieve the surveillance footage, and send it to your colleagues. Let them see it and learn from it. If this news reaches Miss Moore's ears, your position will be secure!"

Timothy excitedly said, "Zachary, you've done me a great favor. | don't know how to thank you enough. Don't worry, once this is done, I'll give you a big red envelope!"

Zachary smiled and casually said, "Your intention is enough."

After that, Zachary thought to himself, "Your so-called big red envelope will probably be worth only a few thousand. If | hadn't tricked Felix today, | would have to pay at least a hundred thousand to Jacob."

Close to six o'clock, Elaine called Jacob and affectionately asked him, "Hey, honey, what do you want to eat tonight? I'll prepare it in advance for you."

Jacob chuckled and said, "Darling, | have something to do tonight with my friends, so | won't be coming home for dinner."

Elaine casually asked, "What's the matter? You sound so happy?"

Jacob smiled and said, "If this thing goes well, | might make three to four hundred thousand. If it really happens, after we go to Dubai, I'll buy you a big diamond ring."

Elaine, upon hearing the possibility of making hundreds of thousands, became excited and asked, “Really? What kind of business can make that much money?”

Jacob laughed and said, “A secret plan. We'll see if it works tonight, but whether it works or not, we're leaving tomorrow morning.”

Elaine asked, “Did you decide when we're going to Dubai?”

Jacob said, “Whether we go or not depends on tonight. Regardless of the outcome, we'll leave tomorrow morning. I'll book our plane tickets, and | already reserved the seven-star sailboat hotel that | mentioned before. People online are always bragging about how luxurious that seven-star hotel is. | want to see for myself how impressive it really is.”

Elaine was overjoyed and danced around, saying, "Oh my goodness, that's great! I've been looking forward to it! Well, you go ahead and take care of your business. I'll quickly pack our things!”

Jacob, with a domineering tone, said, “Pack light, bring only the essentials. Besides the essentials, we can buy everything else there!”

“Okay!” Elaine was extremely excited and said, “You go and take care of your business. I'll go pack our things!”

After hanging up the phone, Elaine immediately called Charlie.

At this moment, Charlie was at the mountain villa in Elys-Champ. Grandpa Evans and his two uncles were still in Eastcliff discussing | investment cooperation. Charlie was specifically asked to spend more time with Grandma Evans, and coincidentally, Nanako was practicing controlling her reiki in another villa. So Charlie went directly to this villa.

Originally, he planned to return to the city and pick up Claire from her company, then go home together for dinner.

Unexpectedly, Elaine called and said, "Good son-in-law, your dad won't be coming home for dinner tonight. He said he's leaving for Dubai

tomorrow morning. Your mom needs to pack. If you and Claire have any food preferences, order something in advance and have it delivered to our house.”

Charlie curiously asked, “Didn't Dad say that the things here haven't been settled yet? Why is he leaving tomorrow morning?”

Elaine smiled and said, “I don't know what he's thinking, but he just called and said there's a business deal tonight that might make him three to four hundred thousand. Whether it works or not, he's leaving tomorrow morning.”

Upon hearing this, Charlie knew that his father-in-law was definitely planning something against Peter tonight.

Although he didn't know what trick they were planning, Charlie wasn't too worried. After all, both Jacob and Zachary were just small fries in front of Peter. However, the only thing Charlie was worried about was them being unfair and gathering a group of people to cause trouble for Peter.

Despite having seen the world and experienced storms, Peter was ultimately a weak middle-aged man with no fighting ability. Even if Zachary's gang of hooligans weren't there, just Jacob and Zachary themselves could easily beat Peter. So Charlie thought for a while and decided to secretly monitor Antique Street. If they didn't resort to violence, he wouldn't interfere. But if they did, he would be able to stop them.

Thinking this, he told Elaine, “Mom, I won't come back for dinner tonight either. I'll let Claire know. You and Claire can order takeout for dinner...”

Elaine didn't mind. The main reason was that she couldn't spare the time to cook, and she didn't want Charlie to come back without dinner. Since Charlie wasn't coming back, it was fine to do whatever.

So she happily said, “Good son-in-law, since you're also busy, then you do your thing. I'll call Claire and have her order something. The two of us will eat at home!”

“Okay, Mom...”

After hanging up the phone and drove to Antique Street.

When he arrived at Antique Street, he wore a mask and wandered around. He soon spotted Peter's “Selected Artifacts Pavilion”.

Selected Artifacts Pavilion still didn't have a signboard. Only Peter was inside, organizing and tidying up. Besides the old shelves and display cabinets, there weren't many items displayed for sale. It seemed that it would take at least a month or two to prepare properly.

Charlie didn't go in to disturb him and instead went to a teahouse not far away on the opposite side. He found a seat on the second floor with a good view, ordered a pot of Biluochun tea, and sat down to wait. He wanted to see what kind of bad ideas his father-in-law and Zachary were brewing.

## Chapter 5739

At 6,30 PM, as the sky darkened, a figure rushed into Antique Street with urgency.

The person made a beeline for Vintage Deluxe, situated at the heart of the street.

Inside Vintage Deluxe, manager Timothy Carey diligently watched over the store with his staff.

There were a handful of browsing customers, whom Timothy assigned to his staff. He anxiously awaited the arrival of Zachary's associate.

A few minutes later, a person hurriedly entered and immediately inquired, “Is the boss around? Does your store buy antiques?”

“Yes, indeed! We buy, buy, buy!” Timothy eagerly approached and asked, “What do you plan on selling?”

The person glanced around before pulling out an item wrapped in red silk cloth from their pocket. They carefully uncovered a corner, revealing a glimpse of it, before quickly covering it again and whispered, “This is a top-quality item. | wonder If you have the capability to acquire it.”

Timothy smiled and replied, “Don’t worry, in all of Aurous Hill if there's anything we, Vintage Deluxe, can't acquire, then no one else can.”

He continued, “From what | saw just now, it appears to be a base. If 'm not mistaken, based on my personal experience, it should be from the Ming Dynasty. How about we move to the VIP room? We can discuss further there, and can carefully examine the item and give you a fair price.”

The person hastily agreed, “Okay! Let's go!”

Timothy led him to the VIP room and closed the door, leaving only the two of them inside.

Initially, there was no surveillance in the VIP room. However, after Jacob broke the jade Spring Vase, Jasmine had cameras installed in obvious locations.

Upon entering the room and noticing the surveillance cameras, the person quickly asked, “Why do you have video recording here? I don't want anyone outside to know about my visit.”

Timothy knew this conversation was part of a prearranged script. He smiled and said, “Don’t worry, these are our internal security cameras. They mainly serve as evidence In case of disputes or disagreements regarding the items...”

“In our line of work, we have to be cautious. If you were to bring a flawed porcelain here and intentionally break it, claiming that we damaged it, demanding compensation based on market value, without surveillance, we would have no means to defend ourselves, right?”

The person, feeling helpless, waved their hand and said, “Alright, | understand. I'm here to sell something, not to deceive anyone. Please take a look at the Item. if Its suitable, give me a price as soon as possible.”

Saying that, they handed the red silk-wrapped item to Timothy.

Timothy carefully examined the Buddha statue and its accompanying base. Then, he smiled and said to the person, “Friend, are you in a hurry to sell this item?”

“Yes,” the person nodded, “As long as the price is right, | can sell it immediately.”

With a knowledgeable look, Timothy asked, “How much are you planning to ask for this item?”

The person held up five fingers and said, "500,000"

“500,000?” Timothy sneered, “From the looks of this item, it seems to be a bronze Buddha from the Xuande period of the Ming Dynasty.

The craftsmanship and shape are excellent. If it were to be auctioned, it could sell for at least one or two million. If you were to consign it to a reputable antique shop like Vintage Deluxe, it could still sell for around one million. Why are you settling for 500,000?”

The person sighed, “To be honest, this item belonged to my grandfather. He passed away this afternoon, and he left all the antiques to my older brother in his will. | thought my grandfather favored my brother, so | wanted to fight for something for myself. That's why | secretly took it out, hoping to sell it quickly and convert it into cash. I don't need you to tell me whether it's worth one million, two million, or even three or five million. I'm not greedy. If you give me 500,000, the item is yours.”

Timothy Carey retorted, “Since your grandfather has already made a will, leaving the item to your brother, and you secretly took it out, that's considered theft. Therefore, the item is stolen goods. Do you think I dare to buy it?”

The person quickly explained, “My grandfather had many items. This is just one of them. Besides, my brother doesn't know about this

item, nor does he know its value. If this item were to be openly sold, | couldn't sell it for only 500,000. You know many wealthy people in this industry. If you could find someone willing to pay over a million to buy it, wouldn't you make several hundred thousand or even millions?"

'They continued, "I've explained the situation clearly to you. So, | won't waste your time. I'll lower the price by another hundred thousand. If you can take it for 400,000, it's yours. If not, I'll find someone else."

Timothy disdainfully sneered, "Your acting skills are indeed impressive. The story you've concocted is well done. However, you've chosen the wrong target! Do you think I, Timothy Carey, the general manager of Vintage Deluxe, can't see through your little tricks?"

The person's expression flickered with panic, and they hurriedly said, "What tricks? | sincerely want to sell this item. If you want it, take it. If not, give it back to me. | can find someone else. I'm not here to deceive you."

Timothy's smile curled with disdain as he remarked, "Your Buddha statue is undeniably impressive, the craftsmanship and form are impeccable. However, the leather casing appears artificially aged. In my estimation, while it's not a contemporary creation, it lacks the antiquity you claim. I'd wager it hails from the late Qing Dynasty at the earliest, perhaps even the early Republic of China..."

"But let's address the elephant in the room. This base of yours, it's genuinely an artifact from the Xuande period of the Ming Dynasty.

Sadly, it's merely a base. Without my expertise, it holds little value, fetching a meager tens of thousands at best. So, realistically, your offering is worth no more than 70,000 to 80,000. Yet, you proposed a sale price of 500,000, attempting to deceive me. Do you take me for a fool?"

Instant panic gripped the man, stuttering, "How... How did you discern that?"

"It's all in good fun," Timothy retorted arrogantly. "After years of camaraderie and shrewd dealings, if | can't see through your charades, then what use have those years served?"

With a haughty toss, he returned the items, his tone icy. "Brother, if you intend to hoodwink me, you've got much to learn. Return when you've honed your skills!"



The man hastily reclaimed his belongings, nervously pleading, “Boss, I'm young and naive, merely trying to impress. Please forgive my folly...”

Timothy waved dismissively. “Fine, take your things and go...”

“Thank you!” The man hastily gathered his wares and fled without a backward glance.

Timothy, out of the camera's view, allowed himself a smug grin, inwardly reveling in his technological prowess. “Hah, so this is the thrill of using technology to outsmart. Though I'm aware it's a performance, it's undeniably exhilarating!”

With a flourish, he added, “There's no swindler sharper than Timothy Carey in the realm of antiques!”

After shutting the VIP room door, he returned to the lobby.

Meanwhile, the man, having fled Vintage Deluxe, wandered the antique street with his merchandise.

As fate would have it, Peter was preparing to close shop.

Intent on restocking his household, he was about to head to the supermarket when the man approached his store.

Seeing Peter amidst a crowd, the man lowered his voice and inquired clandestinely, “Are you accepting items here, boss?”

## Chapter 5740

In the world of antique trading, the hidden treasures are often unveiled only when the sun sets and the shop is about to close. This is

especially true for those who deal in antiques.

Usually, those who bring in items to sell at night are either freshly unearthed or stolen from others. And, of course, there are those who specialize in selling counterfeit goods to deceive unsuspecting buyers.

Although Peter had been involved in growing businesses overseas, during his last visit to Aurous Hil, he had already learned about the clandestine practices of the antique industry. He knew that the cautious expression and the bundle in the arms of the person standing before him indicated that the items were not meant to be seen in the light of day.

In truth, the antique industry operates similarly around the world, with grave robbing, deception, and substitution being common practices. Even Europeans and Americans are well-versed in these methods, and Peter had witnessed it all.

However, he did not let his wariness show. Instead, he put on a friendly smile and said, “Of course, I'll buy it. Come on in, let's discuss inside!”

With that, he quickly ushered the person into his shop.

At the same time, in the parking lot outside the antique street, Jacob and Zachary were already watching the live broadcast on their phones.

However, the screen was completely black, and the sound was fragmented and chaotic, making it impossible to make sense of anything. Zachary explained to Jacob, “President Wilson, I think my little brother must have put his phone in his pocket, so the image isn't clear. But don't worry, once he takes out his phone, we'll be able to see everything properly.” Jacob nodded repeatedly and said with a smile, “Technology has really advanced. These are the high-end devices that were only seen in

spy movies before. | thought they were just fictional, but it turns out they actually exist..."

Zachary chuckled, "Oh, that's nothing. If you spend more time on the internet, you'll get used to these things. They've been around for years."

Meanwhile, the person had already been welcomed into Peter's shop.

Upon entering, he found the shop empty, devoid of any items. Perplexed, he couldn't help but ask, "Is this shop really open for business?"

Why is it empty?"

Peter smiled and replied, "I recently opened this shop, or rather, | just took over the lease. didn't want it to remain vacant, so | put up the sign. As time goes on, I'll have more items to display."

With a thoughtful gaze, he added, "But that doesn't stop me from buying your items. If it's something good, I'll definitely make a fair offer."

Reaching this point, Peter looked at the person and smiled, "Since there's no one else here, could you show me the items?"

The person nodded and took a seat in front of Peter. He then retrieved a bronze Buddha and its base from his pocket, handing them, along with a red silk cloth, to Peter.

After handing over the bronze Buddha, he also placed his phone on the table.

Jacob and Zachary, who were watching the live broadcast in the car, could now see the real-time footage on Zachary's phone.

The SIM card slot of the phone faced Peter, and the wide-angle lens captured his entire face within the frame.

Jacob's anger flared up when he saw Peter's face.

He gritted his teeth and cursed, "It's that bastard! Just looking at his face infuriates me!"

Zachary quickly comforted him, "President Wilson, don't let your anger consume you. It's not worth compromising your health. Besides,

we're here today to seek revenge on him. Just watch closely, we'll make sure he loses everything and his reputation is ruined!”

Jacob nodded, a mixture of excitement and nervousness evident on his face.

“Success or failure rests upon the next few minutes!”

Inside Selected Artifacts Pavilion...

Before the person and the camera, Peter carefully unwrapped the red silk cloth that covered the bronze Buddha. As he did so, a flicker of surprise briefly appeared in his eyes, quickly replaced with a composed expression.

He examined the bronze Buddha, turning it over in his hands, and asked, “Do you know the origin of this item?”

The person replied, “Yes, isn't this a bronze Buddha from the Xuande period of the Ming Dynasty? It even has the mark on the base.”

Peter looked at him curiously and inquired, “Are you certain it's from the Xuande period of the Ming Dynasty?”

The person, thinking Peter had discovered something, hurriedly responded, “Our grandfather had it examined by experts. They confirmed its value! To be honest, I want to sell it because our grandfather, just passed away today, and I need to sell it before my older brother takes inventory of the inheritance.”

With that, he elaborated on the fabricated story to Peter.

Peter nodded and casually remarked, “I don't think this item resembles the characteristics of the Ming Dynasty. The manufacturing techniques and stylistic features of bronze Buddhas from the Xuande period differ from this one...”

The person grew nervous upon hearing this and asked uncertainly, “How can that be? The experts examined it before, and they

confirmed it's from the Ming Dynasty. They even said it could be worth at least two million if it were to be auctioned.”

He quickly added, “Take a closer look at the base, it clearly belongs to the Xuande period of the Ming Dynasty.”

Peter smiled and said, “The base does indeed belong to the Xuande period, but this bronze Buddha...”

At that moment, Peter abruptly stopped.

In the car, Jacob and Zachary, watching the live broadcast, felt their hearts skip a beat.

They thought, “Oh no, he must have figured it out!”

Zachary was also a bit uncertain and murmured softly, “This... This doesn't seem right. Even our colleagues from the Aurous Hill Museum, let alone ordinary people, wouldn't be able to create something like this without professional equipment and expertise. Even with careful observation, one couldn't easily overlook certain clues.”

Jacob interjected hastily, “Zachary, as much as we're good friends, business is business. This idea was yours, after all. If this item doesn't sell, you'll have to figure out a way to sell it for me for two hundred thousand.”

Though cursing inwardly, Zachary put on a cheerful demeanor and replied, “Don't worry, President Wilson. I've committed to this deal, and I'll see it through. If this Cole fellow doesn't bite, I'll find someone else willing to pay the price. If no one else does, I'll buy it myself for the two hundred thousand.”

Jacob visibly relaxed, nodding as he said, “He's not around now mainly because he doesn't want this Cole guy to slip away again.”

Inside the Zhen Baoxuan store, the man fell silent when Peter mentioned the Bronze Buddha.

After a moment of hesitation, he inquired again, “What are your thoughts on the Bronze Buddha?”

Peter reiterated calmly, "As | said before, | don't believe it's from the Ming Dynasty.”

Asheen of cold sweat appeared on the man’s forehead, fearing Peter might notice. Subconsciously, he leaned back and urged, “Could you take a closer look at it, please?”

Observing the other's nervousness and detecting the beads of sweat, Peter offered a reassuring smile as he handed over a piece of paper, saying, “Relax, wipe away the sweat first...”

At this remark, both the undercover agent and Jacob and Zachary in the car felt a pang of apprehension, convinced they had been discovered.

The person stumbled over his words, clumsily attempting to cover up his nervousness. He stammered, \*N-No... That can't be... The experts examined it before, and they said it's from the Ming Dynasty. I'm not lying to you..."

Zachary couldn't suppress his frustration, muttering curses at the screen in the car, “This idiot's nerves should be steel, yet here he is, all jumpy. What's he even thinking? Isn't this just a trap for Cole? Damn it!"

Jacob echoed the sentiment, teeth gritted as he cursed, “God almighty, who would've thought this bastard was such a sly old fox? Screw him!”

With a wave of his hand, he continued, “Get the numbers straight, Zachary. I'm heading home to pack. Tomorrow morning, I'll catch the earliest flight to Dubai. Sort out the bronze Buddha and settle the payment later.”

He stepped out of the car, leaving Zachary feeling helpless and apologetic. “I'm sorry, President Wilson. I'll sort this mess out. I'll find a way to handle him.”

Ignoring the apology, Jacob had one leg out of the car already. Unexpectedly, at that moment, Peter's voice came through Zachary's mobile phone, “There's really no need to be nervous. I'm not accusing you of lying. I just don't think this bronze Buddha matches the characteristics of the Ming Dynasty. It seems more aligned with those of the Northern Song Dynasty.”

“The Northern... Northern Song Dynasty?” The man was puzzled, lacking historical knowledge.

He asked, “When was the Northern Song Dynasty?”

Peter clarified, “The Northern Song Dynasty spanned from 960 to 1127 AD, followed by the Southern Song Dynasty until 1279 AD. So, your bronze Buddha is at least four hundred years older than the Xuande period.”

In the car, Jacob's interest piqued. He settled back into his seat and withdrew his leg, asking Zachary in surprise, “Zachary, did he just say the bronze Buddha is from the Northern Song Dynasty?!”

Momentarily stunned, Zachary regained his composure and scoffed, “Ridiculous! This idiot claims it's from the Northern Song Dynasty. Why not say it's from the Northern Wei Dynasty? Nonsense.”

Jacob countered, “But didn't that Cole guy say it? What if it's really from the Northern Song Dynasty? That would be a major slip-up.”

Zachary retorted, “President Wilson, you're seasoned in the antique world. Have you ever heard of someone picking up genuine items.”

from sellers of fakes? Even if Mr. Ewing is a master forger, can he accurately determine its age?"

"What if he's made a mistake?" Jacob pressed on. "He mentioned the bronze Buddha's surface was damaged when he acquired it. Could that have clouded his judgment?"

Zachary waved dismissively. "Impossible, President Wilson. He can't be that discerning. His tales are just that tales. In the antique trade, ~ stories abound, but trust none. | once passed off a traditional Chinese painting as the Mona Lisa to foreigners. I'm quite the storyteller | myself."

He continued, "Do you really believe Ewing's claim that the bronze Buddha was damaged upon acquisition? They're just tales. Why don't we concoct our own story, like it's a family heirloom? Cheng might have refurbished it and spun a tale to swindle us out of a hundred thousand yuan."

Anxiously, Jacob asked, "So, you're still suggesting | buy it? Isn't that throwing away a hundred thousand?"

Zachary clarified, "I'm suggesting it's a possibility, not a certainty! And you won't be the one at a loss if you buy it. It's me, Zachary, who'll bear the brunt of any loss."

Jacob responded, "I, Jacob Wilson, don't fear losing money. But | won't tolerate being deceived. It won't sit right with me if you get fooled."

Expressing his concerns, he added, "Zachary, I'm not doubting you, but is it conceivable that the item is truly from the Northern Song Dynasty?"

Zachary asserted confidently, "Impossible, absolutely impossible!"

But sensing Jacob's skepticism and penchant for luck, Zachary pushed further,

"President Wilson, let's put it this way. Can you find a genuine Hermes in a counterfeit workshop? Moreover, imagine stumbling upon a Hermes used by the Queen of Britain, personally signed during her lifetime. Absurd, isn't it?" Jacob pondered, "Your analogy does hold water. But why do you think Cole suddenly claimed it's from the Song Dynasty?"

Shaking his head, Zachary speculated, "I'm not sure. Perhaps he's onto our scheme and playing his own game."



“That's plausible,” Jacob agreed. “He's quite the tricky adversary. He's a tough nut to crack!”