

Superstar 1001

Chapter 1001: King of Masked Singers premieres!

Noon.

At Old Rao's house, the place was full of the smell of medicinal herbs.

Zhang Ye yelled while lying on the sofa, "Is it done yet?"

Yang Shu speedily answered, "Senior bro, it's almost ready, it's almost ready!"

Zhang Ye howled, "Hurry up! I can't take it anymore!"

"Master Rao, please hurry!" Yang Shu urged from the kitchen.

Rao Aimin shouted across the living room, "If you make another sound, trust me, I will throw you out! Concocting the medicine requires proper heat! What are you so anxious for! It's still being bubbled!"

Zhang Ye stopped pestering Rao Aimin out of fear and turned to Chenchen, who was doing her homework. "Chenchen, fetch me a glass of water. I'm thirsty, so be quick."

Chenchen said, "Not gonna."

"In that case, I won't help you do your homework in the future!" Zhang Ye harrumphed.

Chenchen became flustered. "Zhang Ye, are you really that weak?!"

Zhang Ye rolled his eyes. "Get me some water."

Chenchen begrudgingly went to get the water for him and nearly even had to feed it to him.

Zhang Ye lay there all relaxed and gulped down two mouthfuls. Then he said, rather displeased, "Why is the water cold? Bring me warm water next time, understand?"

Chenchen got annoyed and ran to the kitchen to complain, "Aunt! Who does Zhang Ye think he is!"

But Yang Shu said, "Senior Bro's old injuries have relapsed and he's a sick person now. Why are you arguing with him?"

Chenchen was exasperated. "But he's such a bully!"

From the living room, Zhang Ye shouted again. "The food isn't done either? Why is it taking so long! I've been hungry for a whole day! Does anyone care about me?"

Yang Shu immediately replied, "Senior Bro, I'll serve you the food!"

Only Zhang Ye's junior martial sister would readily be at his beck and call to take care of him.

"Senior Bro, sit up and eat."

"I can't move."

"I'll feed you then."

"My junior martial sis is the best."

"Open your mouth."

"Mmm, the chicken wing is not too bad."

"Try some of the red braised pork."

"Mmm, it's good too, but a bit salty."

"Ah, a little salty? Then what should we do?"

"Forget it, I'll make do with it."

Rao Aimin could not stand watching this any further and took a few steps out of the kitchen and said to Yang Shu, "Ignore him. This fellow's just trying to score some pity points! Just place the food on the table. I'll see if he wants to eat or not!"

Chenchen added angrily, "Old Yang, don't care for him!"

But Yang Shu did not listen to them as she continued spoon-feeding Zhang Ye.

Zhang Ye lay there comfortable as a lord, opening his mouth and swallowing the food, then opening his mouth again with the next spoonful already waiting for him. After they finished eating lunch, the medicinal herb concoction was ready. His junior martial sister spoon-fed him again. But after just two mouthfuls, Zhang Ye cried out that it was too bitter and refused to drink anymore.

"Senior Bro!"

"This is not something a human can drink!"

"If you don't drink it, how can you heal your injuries?!"

"What's inside this?!"

"A soil dragon."

"What's that?"

"An earthworm."

"The hell! Are you guys trying to poison me!"

With great difficulty, Zhang Ye finally finished drinking the medicine. Rao Aimin then began to treat him externally. She gave him a traditional Chinese massage to help with his qi and blood circulation. But with just two massage rubs, Zhang Ye cried out again.

The entire time the sun was shining, there was not a moment of peace in the house as every one of them took care of Zhang Ye!

It wasn't until evening that this fellow finally ceased his antics. This was because the King of Masked Singers' premiere episode was about to begin!

Zhang Ye had taken over the whole sofa and occupied it by himself, lying there with his legs up. Be it Rao Aimin, Chenchen, or Yang Shu, they could only move some chairs over and sit beside him.

On Beijing Television, the commercials ended.

Yang Shu said, "It's starting!"

Zhang Ye said, "Turn up the volume."

...

His first uncle's house.

His first uncle and aunt brought out a fruit platter.

In the living room, Zhang Ye's three cousins were all sitting there watching the television. They had arranged to meet up today to watch the King of Masked Singers' premiere episode together as it was a new show planned by their cousin.

"Wow, it's starting, it's finally starting!"

"The first contestant has appeared!"

"What? King of Oddity? What sort of name is this!"

"Holy shit!"

"Ah, he sang so well!"

"The pitch changes were really nice!"

"Who is he?"

"Greater China's Cui Long?"

"It's not him, it's definitely not him! The figure doesn't look like him at all!"

"Then could it be CAK?"

"The voice sounds super similar!"

The three cousins were excited and astonished by what they were watching.

His first uncle and aunt were seated near them and glanced at the screen. With this, they were immediately hooked on the show and joined in with their own guesses.

...

Peking University.

In one of the female dormitories.

Yao Jiancai's daughter, Yao Mi, did not go home for the weekend, instead staying in her dorm together with a few of her roommates to watch the broadcast of the King of Masked Singers. The more the merrier, they thought. Somehow, they'd gotten ahold of a 29-inch LCD TV, and they'd even hooked it up

to an antenna in their dorm. There were a total of 11 people in the room, and all were watching the television in excitement, some of them even singing along.

"It's good! It's so good that I'm crying!"

"I really love Petal Shower!"

"There isn't anyone else in the music industry with such a falsetto!"

"Who exactly is she?"

"The panel of guest judges couldn't guess either?"

"Mimi, hahaha, your dad has spoken!"

"Your dad sure is funny! He definitely deserves to be a big shot in the crosstalk world!"

"It's sad that our Professor Zhang isn't around. It would be even more exciting to watch then!"

"When will Teacher Zhang come back and teach us again? Has he really been banned? Did the air pollution documentary affect him that greatly? How could they ban Teacher Zhang!"

...

Media College.

At the teaching staff's quarters.

Su Hongyan, once Zhang Ye's student counselor, was also watching the show on Beijing Television with some of her colleagues.

"This is really great!"

"Their singing is much more professional than those on The Voice!"

"It's gotta be. The selling point is different. The selling point of The Voice of China was its grassroots contestants, while for King of Masked Singers, the contestants are already famous singers, so of course their skills aren't the same! Frankly, the creativity of this show is great. Only someone like our Media College's Professor Little Zhang can come up with a show like this!"

"Sunflower sang well!"

"He's quite good, but I still prefer Sunset Glow. How did she lose to the others? Will she get eliminated? Who's gonna be crowned Masked King at the end of this episode?"

...

It blew up on the Internet as well!

Overwhelming exclamations and responses started appearing all over Weibo!

"This is really worth goddamn waiting for!"

"So this is King of Masked Singers!"

"Damn, it's 10,000 times better than I expected!"

"So this is what this show is all about! This group of people can really sing well, right? I bet they're all professional singers. And A or B-list big name celebs?"

"Who knows who King of Oddity is!"

"I really like King of Oddity too. His voice is really pleasant and his singing is pretty good, but compared to Petal Shower and the others, he doesn't quite measure up. Petal Shower and Sunflower, on the other hand, are gods!"

"Four contestants have already appeared onstage! And each one is more amazing than the last!"

"The next person is coming on right now!"

"The Clown?"

"I heard a rumor that he was this episode's Masked King?"

"That can't be! Probably a rumor?"

"Right, someone even said that Water Buffalo was the Masked King. Your sister's the water buffalo! There's not even a fucking contestant named Water Buffalo!"

"Look at how he's walking! He can't even stand straight!"

"Is he sick?"

The broadcast now cut to a different scene at an earlier time.

It was showing the moments in the infirmary.

Zhang Ye probably did not even know that while he and the program team staff were in the infirmary, someone had actually lugged a video camera in and recorded many of the scenes that had occurred inside!

A fever of 40 degrees!

A severe cold!

Inflammation of the tonsils!

"Give me a cortisone shot!"

"Are you sure!?"

"Do it!"

"Give me another shot!"

"Shoot me up again!"

"Do it!"

Three shots!

A total of three shots!

The man in the clown mask did not even make a sound!

The scene cut again, back to the moment when The Clown appeared onstage!

At this moment, everyone who was watching the program in front of their televisions gasped in shock. Some of the music industry insiders were also surprised by this!

A madman!

This person must be insane!

"This...this..."

"He's really risking his life!"

"Why's he still singing when he's like that? How can he even sing?"

"Yeah, he's definitely not going to be the Masked King. Those must've been rumors."

"True. It's hard to walk around or even speak with a voice like that, much less sing a song! Can he even make any noise? He won't finish singing, right?"

"How could he possibly finish singing in that condition!"

It wasn't just The Clown who had behind-the-scenes footage edited into the show. There was also behind-the-scenes footage for the other masked singers. For instance, Petal Shower when she was rehearsing her songs and Sunflower's comments on the other singers' performances while he was in his waiting room. But clearly, The Clown's behind-the-scenes footage was more shocking than the others'. The program team definitely knew this, so they purposely edited this scene in.

However, when The Clown took the stage and started singing, a lot of people got a great shock!

Petal Shower's falsetto had shocked them!

Sunflower in the Starlight's tenor had shocked them!

Sunset Glow's gentle and soothing voice had shocked them!

But those were completely different from the shock The Clown thrust upon them. The Clown's song shocked them because it was pure and resonated with their souls!

"I am a wolf that comes from the north.

"Padding through the boundless wilderness.

"The mournful northern wind blows by.

"The slow sand brushes by."

Everyone's had a dream before.

Everyone's pursued those dreams before.

But for the sake of that grassland, that dream, a person like The Clown faced the biting winds while wounded and continued limping forward. No one could say that they had gone that far themselves!

So they were shocked!

Touched!

"Who is he!"

"This guy has such stage presence!"

"A wolf that comes from the north?"

"Doesn't that sound so cool?"

"Does it sound that great? I think it's just average."

"Me too. I'm not really moved. And his voice is too hoarse!"

"That's why it's good!"

"What do you guys know! This singing is filled with so much emotion!"

"The song itself is good too! What song is this, goddammit! Why haven't I heard before?"

...

At Old Rao's house.

Zhang Ye watched his onscreen self and had mixed feelings about it.

Yang Shu was fascinated by the song. "This song is really good, really!"

Rao Aimin did not say anything. Actually, she seldom watched television shows, but ever since she became Zhang Ye's agent, she started paying attention to them.

Chenchen pointed at the television and said, "Just look at him!"

Rao Aimin said, "He insists on taking the stage while badly sick. This perseverance and resilience is not something that just any ordinary person possesses. This man's not bad."

Zhang Ye was elated when he heard.

Hehe.

Good enough.

Yang Shu immediately said, "My senior bro is also someone with strong perseverance!"

Rao Aimin glanced at Yang Shu and pointed to Zhang Ye, who was lying crooked on the sofa like a slob. "You talkin' 'bout this guy?"

Yang Shu was stumped. She wanted to speak up but hesitated and hung her head in silence, apparently rather embarrassed by him.

Zhang Ye couldn't defend himself.

Chapter 1002: The King of Masked Singers is on fire!

On TV.

The Clown had narrowly defeated The Yak.

The netizens started an endless debate.

"Was there even a need to think? Of course the vote goes to The Clown!"

"It actually got decided by just a few votes?"

"This song that The Yak performed was much worse than The Clown's!"

"Yeah, what were the live audience members thinking!"

"Even a fool should be able to deduce which was the better song. How could The Clown have nearly lost this round? "

Next up, the three defeated contestants proceeded to the elimination round and battled each other.

The three contestants were: King of Oddity, Sunset Glow, and The Yak.

This segment was recorded after Zhang Ye had left the studio that day. He had not watched it yet and was naturally interested as he stared unblinkingly at the television.

King of Oddity kicked off the elimination round of performances.

He stuck to his beautiful portamento technique and rap, and he performed well.

After him was Sunset Glow.

"Do you remember what we used to have?"

"Holding hands and living simply."

"We weren't yet 18 then."

"But we'd still speak our minds to each other."

It was a love song.

A slow but tasteful love song.

In this second round of performances, Sunset Glow performed rather stunningly. There were no higher pitches, none at all, but she still managed to capture the hearts of many in the audience!

The three contestants took their turns and finished performing.

Eventually, the results of the voting came out!

Sunset Glow easily remained in the competition while The Yak and King of Oddity were both eliminated!

"Take it off!"

"Take it off!"

"Take it off!"

The live audience all stood up and started shouting!

Chen Guang also stood up!

Amy also said excitedly, "Who are you!"

Dong Shanshan smiled and said, "You can choose to reveal your identity, or you can choose to exit the stage with your mask on."

King of Oddity laughed a little and thought for a moment. Then he grabbed his mask and took it off with everyone's attention on him.

When the television audience saw the face beneath the mask, many of them were startled!

Chen Guang was stunned. "Little Chi?"

King of Oddity smiled and said, "Hello, Senior Bro."

Amy also knew him personally. "Oh my god! How could it be you!"

Chi Yi! It was Chi Yi, who was from the same agency as Chen Guang!

The Internet also blew up!

"Damn! It's our Chi Yi!"

"Why is it him?"

"Man, that's a C-list celebrity!"

"In the music industry, Chi Yi was considered quite a big name some years ago. When he first debuted, he was known as a pretty boy to many and had also won an award for best song! He had a glorious past and surely counted as one of the top 30 people in the music industry at that time. But later, for reasons unknown, he stopped releasing albums and switched to acting in movies. Although he was also very popular in the film industry and is a C-list celebrity now, a lot of people still felt it sad that he did not continue his singing career!"

"Why would he be participating in this show?"

"Has Chi Yi gone back to singing?"

"He sang really well! His singing is as good as before!"

"Ahhh, my Little Chi!"

This was an extremely popular celebrity idol!

What's more, Chi Yi was a C-list celebrity as well!

After the astonishment faded, everyone thought of something. For someone who was so popular and good at singing, and had been even a professional singer, if this was any other singing show, he definitely would have been saved for a much later appearance. But on the stage of King of Masked Singers, Chi Yi had actually been eliminated in the first episode? What the fuck?! Then who the hell could the remaining masked singers be?! Thinking of this, the audience's curiosity suddenly erupted!

King of Oddity turned out to be Chi Yi!

Then who was the other one?

Who was The Yak?

The camera cut to The Yak.

Dong Shanshan asked, "You can choose to reveal your identity, or you can—"

"I choose not to reveal my identity," said The Yak before Dong Shanshan could finish.

The audience was taken aback.

Amy asked anxiously, "Why not?"

Zhang Xia persuaded, "I don't think it matters much as those who reveal their identities are definitely not considered losers. There aren't any losers at all here today. Also, we really wish to know who you are."

Wang Zhuishu added, "You sang really well!"

But The Yak did not say anything.

Dong Shanshan nodded and said, "OK, we respect your choice."

The Yak bowed to the audience and then mysteriously departed from the stage just like that, still wearing his mask. Perhaps no one in the audience would ever know who this man was.

The netizens were all vexed.

"Reveal your identity, dammit!"

"*faints* Why didn't he reveal himself?"

"How very suspenseful!"

"Who could that guy be?"

"*flips table* I'm so pissed!"

Everyone could only feel that way. If the contestant did not want to reveal their identity, there was nothing they could do about it!

"It's time for the next round!"

"Right, it's time to battle for the first episode's Masked King!"

"Who do you guys think has the best chance of winning?"

"Sunflower of course!"

"Definitely Petal Shower!"

"Right, it's basically just between these two. Although I also like The Clown, his voice is really not in good shape. It sounds quite hoarse, and judging from the earlier voting by the live audience members, The Clown stands no chance."

"But why are there people saying that The Clown was crowned the first episode's Masked King?"

"That's not possible."

"It's probably just a rumor."

"When he's like that, how can he fight for the throne of the Masked King?"

"Yeah, whether he can even sing his next song at all is questionable."

...

At Old Rao's house.

Zhang Ye had been through the final round of this episode's competition and already knew the results, so he didn't have much interest in the latter part of the show. As he watched, his eyes began to droop and he fell asleep unknowingly.

By the time he opened his eyes again, it was already the next morning. He had fallen asleep on the sofa, and someone had covered him with a blanket. The sky was bright and the chirping of birds drifted in from outside.

Zhang Ye got up from the sofa and went to the bathroom. He could feel that his body was in much better condition now. It seemed that Old Rao's medicinal herb concoction was actually quite effective, and he didn't drink it for nothing.

The front door opened.

Yang Shu came back carrying some things.

"Senior Bro, you're up?"

"Where'd you go?"

"To buy breakfast for you."

"Oh."

"By the way, here's today's newspapers."

Zhang Ye felt rather happy deep down inside. It was worth taking in this junior martial sister of his. Just look at all that she had done. "Where's Old Rao and Chenchen?"

"Master Rao took the kid out for morning exercises," Yang Shu replied.

Zhang Ye nodded then flipped open one of the newspapers.

"Chi Yi participates in King of Masked Singers!"

"King of Masked Singers' premiere episode! Chi Yi gets eliminated!"

"The Clown crowned first Masked King!"

"'Wild Rose' search term trends to top spot!"

"King of Masked Singers' premiere episode a hit! Trending #1 on Weibo! "

"Who is The Clown? "

"Speculation on Petal Shower's identity! "

The newspapers were all full of news regarding King of Masked Singers!

While eating breakfast, Zhang Ye browsed through Weibo and realized that there were also an overwhelming amount of discussions online!

"That was so fun!"

"King of Masked Singers' first episode was so damn interesting!"

"Much love to Petal Shower!"

"Much love to The Clown. I love him so much!"

"The Clown was so cool. That last song, 'Wild Rose,' made me cry for real!"

"Me too. 'I am a beautiful, beautiful wild rose.' I was totally pulled in and have already listened to it more than 10 times. Each time I hear it, I shed some tears!"

"Poor Chi Yi!"

"Chi Yi is supposed to be a really good singer and very popular too. How did he get eliminated!"

"The Yak is such a coward! He was too scared to even show his face!"

"Yeah, what a cheat! Even now, no one knows who he is!"

"When will the next episode be broadcast? Hurry up! I can't wait! I wanna continue listening to The Clown sing! His songs are so amazingly touching!"

"The next Masked King will definitely be Sunflower!"

"Get lost! It'll definitely be our Petal Shower!"

"Who's the most popular right now?"

"A poll shows that most people are interested in The Clown."

"The Clown? He only won because of luck."

"Nonsense! Go and check out today's Top Chinese Music Chart!"

Zhang Ye decided to do so. He found out that on the music industry's authoritative Top Chinese Music Chart, seven out of the top ten spots were taken by songs that were performed on King of Masked Singers!

#10: King of Oddity's "Idiot."

#9: A new song by a big name of the music industry.

#8: Sunflower in the Starlight's "Like Smoke, As Water."

#7: Sunset Glow's "My Past Lover."

#5: The Clown's "Wolf."

#4: Petal Shower's "On a Little Night Like This."

#3 was the song that Zhang Ye wrote and composed for Spring Garden—"Super Star." This song had already been charting for some time.

Number 2 was also another song performed by Petal Shower.

Then, impressively, at first place was "Wild Rose"!

Even on the monthly rankings of the Top Chinese Music Chart, although "Wild Rose" had only charted for a day since getting published last night, it had already shot up on the monthly chart to 11th!

In only a single day!

In the short span of barely a day!

"Wild Rose" had been shared and recommended like crazy!

Zhang Ye was sitting in the apartment and eating breakfast when he suddenly heard the tone-deaf singing of some men floating in from outside the windows. "I'm a beautiful, beautiful wild rose. / Hating the Heavens for being unfair."

There were already people who knew how to sing the song!

So you could imagine just how quickly the song had propagated through the masses!

Even Zhang Ye himself had not expected this. A slightly more niche song from his previous world had such a great influence and spread so quickly over here. Such news was very encouraging to him. Together with the newspaper articles and looking at the heated discussions online, Zhang Ye could already feel it clearly.

King of Masked Singers was on fire!

Chapter 1003: Rankings and viewership ratings!

Later that morning.

His mother called him.

"Son, what are you up to?"

"Oh, I'm at Old Rao's place. How's your trip with Dad going?"

"It's quite nice and cozy here in Hainan. Oh right, I watched that new show of yours."

"Haha, so how was it?"

"It's fantastic! Your dad could not get enough and rewatched it."

"Which contestant do you like on the show?"

"I like Sunflower in the Starlight."

"Uh, what about dad?"

"Your dad likes Petal Shower."

"..."

"Son, what's the matter?"

"Ahem, nothing. Ai, enjoy your vacation."

After hanging up, Zhang Ye didn't know how to react. He initially thought that at least one of his parents would like The Clown. But as it turned out, neither of them mentioned him. He did not even have a chance to brag a little. What a failure! But that was just the first episode. Besides, his physical and voice conditions were not optimal during the recording of the episode. Zhang Ye was not worried at all since there were still plenty of opportunities to showcase himself in the future. As long as he did not get eliminated from the show, he would be able to bring out the songs he wanted to sing one by one.

Which song should he sing for the next episode?

An emotional song?

A happy song?

A song using his head voice?

Or something touching that would stir the hearts of the viewers?

He had to prepare two songs. What a headache that was!

Zhang Ye paced up and down Old Rao's living room as he started thinking and planning for the next round of competition. Now that he did not have any work or activities to keep him busy, he focused all his effort and time on the King of Masked Singers because this was his only way out after much brooding. He was left with no choice but to hide behind a mask and use a different method to roam the world with his pride.

Yang Shu looked at him and asked, "Senior Bro, are you feeling better?"

"I guess," Zhang Ye instinctively replied as he continued pacing.

At this moment, keys jangled from outside. Old Rao was back!

Yang Shu turned around and immediately opened the door. "Master Rao, Chenchen."

Rao Aimin grunted. "Where's Zhang Ye?"

Yang Shu said, "Senior Bro? Isn't he right here..." She turned around to point, but he was not there anymore. Zhang Ye was no longer pacing around the dining table.

"Eh? He's not up yet?" Rao Aimin looked to the sofa.

She saw Zhang Ye lying on the sofa, groaning and whining like he was about to die.

Zhang Ye pleaded, "Old Rao, get me a cup of water."

Rao Aimin said, "Fuck off."

"But I'm thirsty."

"Get it yourself!"

"Chenchen, get it for me. I can't move."

Yang Shu's jaw dropped!

...

Within the industry.

At a television station.

"If we had known—even if we had to pay 30 million RMB for the breach of contract back then—we should still have headhunted Zhang Ye from Central TV to join us! I'm sure that Central TV would've let him go for 30 million RMB!"

"Hai, it's useless to say anything now!"

"Zhang Ye's ideas are really creative!"

"Yeah, just him alone would be enough to sweep aside all of the production teams in the industry!"

"The King of Masked Singers is definitely gonna catch fire and will most likely subvert many of the things that we already know!"

"Yeah, just look at today's Top Chinese Music Chart. It's ludicrous. I have quite a few friends in the music industry and heard that there was an uproar there too. Songs performed on the show, which were broadcast just last night, actually charted on the Top Chinese Music Chart today? And many of the songs were covers too? They even occupied seven of the top ten spots on the chart? This is simply unbelievable. In the past, we had to go everywhere just to promote a new song. The companies would even have to throw money around in order to get an interview or get on a variety show. But now? They've achieved the same thing with just a TV show? And it even went further than that?"

"The ratings for 'Wild Rose' are too scary!"

"Who is this Clown person?"

"I don't know! Which big name in the music industry is he? He even managed to sing that well while sick?"

"'Wild Rose' has already stormed through the charts. It's already #1 on the daily Top Chinese Music Chart today. In a few more days, I suppose the monthly #1 spot is as good as theirs. How scary! This is insane!"

"What a subversive variety show!"

"Hai, Beijing TV has really gotten the most out of it this time!"

"There's no helping it. Zhang Ye is a Beijing local, after all! Dammit. With him there, who the hell can still vie with Beijing TV?"

"Has the viewership rating for their show been released yet?"

"Not yet, but it should be out sometime soon."

"Let's see what their viewership turns out to be first."

"Surely it won't be breaking another historical record, right?"

...

At an entertainment company.

"Little Xiao."

"Director Zhou."

"Did you watch the King of Masked Singers?"

"I did."

"What are your thoughts on it?"

"The contestants on the show are indeed very strong. I think that I may have identified one of them, but I'm not very sure. As for the others, I don't know since I really couldn't guess who they were."

"You're our company's highly prized newcomer. I have quite a good relationship with the King of Masked Singers' Executive Director Hu Fei and already communicated with him. You can go and try out for the show."

"Do you think I'm good enough?"

"You're also a professional singer, so you need to have confidence in yourself. This show will definitely become popular; rather, it has already become very popular. Many companies are eyeing for a slice of this pie right now and they're all vying to send their celebrities to the show. If we don't act quickly, we likely wouldn't have another chance."

"Alright, I'll do as you say."

...

At Beijing Television.

In the King of Masked Singers' program team office.

A lot of people from the other program teams came by to "visit."

"Old Hu, you guys were really impressive this time!"

"Hai, not really."

"Your show has already become so popular, yet you're still being so humble? Hurry up and treat us already. You must definitely do so. We won't show up if the restaurant is too low-class!"

"Hur hur, let's wait until the viewership ratings are out. It looks like the show is very popular, but we still don't know how the results will turn out."

"Come on, you. The online discussions are already so overwhelming, and everyone in the industry is talking about your show. If your viewership rating is bad, I'll twist my head off and give it to you."

"Then I'll be hoping you're right."

Previously, they were the program team for Do You Remember. Although that show was quite good too back then, but all it was was quite good. Hu Fei and the program team staff had never enjoyed such treatment before. A deputy station head and a station executive even made a visit to their office and sat around for a while before heading back to their own office for the day. Quite a few of their Beijing Television colleagues also came by to congratulate them, while a lot of media reporters bombarded the program team with calls.

Hou Ge said excitedly, "We're famous!"

Hou Di proclaimed, "I can't believe we got to see a day like this!"

"I feel like I'm living a dream." Xiao Lu was still getting used to this. "Did any of you receive any calls? I got two calls this morning from the other TV stations, looking to headhunt me. They offered me an annual package of 500,000 yuan! I was totally shocked! I've never even seen 500,000 yuan in my lifetime before!"

Dafei exclaimed, "Damn, why didn't anyone headhunt me?!"

Xiao Lu laughed and quipped, "'Cause you're ugly."

Dafei: "..."

Everyone laughed.

Hu Fei smiled and said, "Actually, we shouldn't be getting so carried away. For those of us who're involved, we know that this is all to the credit of Teacher Zhang."

Han Qi gave a wry smile and said, "Teacher Zhang is just too amazing."

Han Qi was a newcomer who had just transferred to the current program team. During the few times that Zhang Ye had come over, she had only seen him from a distance and did not have an opportunity to speak with him. At her level, she felt that she was not qualified to speak with him yet. This was Zhang Ye

they were talking about, a big shot A-list celebrity and a very famous figure in the industry. As a result, she could only watch from afar even though she was a diehard Zhang Ye fan. However, Han Qi did not know that she had already interacted with Zhang Ye many times.

Suddenly, hasty footfalls came running!

One of the program team employees rushed into the office and shouted excitedly, "It's here! The viewership ratings are out!"

Hu Fei quickly said, "How did we do?"

Hou Ge immediately tensed up. "How much did we get?"

Xiao Lu said anxiously, "What's our nationwide ranking?"

When that person handed the viewership ratings chart to Hu Fei, everyone instantly gathered around him!

"Let me take a look!"

"Don't block me!"

"How much did we get?"

"Just how much is it?"

Then, the numbers on the form appeared before everyone's eyes!

When they saw the numbers, shock jumped onto the program team's faces!

The nationwide viewership ratings for the King of Masked Singers premiere episode was—2.51%!

They were the #1 show nationwide!

They led by double the #2 show's viewership rating!

The office fell silent.

One second.

Two seconds.

Suddenly, ear-piercing screams rang out!

"Ahhh!"

"Number one! We're number one nationwide!"

"Holy shit! 2.51%!"

"It's really become popular this time! Our show's really a hit!"

"Heavens!"

"This is ridiculous!"

"It's even higher than The Voice's premiere episode rating?"

"Oh my god!"

Han Qi jumped for joy!

Xiao Lu was shrieking with excitement!

Cries of joy!

Cheering!

The office devolved into chaos!

Hu Fei suddenly said, "Quick, inform Little Zhang about this!"

Dafei quickly replied, "Let me do it. I'll give Teacher Zhang a call!"

Beijing Television burst into an uproar!

The industry was shocked by the viewership ratings!

This was just the premiere broadcast!

The first episode of the show!

But this episode has already fucking achieved a viewership rating of 2.51%? What does this mean? Do you all intend to fucking break the 4% mark? How can it possibly be so high?!

Chapter 1004: The Clown gets called out?

At Old Rao's house.

Zhang Ye was still playing dead on the sofa when he received the call.

"Dafei, it's out?"

"Yeah! It's out!"

"How much?"

"2.51%!"

"Ah? How much again?"

"The premiere episode's viewership was 2.51%!"

"Is that figure from a draft report?"

"It's not! This is the actual viewership rating! Teacher Zhang, we've gotten first nationwide. Our premiere episode has taken the number one spot in the nationwide viewership ratings! You're so incredible!"

Dafei called his coworkers over to the phone.

Xiao Lu ran over and shouted into the phone: "Teacher Zhang, you're so amazing! So, so amazing! Hurry over. Brother Hu says that he'll be treating us to a meal, and the Station Head has announced that they'll be holding a celebratory banquet just for our program team, right after they gave us a letter of commendation and published it to the entire station! We're just lacking your presence now!"

Zhang Ye laughed and said, "I won't be joining you guys today. I still have some things to attend to."

After hanging up, Zhang Ye kept quiet for a second before suddenly belly laughing!

#1 nationwide?

2.51%?

Another record has been broken!

In fact, Zhang Ye wasn't too sure how the show would perform before it was broadcast. It wasn't because he was not confident, but just that he was unable to put his finger on it. After all, the King of Masked Singers back in his previous world did not have that great of a viewership rating. It only managed around 1 to 2% tops. Zhang Ye had studied the shortcomings of the show closely in order to make the changes to the version in this world. Thus, he could not predict the results until the final moment when the results were released. From the looks of it, the viewership this time really did not disappoint him. In fact, it even exceeded the expectations that Zhang Ye had set for it by a great deal. It looked like the King of Masked Singers that he had made revisions to had been accepted by everyone. This was no doubt a boost to Zhang Ye, as even though he was neither the executive director nor the host, he was still part of the show. If the show became popular, Zhang Ye's popularity would get higher as a result.

He immediately went to check the Celebrity Rankings Index, hoping to see how much his popularity score had gone up by. He felt that it would surely be a sizable amount. However, when he checked the list, he was shocked to discover that his popularity score was actually dropping, although it was still within the A-list.

Damn!

What was happening?

Then, with a jolt, Zhang Ye facepalmed as he suddenly remembered that he was performing with a mask on, and no one knew that it was him who joined the competition. Therefore, it was impossible that he would be credited with any popularity as Zhang Ye. Having not been onscreen for some time and without a job, the A-list celebrities ranked behind him had started catching up relentlessly while Zhang Ye's popularity score was sliding back. Zhang Ye could only smile helplessly at this. After his fever yesterday, he was probably feeling a little mixed up right now, but that didn't really matter. He would just have to leave this issue of his popularity score aside for now. He was sure that on the day that he revealed himself, all of that accumulated popularity would come back to him. Thinking of the arrival of such a day, Zhang Ye could no longer control his laughter as he wondered when he would achieve that explosion in popularity. But first, he would have to continue singing and not get eliminated midway through the show.

Tired from laughing, Zhang Ye took a breather and suddenly realized that everyone in the apartment was looking at him.

Rao Aimin was looking at him.

Chenchen was also staring at him.

Zhang Ye rubbed his face. "Why you lookin' at me?"

Rao Aimin narrowed her eyes. "Rascal, you're quite full of energy when you're laughing, aren't you?"

With that, Zhang Ye immediately collapsed back onto the sofa and said weakly, "It's the last gasp."

Rao Aimin sent a kick flying at him!

"So you were only pretending earlier?"

"Aiyo, what are you doing!"

"Get up!"

"Don't kick, don't kick!"

Chenchen shouted angrily, "Zhang Ye, you're so shameless! I thought that you were actually seriously injured! I even went to get you a cup of water! You...why are you not behaving like a proper adult!"

Zhang Ye got chased around the apartment. "I'm always the one being ordered around! Can't I be the one to order you guys around for once? Aiyo, Old Rao, you're hitting me for real? Do you think I won't retaliate? Do you think that I can't beat you? You're more seriously injured than I am."

However, the facts had already proved that even if Rao Aimin's injuries have not recovered, even if her injuries were more serious than Zhang Ye's, he still couldn't beat her.

This fellow was actually much better, his injuries under control and regaining 40-50% of his stamina. He now had the foundation of a martial arts master, and his strength and stamina levels were maxed out after having eaten all those level 1 Fruits from the lottery draw. Once his injuries were alleviated and did not affect him as much, Zhang Ye's resilience and recovery rate would naturally be different from normal people's.

...

Medicinal herb concoction three times a day.

Traditional Chinese massage twice daily.

By the second day, Zhang Ye could already do some simple exercises.

By the third day, the rasp in Zhang Ye's voice started to disappear.

By the fourth day, Zhang Ye attempted singing two high notes and could practically hit them, except that he couldn't sustain them for long. If he did, his voice would end up trembling due to his vocal cords tightening.

By the fifth day, the side effects from the cortisone shots had almost subsided.

The doctor was right about the severe side effects of a cortisone shot, let alone the fact that he had received three shots. Even for someone with Zhang Ye's physique and condition, it still took him five days to recover from it. If it were a normal person, they would probably have taken more than a month to recover their voice.

His body was back to normal for now.

His voice had just about recovered.

However, Zhang Ye was still undecided on what songs to sing, and with the second episode's recording of King of Masked Singers coming up, he was starting to panic, too. Everyone knew that he was someone who always set very high standards for himself, so he would be much more stringent when it came to choosing a song. He couldn't even be a little unsatisfied with it.

Which songs should he choose?

He had absolutely no idea whatsoever!

Reuse the song he had rehearsed before he switched songs last time? No good!

Or should he bring out a classic?

...

At this moment, a heated discussion erupted online!

"It will be Saturday in another two days!"

"They'll be recording tomorrow, right?"

"I'm so looking forward to it!"

"King of Masked Singers is so good!"

"I love The Clown the most!"

"Who do you guys think will be crowned as the second episode's Masked King?"

"Petal Shower!"

"Sunset Glow sang really well too! It's just that a lot of the audience members could not understand!"

"It's definitely going to be Sunflower, without a doubt!"

"Eh, why didn't anyone mention The Clown?"

"He's already been crowned as the first episode's Masked King. And besides, everyone knows that his crowning was not exactly well-deserved. He only got it because he was being opportunistic."

"Ah, what do you mean by that?"

"Can't you tell? For someone as sick as him, everyone would surely pity him. A lot of people voted for him out of sympathy. Didn't any of you realize that? The Clown's singing and voice were totally appalling, even though he was really suffering from a cold too, which we won't talk about. His technique

actually laid in his lyrics, claiming he was some wolf from the north looking for some beautiful plains, or how he's a beautiful, beautiful wild rose but for the unfair heavens. He only won on the technicalities of his song lyrics which he used to apply to his circumstances at that moment. It's no surprise that he won the vote to become Masked King. But he definitely has no chance in the second episode."

"Finally! There's someone else who noticed it! I also noticed it!"

"Yeah, those two songs by The Clown were good, and I wondered who wrote them too, but I can't help but feel that it wasn't a proper victory. He only did it by gaining pity points!"

"Is that so? I thought it was quite a proper win."

"That's because you're still too young to understand."

"That's quite true, to be honest. You can even say that The Clown's performance that day was the worst of the six participants, but his lyrics were good and he totally took advantage of that. If he really were to sing another song, even if he didn't have a cold and his voice was in the best possible shape, he still couldn't compare to Petal Shower and Sunflower. He probably wouldn't even last in a competition against Sunset Glow and The Yak!"

"Um, that's what I think too."

"There are two possibilities now. One is that The Clown's voice has not recovered yet and he'll continue playing the sympathy card but the audience does not get convinced. That would mean he is almost guaranteed to get eliminated. The second is that The Clown's voice has recovered and he performs to his best. But without the sympathy card, how many people will actually like his songs and singing? Rather than talking about his chances of becoming the second episode's Masked King, I think The Clown will find it hard to even stay in the competition."

On the Top Chinese Music Chart.

"Wild Rose" was already sweeping aside every other song on the charts.

#1 on the daily chart!

#1 on the weekly chart!

#3 on the monthly chart, but already making its way up to first place!

The performance of "Wolf" was quite good and did well on the charts too.

But what was surprising was that in the official poll created by Beijing Television's King of Masked Singers program team, the support for The Clown was dipping.

First: Petal Shower.

Second: Sunflower in the Starlight.

Third: Sunset Glow.

The Clown was ranked fourth.

Followed by the eliminated King of Oddity, who wasn't too far behind The Clown.

A lot of people had been affected by the discussions, or rather a lot of them had the same opinions regarding The Clown and felt that he had won the first episode only because he got lucky.

Some negative news also sprung up after that.

"How far can The Clown go just by relying on sympathy?"

"Sources claim that replacement masked singers on the King of Masked Singers' second episode will include a talented singer!"

"The Clown facing elimination?"

"Wild Rose sweeps the charts, The Clown sweeps the floor!"

"A singing competition or a songwriting competition?"

"Playing the sympathy card on King of Masked Singers gets called out by netizens!"

"The Clown: A flash in the pan?"

"The Clown revealed: Might be an unknown rookie!"

When a person gets popular, gossip will fly.

With the King of Masked Singers so popular now, it was difficult to avoid the doubting voices. But these doubting voices from the media and people regarding The Clown was something that was still rarely seen. In the era of speculation, lies, and sympathy cards, people were getting even more sensitive to it. Together with people fanning the flames behind these claims, everyone started believing it the more they heard them. They thought that it was rather true, since if it weren't for those lyrical verses that resonated with everyone's emotions at that time and gained their sympathy, who would have actually cast their vote for him? Perhaps the King of Masked Singers' program team also had such thoughts. Frankly, a lot of people did not even bother listening to The Clown's voice or heard anything special in his voice. Everyone was purely moved just by the lyrics of those two songs.

"I just dislike people who try to gain sympathy this way!"

"Yeah, it's so disgusting to watch!"

"Didn't he just get those good songs because of his company? It's not like he really has the talent to win!"

The opinions were getting more and more skewed!

...

Zhang Ye found out about this news and these opinions the night before the recording was about to take place.

Depending on lyrics?

Trying to gain sympathy?

He just smiled and did not get bothered by it.

He settled his mind then continued to select songs.

Chapter 1005: The Clown's two songs!

Friday.

At around 8 in the morning.

Near the side door of Beijing Television's main building, Han Qi was standing alone at a spot she felt would not be eye-catching. She looked around from time to time and seemed to be waiting for someone.

Not too far away, Xiao Lu and Dafei were chatting and laughing as they walked over.

"Eh, Little Han?" Xiao Lu was surprised to see her here.

Han Qi smiled and said, "Sister Lu, Brother Fei, good morning."

Dafei wondered, "What are you doing here?"

Han Qi blushed and said, "I-I'm waiting for Teacher Clown."

Dafei asked, "The Clown's rehearsal is scheduled for 9 AM, right?"

Han Qi nodded. "Yes."

Xiao Lu smiled and said, "Then you better hurry. The other singers finished rehearsing yesterday except for Teacher Clown." Her smile then withdrew and she said with melancholy, "The public opinion during the past two days hasn't favored him much. A lot of people are already doubting The Clown for not winning the competition properly, saying he relied on the lyrics to remedy his situation and even chastised him for trying to gain pity points. We will start recording the show in the afternoon. When he takes the stage later, he'll definitely face a great deal of pressure and the audience will probably be affected by public opinion during the voting."

Han Qi said angrily, "What do they mean 'relying on lyrics'? They don't know a thing!"

"Just be a bit more attentive in regards to that. Also, the condition of Teacher Clown's voice is another problem, so follow up with him on that." Then Xiao Lu and Dafei went into the main building.

Han Qi was left feeling both angry and worried.

It was really infuriating!

What would those media people know!

What would those netizens know!

How could they criticize Teacher Clown?

Han Qi continued to look around as she waited for her target. She was here to "intercept" The Clown today. He had always been either appearing at the station or in front of her without getting noticed every single time, so Han Qi decided that she would just come out to the entrance to wait for him. She

really wanted to know who the man behind The Clown's mask was. She was confident that with her past interactions with him, if The Clown stood in front of her, she would be able to recognize him as quite a few of The Clown's distinct traits came to her mind.

Celebrity.

Professional singer.

Charming.

Short haired.

Around 30 years of age?

In front of her, a celebrity and two of his assistants were walking over.

Han Qi immediately locked her eyes on him. No, not him. This man was invited to come for an interview today. Eh, another person was coming, but it wasn't him either. He was a host at Beijing Television.

In the end, she did not manage to spot The Clown, but instead saw her idol.

In the parking lot, Zhang Ye got out of his car and walked straight toward the building.

On his way over, there were quite a few people who greeted him.

"Aiya, Teacher Zhang!"

"Hello, Teacher Zhang."

"Good morning, Teacher Zhang."

"Good morning, Director Zhang."

Not only the King of Masked Singers' program team, even the other departments and program teams' staff who saw Zhang Ye were friendly to him. The King of Masked Singers that Zhang Ye produced had allowed Beijing Television to achieve the top spot in the nationwide viewership ratings of television shows for the first time ever. Even if they were not staff from the King of Masked Singers' program team, they still felt extremely excited. Due to the domino effect, the other program teams experienced a slight viewership increase for their shows. This proved that the King of Masked Singers was leading Beijing Television to move onto a bigger stage and journey to becoming a leading provincial satellite station. Naturally, a lot of the Beijing Television staff were willing to recognize Zhang Ye's merits because everyone knew that if it were not for Zhang Ye's contributions, even with the skill of all the program teams in Beijing Television combined, it was impossible that they could come up with a show that performed so outstandingly.

Zhang Ye smiled and nodded at them.

He arrived at the entrance in the blink of an eye.

Han Qi was already extremely nervous. She straightened instantly and mustered up her courage to greet him. She did not have any expectations that Zhang Ye would reply to her. "Teacher Zhang, good morning!"

When Zhang Ye heard that, he was surprised for a moment. Only then did he see Han Qi, to whom he smiled and said, "Morning to you as well." Then he went upstairs without saying anything else.

But Han Qi got very excited!

Teacher Zhang spoke to me! He spoke to me!

She was truly a diehard Zhang Ye fan and was the type who would argue with anyone if they said bad things about him online. She was in a very terrible mood today due to Teacher Clown's situation, but when Zhang Ye greeted her with a "morning to you as well," her mood immediately improved and she became much more spirited!

So she continued waiting.

Why hadn't Teacher Clown arrived yet?

10 minutes.

20 minutes.

30 minutes.

It was almost 9 AM and time for the scheduled rehearsal, but The Clown was still not here yet.

Han Qi quickly called The Clown, but no one answered the phone. As such, she had no choice but to call to Music Director Bai Yuanfei. She anxiously said: "Teacher Bai, Teacher Clown has not arrived yet, and as he might not be feeling too well, do you think we can arrange something regarding the rehearsal...."

On the other end of the line.

Bai Yuanfei said in surprise: "The Clown? But he's already here, isn't he?"

Han Qi exclaimed: "Ah?"

Bai Yuanfei said: "We're already rehearsing."

He already arrived?

What the hell!

When did you even arrive?

Don't tell me you can teleport?

Han Qi nearly fainted as her attempt to intercept The Clown ended in vain. The Clown was simply too mysterious. Could it be that he had entered from the back door or through the cafeteria's stairway entrance? Why are you doing things so randomly! Han Qi's curiosity almost exploded. Like a lot of the viewers in the country, she really wanted to know who The Clown was! Why wouldn't he show his face? Why did he have to hide his identity so carefully? Was there any reason why he couldn't show his face? That not even the program team staff could know about it? Uh, could it be that he was very, very...ugly?

She immediately set herself thinking.

Who were the ugly celebrities in the entertainment industry?

Crosstalk comedian Tang Dazhang?

Korea's Lee Anson?

Or those athletes from the sporting world?

Whatever it was, in Han Qi's eyes, those who had scolded Zhang Ye were all ugly.

See, this is what you call a diehard fan!

...

In the rehearsal room.

This was a rather big set allocated to them by Beijing Television. Other than musical instruments, there were cameras set up around the place. Some rehearsal scenes would probably end up being edited and broadcast in the episode. The entire time after the masked singers arrived at Beijing Television would be fully recorded, unless the contestants personally requested for them not to do so. For example, not placing any cameras in the waiting room. If that happened, the program team would respect the singers' wishes like what The Clown had just done.

By the time Han Qi came over, The Clown had indeed already arrived.

Music Director Bai Yuanfei said, "Let's rehearse once more."

The Miracle Wheels nodded.

The house band lineup for today was magnificent, with about eight old folk music teachers invited as well.

Han Qi did not go over to disturb them. She just found a seat in the audience and listened attentively.

The music started playing.

The band members looked at the score given to them by The Clown and started playing the accompaniment.

The Clown was wearing his mask and standing on stage, humming softly along with the music. "Hmm, mmm, hmmm..." He practiced his song by humming in a nasally voice the entire process.

Han Qi's heart skipped a beat.

Shit!

The teacher's voice had not recovered yet!

They finally finished with the rehearsal of the first song after a long very time.

The Clown said, "Thanks for helping me, teachers."

Han Qi was surprised. Eh, listening to Teacher Clown's speak, he sounded like he was in better shape than last week. He even spoke with his disguised voice? He was purposely hiding his voice? Or was it because his voice had not fully recovered yet?

Bai Yuanfei said worriedly, "Is everything gonna be fine?"

The Clown nodded. "The song is a bit difficult, so I can't do a proper practice run."

The band guitarist asked, "Was it because of the side effects from the cortisone shot? You really risked your life. With three shots, even the gods would not be able to bear with it!"

The drummer sighed while shaking his head.

The Clown said, "That's why I have to save my voice for the actual performance."

"Alright." Bai Yuanfei said, "We'll rehearse this way for now. You don't have to sing; it's fine to just hum along. Try your best to maintain your stamina. Let's start with the rehearsal of the second song!"

However, the second song went beyond their expectations as they spent almost two hours before just barely getting through the rehearsal. Every one of the band members were extremely tired from it.

What song was this?

Why was it so complex?

Was this even necessary?

Could it be that his voice was unable to recover in time, so he decided to use the accompaniment to make up for it? Using the music's charm to cover his mistakes?

Hai. The band members no longer held much hope for The Clown in this round of the competition!

Chapter 1006: The Clown vs. Petal Shower!

Later that afternoon.

The recording was about to begin.

Backstage, the contestants started to draw lots to decide the order of their appearances and opponents in the first round. There were two replacement masked singers here, whose names and strength were unknown. As such, everyone placed a great deal of importance on this draw due to their results being affected by who their opponent was and in which order they would appear onstage. This was in direct relation to whether they could still remain on this stage or if they would advance further.

In The Clown's waiting room.

The door opened.

Han Qi and some of the program team staff came in.

"Teacher, it's your turn," Han Qi said nervously. She was hoping that The Clown would draw a good lot, the best being number six and would mean that he would be the last to sing.

The Clown reached his hand into the box.

The camera focused onto him immediately.

At the same time, the other contestants could clearly observe the ongoing at The Clown's waiting room in real time

Sunflower in the Starlight had drawn number three.

Petal Shower was number one.

New replacement masked singer "God of War" had drawn number four.

These were the results of the draw so far: Sunflower's opponent was to be God of War. During the drawing process that was shown live from God of War's waiting room earlier, all the other contestants saw how God of War practically broke down. At first, the man's voice sounded rather cheerful, but he ended up exclaiming "no, no, no" for the longest time after the draw. This was because anyone who had watched the first episode of King of Masked Singers would know exactly how strong an opponent Sunflower was. One was Sunflower, the other was Petal Shower. They were both opponents that no one wanted to be matched against!

It was now The Clown's turn for the draw. Everyone was glued to their TV.

The Clown's hand withdrew from the box, holding a small ball in his hand. The numbered side of it was then turned to the camera.

Number two!

He had drawn number two!

He would be the second one to appear on stage and his opponent was—Petal Shower.

Han Qi similarly broke down as well. No! No! No!

He would be appearing at the beginning and his opponent was going to be Petal Shower. This was the worst lot that could be drawn!

In the waiting room of the other replacement masked singer who had not drawn lots yet, he let out a long sigh of relief after seeing The Clown get matched with Petal Shower. That would mean that Sunset Glow had been confirmed as his opponent. Petal Shower was currently the contestant with the most popularity in the prediction poll on the official website. Hundreds of thousands of people had voted that she would be crowned the second episode's Masked King, with Sunflower in second place with 110,000 votes. This was the reason why no one was willing to face off against these two in the first round; they had already gained a good standing in popularity. Even if they made some mistakes and did not perform up to their potential, the live audience voters might still cast their votes for them as there would be emotion involved in their decision. Competitions have always declared themselves to be fair, but how could there possibly be absolute fairness?

The door closed.

The program team staff left the waiting room.

Han Qi said in panic, "What should we do now!"

But The Clown did not say a single word. Petal Shower was indeed a strong opponent, and he honestly did not wish to face her for his first song today, yet this was exactly what happened.

The studio issued an announcement to start the countdown to recording.

Han Qi was in despair.

Petal Shower enjoyed a very good reputation while The Clown was attracting doubt from too many people!

They could not win this!

There was no way they could win!

When the house band and the program team staff found out about this matchup, they pitied The Clown. They knew there was no chance he could fight for the throne of the Masked King now and thought that he should be thinking of how to remain in the competition instead.

...

The studio was packed.

The audience gazed at the stage in excitement as recording began!

After Dong Shanshan took the stage and recited a string of advertising messages, she smiled at the guessing panel. "Judges, after the first episode, do you have any guesses on who the contestants are?"

Zhang Xia smiled and said, "I have no idea who's who."

Amy giggled and said, "Even at the moment when King of Oddity took off his mask, I still could not believe it. With the costumes wrapping them up so tightly and wearing a mask, who could guess who they are? But Sunset Glow's voice sounds a little familiar to me, so I'll just continue observing for now."

Backstage, Sunset Glow was watching the television. When she heard that, she raised a half-smile.

This is not good.

Did Amy really recognize me?

I've already deliberately changed the tone of my vocal register.

Chen Guang laughed and said, "I'll observe a bit more today."

Dong Shanshan asked, "Judges, are there any contestants you have a good feeling about?"

Wang Zhuishu smiled and said, "I still have my money on Petal Shower."

Chen Yidong said, "I think Sunflower is good. He has a great chance of becoming the Masked King today."

Chen Guang added, "If we're talking about singing, Sunflower and Petal Shower really do have the greater chance of becoming the Masked King. But this is a competition after all, so it's hard to tell."

Zhang Xia nodded. "Petal Shower is very good. I feel like I definitely know her."

Yao Jiancai looked at Chen Guang and joked, "Old Chen, could your wife have come to join the competition?"

Chen Guang's eyes twitched as he replied hurriedly with a smile, "I still believe that Petal Shower is Sister Zhang."

Amy laughed. "That's possible too!"

Everyone was making wild guesses. In truth, a lot of people really weren't thinking about the contestants as any of those famous big names in the music industry. They were all still confused.

After the atmosphere warmed up, the competition got underway.

The audience was also getting more and more excited.

"Hurry up!"

"Petal Shower! Petal Shower!"

"I wonder what kind of song Sunflower will sing today. I like him so much!"

"Eh, why didn't any of the judges mention The Clown?"

"I guess the program team must have informed them before the recording started."

"Yeah, the voices of doubts are getting stronger and they're all about the validity of The Clown winning Masked King on the last episode. No one really dares to bring up how he went onstage sick and could still sing in that way anymore. The judges probably know it themselves too that they were only moved by The Clown's songs last week out of sympathy due to how the lyrics were befitting of the circumstances. Didn't Grandma Zhang Xia and Chen Guang also say that if it were really down to singing technique, other than the two replacements today, the best would definitely be either Petal Shower or Sunflower?"

"The Clown was indeed just being opportunistic."

"The first episode's Masked King should have been Sunflower."

"Oh come on, it should have been Sunset Glow."

"Hur hur."

"Let's see how it goes this episode then!"

"Eh, it's starting!"

People in the audience were debating endlessly about their favorite singer or who they supported. However, The Clown's name was starting to get mentioned less and less.

Dong Shanshan's voice reverberated through the studio. "Let us welcome our first performer today—Petal Shower."

Immediate applause rang out!

"Wow!"

"She's the first one to perform!"

"Petal Shower, I love you!"

"This is great! The first one to sing is our Petal Shower!"

Quite a few people were shouting and screaming, raising the intensity in the studio!

During the first episode when the contestants were underneath masks and had yet to sing a song, people had no idea how good they were. When the contestants first appeared on stage, the applause was lukewarm at best. However, this time was different as everyone had watched the show once. In fact, there were even some people in the audience who were attending the recording for the second time. The atmosphere was clearly different than last time.

Under everyone's attention, Petal Shower walked onstage.

Applause thundered once again!

"You got this!"

"Come on!"

"You're the true Masked King!"

Just from this reaction alone, it could be obvious how popular Petal Shower was!

Even the program team staff and the other contestants who were backstage and slated to appear later could only smile wryly to themselves. She was already this popular after singing just two songs in the first episode?

How could they still compete with her?

They should just crown her Masked King straight away!

However, they were willing to admit that Petal Shower was indeed a strong foe. Thinking of this, all the other masked singers felt some sympathy for The Clown for having drawn today's worst lot!

The lights dimmed.

The bowed notes of a violin floated through the air.

The audience hushed, with some of them closing their eyes to listen.

Petal Shower gripped the microphone and opened her mouth softly.

A gentle falsetto drifted out!

It was her signature technique on this stage, as well as the audience's familiar sense of shock!

"Lies repeated a hundred times.

"In return, just a false promise.

"A mask that's been worn a lifetime.

"Why can't I become the person I want to be?"

The audience knew from the moment they heard it!

This was "Face"!

It was a very slow and touching song!

Amy forced a smile and said, "How nice. She's singing it better than me!"

Zhang Xia looked at her. "It's not like you to sing endearing songs in the first place."

Amy said to convince her, "There's almost no one in the music industry who can sing like this. The range of her falsetto is enormous, so I'm a 100% sure that Petal Shower is a professional singer. She's most definitely a big name too!"

Wang Zhuishu agreed, "That's right. And I have a feeling that this woman must be such a big name in the music industry that we couldn't even start imagining it. But as long as she doesn't speak with her normal voice, there's no way that we can guess who she is!"

Yao Jiancai was enjoying the singing. "Whoever faces her is really down on their luck."

Chen Yidong said, "As long as Petal Shower does not make any mistakes, it'll be difficult for anyone to beat her. Her falsetto is so amazing that I don't think there's anyone who has a better technique than hers!"

Petal Shower sang a cappella.

"Ugly.

"A pretence.

"This is...

"What my face...is."

The performance ended.

Petal Shower lowered her microphone and took a slight bow in thanks.

Applause immediately rang out!

Even the backstage contestants were clapping for her!

The audience was screaming from every corner!

"It's so good!"

"I used to not like this song, but Petal Shower sang it really well!"

"That's what a charming singer can do!"

"She's definitely going to win!"

"Yeah, there's no need to listen to the next contestant!"

"Right, it doesn't matter who comes next!"

"Petal Shower!"

"Petal Shower!"

Petal Shower's performance today was as good as her last one. There were no mistakes and no voice cracking, although it wasn't as stunning as her first performance in the last episode. Perhaps this was due to the choice and genre of the song, but she still managed to perform it up to her level and it was still as enjoyable to listen to! But the most crucial point was that the entire song was sung with a varied falsetto, which further increased the charm of the song. After all, none of them had ever heard of anyone who would dare to sing like this. Due to it being very difficult to sing in falsetto, not too many singers had the capability to do so, nor would they dare to do something like this live! Due to such curiosity, this rendition of "Face" by Petal Shower had once again infected the studio!

Whether it was the audience?

The judges?

The backstage contestants?

Or the program team staff?

None of them felt that she could lose!

Chapter 1007: A song without lyrics!

The studio was filled with the sound of applause.

The first song had raised the atmosphere to the highest point. None of the other participating singers hoped that they would be the next to appear, but The Clown was already standing at the door.

Han Qi gave a bitter smile. "Teacher."

The Clown grunted in acknowledgment.

Han Qi hesitated, then said, "Let's aim for the next song instead and focus on that. Don't try so hard on this song and preserve some of your stamina for later. After all, your voice has only recovered a little and you still can't perform to the best of your ability. We just need to ensure that you don't get eliminated."

The Clown smiled but did not speak.

Dafei came over. "It's your turn soon."

The Clown nodded.

Executive Director Hu Fei took some time to go over. He was worried about The Clown's voice and even more worried that the recent public opinion would strike a blow to him. "How do you feel?"

The Clown said, "Great."

Hu Fei sighed. "Ignore what the media is saying."

The Clown said, "Alright."

Hu Fei said, "Ignore them and don't let it get to you. Just sing the best that you can."

The Clown shook his head. "I don't mind what they're saying on the Internet and news."

"Right, just sing as you would usually sing. Your lyrics are your greatest weapon, so you can't just toss them aside. It's also a part of your strength," Hu Fei comforted.

The Clown smiled and said, "I do understand that."

When the program team staff heard this, they felt relieved.

He was indeed worthy of being someone from the entertainment circle as his mental fortitude seemed to be much stronger than most people. Even with so much pressure stemming from the public, he was able to easily brush it aside. This was something that most other people could do!

Good on you, Teacher Clown!

Don't let the gossip get to you!

Even if you lose today, no one will take you lightly!

From the stage, Dong Shanshan filtered in. "Then, let's welcome our next contestant—The Clown!"

The Clown exhaled, took a step, and walked out onto the stage at his own pace.

Han Qi felt a heavy sense of frustration as she watched The Clown walk off toward the stage. He was doomed even before he could take the stage or utter any lyrics. This feeling deflated her!

The audience was stunned!

Right now, many people were watching in shock as The Clown slowly walked onto the stage.

"What?"

"The next one up is The Clown?"

"Damn, why is it him?"

"Can he get any more unlucky than that?"

"Yeah, if it were any other opponent, The Clown might still somehow advance to the next round, especially if it was either of those two replacement masked singers since no one knows how well they can sing yet. But now that his opponent is Petal Shower, what competition is left? His voice has not recovered yet, right? Even if he were to bring out another two sensational songs, or if his company wrote him another two songs with lyrics that could move the Heavens, it's not likely that anyone would get convinced like last time."

"This round really boils down to their skills."

"It's no use even if The Clown's voice has recovered!"

"I really do like his lyrics, though. I was here for the last episode's recording and gave him my vote at that time, but if I were to disregard the meaning behind the lyrics, I doubt that The Clown could even clinch third place!"

"He's even being called out in the media right now."

"The previous Masked King should not have been him."

The audience was pointing at the stage and making lots of noise.

However, Zhang Ye was seemingly unaware of the situation. He quietly walked to center stage and closed his eyes as though he did not hear anything. He had witnessed this sort of spectacle too many times before, so much that he could not even count the number of times it had happened.

Chen Guang looked at him and sighed.

Zhang Xia said, "Things are very disadvantageous for The Clown."

The pressure from public opinion was too great and was practically the death sentence for The Clown.

The lights dimmed.

This was the signal that the next performance was about to begin.

Petal Shower did not return to her waiting room. She watched him from the wings.

Backstage, Sunset Glow, Sunflower, God of War, and the other contestants were also watching TVs without blinking. They were actually rather curious about what song The Clown would be singing today.

The music started.

The notes of a piano played.

But it wasn't Zhang Ye playing the piano today, because this song was too difficult and Zhang Ye would not be able to concentrate on playing and singing simultaneously. Even during the rehearsals, he did not practice the singing as he was afraid that his voice would be unable to hold up—yes, he was really going to challenge such a difficult song today!

The title of the song was displayed on the teleprompter overhead the stage.

Opera, Dedicated to Love.

The judges blinked.

The audience could not understand either.

Opera?

What is this?

Never heard of it. Are you going to sing another original? Do you intend to win us over with your lyrics again?

All of a sudden, right as the piano played the melody, The Clown opened his mouth.

"Oooooooo.

"Aaaaah, uaaaaahh.

"Aaaaaah, oooh, aaaah."

The judges were shocked!

The audience was shocked!

The other contestants were also shocked!

When these vocals came out, a lot of people could feel themselves getting the goosebumps!

It was falsetto!

The Clown was actually singing in falsetto too!

Holy shit! Did The Clown actually intend to compete against Petal Shower through the falsetto?

No way! There was absolutely no way! He would definitely just be singing in falsetto for the first two verses before switching back to his normal voice!

Petal Shower looked up to the stage at The Clown in surprise and could not react!

"Aaaaahhh.

"Aaah, ahhhh.

"Aaaaaahh, ahhh, ahhh."

There were no signs of his normal voice at all!

It was all in falsetto!

The audience was dumbfounded from listening to this!

Zhang Xia was also dumbfounded. "This, this singing, this falsetto..."

Amy squealed, "How is this possible!"

Wang Zhuishu was also dumbfounded!

Chen Guang was dumbfounded too!

Right after Petal Shower finished performing, some people were saying that there wouldn't be another person who could sing in falsetto the way she did. But just a few minutes later, a great slap was buffeted across their faces with a loud smack!

Another person had appeared!

And it was even a person who could also wield his falsetto technique in such a superb manner!

The best aspect of Petal Shower's varying falsetto range was its exquisiteness!

But The Clown's falsetto was better in terms of vocal weight. It won in terms of carrying power and emotion and carved into everyone's hearts like a sharp knife. It left everyone unprepared for the shock they were receiving!

What was going on?

Just what was happening?

Han Qi and the program team staff were in similar states of disbelief!

No one had expected that The Clown would sing this way, nor could they have expected that he had such a good falsetto! This was terrifying! This singing technique was simply terrifying!

Zhang Ye continued singing.

"Aaaaaaaaah.

"Ahhhhhhhhhhhh.

"Ahhhhh, ahh."

All of a sudden, he raised the pitch of his falsetto so high that it felt like it had pierced through the roof!

Hearing this, the audience found it hard to hold their feelings in any longer!

"Oh my god!"

"This, this..."

"Can it get any more amazing than this?"

"Heavens!"

"What about the lyrics?"

"Where are the lyrics?"

"Yeah, why are there no lyrics? How can there be no lyrics?"

Zhang Ye was still singing.

"Aah, aaaaah.

"Ahh, ahhhhhh.

"Aaaaaaaaah, ahhhh.

"Ahhh, ahhh."

There was only one "ah" word on the teleprompter!

The audience was once again shocked by The Clown's choice of song!

There were no lyrics!

This was a fucking song without any lyrics!

The house band musicians were dumbstruck!

Music Director Bai Yuanfei looked like he was at a total loss for words!

They finally knew why The Clown had not opened his mouth to sing during the rehearsal. They finally knew why The Clown only hummed through the song when rehearsing. It was because this fucking song had no lyrics in the first place!

Was there even a song like that? Could a song...really have no lyrics? There wasn't any sort of a song in this world, not a single one. But in Zhang Ye's previous world, this song titled "Opera, Dedicated to Love" truly did not have any lyrics. The original version was performed by famous Russian singer, Vitas 1, and was simply known as "Opera 2." Later, it was covered by Terry Lin 3 on the music show I Am a Singer. His performance shocked the entire audience and he got a very good result!

And today, Zhang Ye had brought this famous song from his previous world and presented it here on this stage!

It did not just shock the audience!

It terrified everyone in the audience!

Because no one in this world had ever before heard a song with no lyrics!

Everyone knew current public opinion basically doubted The Clown's win in the first episode, saying he used the meaning of his lyrics to win and that it was not a proper victory!

But today, The Clown had come onstage once more and actually sang an entire song with no lyrics. This was clearly a response to those people—this was clearly a face smacking!

And it was even a very harsh slap!

His singing was simply amazing!

There were no lyrics in it whatsoever, but why? How could this singing floating through the studio stir up image after image in their minds?

Why?

Why did they get the goosebumps from listening to his singing?

The audience was terribly shocked!

Especially when The Clown suddenly paused, then continued singing in a falsetto that increased in pitch for a good five to six seconds, even incorporating some portamento!

With that, many in the audience could not longer hold it in and started to stand up while screaming!

They were going crazy!

The audience had gone crazy!

Meanwhile, Hu Fei nearly passed out onto the floor!

Before The Clown went out on stage, Hu Fei tried to comfort him as he was afraid The Clown would be affected negatively by public opinion on how he had used lyrics to win. The Clown's response to Hu Fei and the program team was still very fresh in their minds. He had stated very firmly that he did not mind it at all.

Everyone who heard him say that had believed him at the time!

But now, the program team staff nearly vomited blood!

Didn't mind?

Didn't mind, your sister, fuck!

You minded it a whole fucking lot, alright!?

Chapter 1008: Who on earth is this!

There were two versions of this song that Zhang Ye was familiar with.

One of them was the original sung by Vitas 1 .

The other was by Terry Lin 2 , who made some changes to it.

These two singers had a very wide falsetto range, although their singing styles were completely different.

Today, Zhang Ye did not imitate either of their versions. This was because, similar to the differences between those two, Zhang Ye's falsetto was different from Vitas's and Terry Lin's. If he had purposely imitated their style, he would only be at a disadvantage and cause this song to lose its essence. Therefore, Zhang Ye also adapted it to suit himself and used his own style to interpret this song. His falsetto voice was even firmer and more carrying than Terry Lin's and Vitas's techniques, so he tightened the control of his high notes so that they would not sound too breathy. But he had to push his falsetto out and let it soar to the skies!

This song was too difficult!

Even for Zhang Ye, he had to expend all of his energy just to fully concentrate and focus on the singing. As a result, he had his eyes closed for the duration of his performance without even looking at the judges or audience once.

"Aaah, aaah, aaah, ahhhhh.

"Ahhhhhhh, ahhhhhhh.

"Ahhhh, aaaaaahhhh.

"Ahh, ahhhhhhh."

He did not look at anyone.

But everyone was watching him in utter shock!

Zhang Xia saw an image of a dancer dancing and their sweat dripping on a stage that was within a grand and majestic palace.

Amy also pictured an image. It was a forlorn, empty alleyway without any signs of people other than a person injured all over whose clothes were stained with fresh blood. That person had thrust their chest out and was gazing up at the moon and singing.

In the audience.

A female audience member felt like she was in an endless expanse of greenery, not knowing where to go or which direction to head toward. All of a sudden, singing drifted towards her from afar. She started running with all her might toward it. As she ran and ran, she saw her late mother waving at her while smiling and calling for her to return home. She suddenly started to cry and couldn't stop!

The Clown's singing felt like it was saying something. It felt like it was stirring up all kinds of emotions about love onto this stage!

Dedicated to Love.

This was exactly what the song was about.

It was as though he was telling everyone that even if they were scolding him or if he didn't have an audience, he would still give his all and dedicate himself to the stage!

"Ahhhhhhh, ahh.

"Ahhhhhhh, aaaah.

"Ahhhh, ahhhhhhh.

"Aaaaaahhhh, ahhhh."

All kinds of images were conjured up in the minds of many of the audience members!

Han Qi saw it!

Hu Fei saw it!

Yao Jiancai saw it!

Petal Shower saw it!

Sunflower saw it!

Sunset Glow saw it!

The audience also saw it!

So they were shocked! So they were moved!

There were no lyrics!

Not a single verse!

However, even though this song had no words, it felt like it said thousands of words. In fact, it conveyed more than what thousand of words could say!

Several of the judges suddenly recalled the criticism in the news and online. They were suddenly very angered and felt that it was extremely insulting! Would a singer who could sing such a song need to rely on using lyrics to gain sympathy?

How could that be!

How could that be possible!

So what if there weren't any lyrics?

He could still shine in radiant splendor!

That was the charm of music!

That was this singer's charm!

...

Backstage.

In Sunflower in the Starlight's waiting room.

Sunflower watched the television and did not say a word.

...

In Sunset Glow's waiting room.

Sunset Glow abruptly turned to the side and gave a wry smile to the camera inside the room. "If he makes it to the next round, I wouldn't want to face him."

...

In God of War's waiting room.

God of War looked helpless.

What sort of people were these!

Who the fuck was this group of freaks!

...

In the studio.

The music stopped.

In the middle of The Clown's a cappella falsetto, he ended the song amid sorrow and love. He sustained the falsetto for a very long time and in a very high pitch. As it came to the end, it got lower and softer until there was no sound.

Silence.

It was so silent it was scary.

It wasn't until The Clown raised his head and bowed in thanks that the audience knew the performance had ended!

Applause then seemingly thundered with a sudden explosion!

The audience was shouting his name in a frenzy!

"The Clown!"

"The Clown!"

"The Clown!"

"The Clown!"

This was a song that could move people!

This was an unprecedented song!

Other than shouting, they could not find another way to express their emotions!

Dong Shanshan came onstage. "Let's invite our previous singer, Petal Shower."

Petal Shower walked slowly up onto the stage and nodded at The Clown. Her eyes were locked on him as though she were hoping to discover a clue to find out who he was!

The Clown nodded back at her.

Dong Shanshan smiled and said, "Will the panel of judges—"

"I don't know how to describe what I'm feeling right now! The Clown, you're so wonderful!" Amy did not wait and stood up before Shanshan could finish speaking.

The Clown gave a slight bow and said, "Thank you, Teacher Amy."

Amy quickly waved it off and said, "Don't you call me that. I don't deserve to be addressed as a teacher in front of you."

Wang Zhuishu was completely convinced. "He definitely has to be a big shot in the industry! There's no doubt!"

The Clown smiled but did not respond.

Dong Shanshan said, "Oh, Teacher Wang, who do you think he is?"

Wang Zhuishu said dejectedly, "The problem is I don't really know who this big shot is! I don't even have a potential candidate in mind!"

Chen Yidong said, "When he sang 'Wolf' and 'Wild Rose' in the last episode, he was in very bad shape and had lost his voice. Still, he managed to sing those songs in such an astonishing way. At that time, I was already wondering how good this guy's singing would be if his voice had recovered. I finally heard it today! He's really amazing! Seriously...you've really shocked me today!"

The Clown's voice came from underneath the mask and went through the voice transforming microphone. "Thank you."

Zhang Xia suddenly said, "But there's no such person in the music industry!"

The judges looked to Zhang Xia.

Zhang Xia analyzed, "Petal Shower sang her female falsetto to a perfection. Although I can't guess who she is because she did not reveal any of her real voice, I at least have some candidates in mind and it's possible to make a guess. However, I really can't guess who The Clown is. I've been in the music industry for a few decades now, yet I've never heard of any male singers who could sing in falsetto like this. There just isn't anyone I can think of. So I guess, yeah, I can only guess that this man is probably not part of the music industry."

Yao Jiancai said in surprise, "You mean to say that The Clown is not a professional singer?"

Amy instantly shook her head. "That's impossible. Can an amateur singer sing that well? If so, then professional singers would die out." This was how she was. She wasn't afraid to use whatever descriptions she liked.

Zhang Xia said, "I can only guess."

Wang Zhuishu asked, "Just who are you!"

The Clown smiled without saying a word.

Wang Zhuishu asked, "Can you tell us your age? Let's narrow down the range of our target."

Dong Shanshan quickly stopped the discussion. She smiled and said, "Teacher Wang, the contestant will not be answering any questions that are too specific. You must rely upon your own guesses."

Chen Guang spoke up, "Then can I ask a not so straightforward question?"

Dong Shanshan nodded.

Chen Guang thought for a moment, then suddenly asked, "Are you above or below the B-list?"

The audience was immediately energized!

The judges felt that this was a very good question and pricked up their ears.

As Dong Shanshan was not sure if this question was acceptable, she quickly communicated with the program team staff through her earpiece.

However, The Clown was already answering the question.

The Clown said calmly, "Above."

The entire studio flew into an uproar!

At least a B-list celebrity?

In other words, he was at least a B-lister?

Petal Shower looked at him with interest!

Chen Guang was dumbfounded!

Zhang Xia gasped!

The masked singers backstage were also extremely shocked!

They thought that King of Oddity, who had been eliminated last episode, was a big name since he was a C-lister. But who could have expected that The Clown, who hadn't been recognized by anyone and even thought by some to be a newcomer, would turn out to be an even bigger name, at least a B-list celebrity! Everyone was stunned by this revelation!

The audience was making a ruckus!

"Who is it!"

"At least a B-lister? There's over several dozen possibilities!"

"But the range isn't that large either!"

"Holy shit!"

"Is he really a B-lister?"

"He might even be an A-lister?"

"Heavens! He's that much of a big name?"

Dong Shanshan was stunned too. Clearly, she did not expect this either!

Amy instantly got excited. "Above the B-list—that's a very small range of possibilities. S-So why can't I guess who you are!"

The Clown smiled. He thought to himself that of course they couldn't guess who he was.

Yao Jiancai gave Chen Guang a look. "Are you Chen Guang's twin brother? And the one onstage is the real Old Chen? You guys are just teasing us, aren't you?"

Chen Guang didn't know whether to laugh or cry. "I'm an only child, Brother Yao."

Zhang Xia said, "Besides you, who else can sing as great that?"

Chen Guang gave a wry smile. "I don't know. Even if I go all out with my falsetto, it's quite impossible for me to sing better than him. Controlling my falsetto is not a strong point of mine."

At least a B-list celebrity?

A falsetto that has reached the peak of perfection?

Who is it!

Who the fuck could this big shot be! Goddammit!

Chapter 1009: Voting!

It was almost time for the voting segment.

This was the most anticipated part of the show.

Dong Shanshan's hosting style was improving. She could take control of a situation and her hosting had become very good as well. After all, she was someone whose grades were much higher than Zhang Ye's during their Media College days among their entire class. A lot of people constantly focused on Dong Shanshan's looks, her figure, and her long legs, but neglected to consider her skills as a professional host. On the stage of King of Masked Singers, she knew quite well that she was just a supporting role and acted as a link between the event proceedings and flow of the show. As a result, she neither had to steal the show nor the lines. But when it came time for her to speak, she would definitely not allow others to ignore her.

Dong Shanshan smiled and said, "I can see that a few of our judges are confused."

The audience laughed. In reality, they were confused too!

Wang Zhuishu said, "Yeah, I have no clue at all!"

Chen Yidong said, "It's the same for Petal Shower. I can't figure out who she is!"

Yao Jiancai gloomily said, "Is this a singing show or a game show? I'm not good at using my brain and my head is already swelling from all that thinking."

Dong Shanshan told them, "To improve your concentration and refresh your mind, please drink Bright Fruit Cocoa." Then she winked at the camera and emphasized, "It's free of preservatives too!"

With the title sponsor of the show being Bright Fruit Cocoa, she promoted it very naturally and seamlessly. The judges and audience found it funny.

It was time for the judges to vote.

Chen Guang declared, "I'll not vote. There's no way to make a choice."

Zhang Xia also found it very difficult. She said, "Both of them sang in falsetto and had flawless performances. It is indeed hard to choose. I won't be surprised no matter who wins today."

Amy immediately said, "I like The Clown's performance more. I became his fan last episode, and I really like him so much. Even though The Clown's song did not contain any lyrics, I imagined a lot of images because of it. His voice and the song were so vivid that it brought all those images to mind. From the difficulty of the performance and song, The Clown's 'Opera' is undoubtedly the more stunning performance for me."

The Clown said, "Thank you."

Wang Zhuishu thought for a long time before saying, "I'll still give my support to Petal Shower. Although The Clown has moved me as well, I still prefer the way that Petal Shower expressed herself with her singing."

Petal Shower's mask concealed her face quite closely, with her entire head covered up so well that no one could even tell what hairstyle she wore. It was the same for her expression too. They could only see from her eyes that she was probably smiling. "Thank you, Teacher Wang."

Yao Jiancai expressed, "I think that The Clown is a little bit better."

Chen Yidong said, "Petal Shower is good too. Hai, it's so difficult to choose from between the two of them."

Dong Shanshan smiled and said, "Then let's leave the final voting to the 500 audience members and let them decide the winner." Looking into the audience, she said, "Everyone, please pick up your voting devices to cast a vote for your favorite performance today."

The audience immediately got down to action.

Some of them voted without any hesitation at all.

Some of them were hesitating and couldn't come to a decision for a very long while.

"It's too difficult to choose!"

"Yeah, the two of them were incredible today!"

"If the two of them had gone against any of the other singers, I would definitely have voted for them. Why did these two big names have to compete against each other so early in the first round! How am I supposed to vote?"

"They both sang so great!"

"Agreed. Their ability to sing in falsetto is too close to call. Both of them are wonderful!"

"Then we can only judge based on the songs that they sang."

"Hai, I suppose I have to go with my gut then!"

"I still think that The Clown's singing was more breathtaking!"

"I think so too. A song with no lyrics? There's really no one else who can sing like this!"

"Petal Shower's singing was so full of emotion. Personally, I still prefer her."

All competitions were like this. Everyone had their personal preferences. Even for the best singer or song, it was impossible that everyone would like it due to everyone being different. For example, age, gender, and experiences would all create differences in the personality and perception of a person. This is very commonplace.

Backstage.

Several of the masked singers who hadn't appeared on stage yet took a vote as well.

The producer who was accompanying them asked for their opinions. "Who do you all think will win?"

Sunset Glow pondered the question for a moment. "The Clown."

Sunflower in the Starlight shook his head. "It could be either one of them since they're both so equally matched."

God of War did not hesitate. "The Clown."

The other new replacement masked singer called Lord Peacock said, "I'm optimistic about Petal Shower."

In the studio.

The voting had already begun!

The judges were all staring at the screen.

Han Qi, who was standing in the wings, was getting extremely anxious as she clenched her fists so tightly that her nails cut into her flesh. She was shouting in her head, The Clown! The Clown! It has to be The Clown!

However, The Clown did not turn to look at the screen. He did not seem like he cared.

It was the same for Petal Shower. She gazed forward and did not turn around.

Their mental fortitude and stage presence were very strong. Just by their attitude, people would not believe it even if they were told that the two of them were not big shots. They indeed had the demeanor of a big shot, unlike those new singers who would often try to show off their talent or make a commotion when they became too focused on the result.

The audience was shouting the names of the singer they supported!

"Petal Shower!"

"The Clown!"

"The Clown!"

"Petal Shower!"

"The Clown!"

5 votes!

10 votes!

100 votes!

Their two tallies were very close and evenly distributed!

Without a doubt, this was definitely the most intense pair of contestants for this episode's matchup. The two of them had given a near perfect performance for everyone!

Finally, the voting ended!

The results were displayed on the big screen!

When the audience saw the result, they exclaimed in surprise!

The judges were astonished too!

Petal Shower's tally: 241 votes!

The Clown's tally: 259 votes!

Everyone thought that their tallies would probably be quite close or even separated by only one or two votes. But towards the end of the voting, The Clown's tally gradually pulled away from Petal Shower. In the end, he led Petal Shower by 18 votes!

The Clown won!

Petal Shower immediately applauded. She looked at The Clown and gave him a gentle hug with open arms.

Zhang Ye hugged her back for courtesy's sake.

Suddenly, he heard Petal Shower whisper to him, "I won't lose next time."

Zhang Ye was stunned.

Eh?

This voice?

When the masked singers spoke into the microphone, the signal sent back would be transformed by a voice transformer before getting transmitted over the speakers. But of course, their voices would not be changed during the performance as that would sound very strange. But when they spoke, the program team staff would make some adjustments to their microphones. That was why Zhang Xia kept saying that she had not heard Petal Shower's real voice before. However, when Petal Shower whispered into Zhang Ye's ear, it was not said through the microphone. It was just her voice coming from directly underneath her mask and not transformed through the voice transformer. Perhaps she had completely forgotten about disguising her voice.

It sounded familiar!

This voice sounded really familiar!

Zhang Ye had felt that there was a very high chance that Sunset Glow was probably someone he knew. But when he heard Petal Shower's real voice, he was sure that he definitely knew this woman!

Who was it?

Which friend was she?

His mind went blank all at once!

When he realized that they definitely knew each other, Zhang Ye was afraid to speak. He just nodded and smiled to express his understanding. He was afraid that if he opened his mouth, Petal Shower would instantly recognize him, although he was confident that nearly no one could guess who he was on this stage as almost no one would think to link him to this character.

This felt extremely nice!

Offstage.

The moment Zhang Ye came off the stage, he saw a dark figure rushing toward him!

"We won! We really won!" Han Qi was exclaiming incoherently in her excitement!

Zhang Ye felt his heart warm. "You're more excited than I am?"

Han Qi said, "But of course! The singer you won against is Petal Shower! She had the highest fanbase among all the masked singers! Nobody in the media and audience thought that you would get through to the next round! Everyone was doubting you! So how can I not be excited! How could I not be excited! This, this is so unreal!"

When the program team staff saw The Clown, they gave him a thumbs up raised high in the air!

Music Director Bai Yuanfei looked at Zhang Ye, and smiled and nodded at him.

The Clown was astonishing today!

The audience's understanding of The Clown had been flipped on its head!

This was The Clown after his voice had recovered?

This was his true skill?

No, that was not it. He still had not fully recovered yet. As someone who came down with a bad cold, fever, and inflammation of the tonsils and even took three cortisone shots, how could he possibly recover so quickly? If he had really recovered, then why did he not sing during the rehearsals? Instead, he saved his energy so that he could use it onstage? From that, it could be assumed that The Clown's voice was still not in the best shape!

With this thought, a lot of people were stunned by this conclusion they had arrived at.

Damn!

Could he perhaps be even more amazing than that?

Could he perhaps still sing better than that?

Chapter 1010: The Clown's second song!

Backstage.

In the waiting room.

When Zhang Ye came back, he turned around and asked, "Water?"

Han Qi was caught off guard. "Huh?"

Zhang Ye cupped a hand and raised it to his mouth.

Only then did Han Qi understand what he meant and quickly went to get a bottle of mineral water for him.

When Zhang Ye finished drinking the water, he didn't say a word.

Han Qi said, "Teacher, for your next song..."

Zhang Ye shook his head and pointed at his throat, then waved his hand to signal that he could not say anything right now. In truth, it was not that he could not talk, it was just that he wanted to let his throat rest to the fullest extent. Having sung "Opera," his voice had reached its limits. If he sang it a second time, he might not even finish the song. Singing in falsetto was very tiring and caused the muscles in his nasal cavity and throat to tighten up. Moreover, he had only just recovered from his illness and stabilized his old injuries.

Han Qi understood, then got anxious. "Then what about your next song?"

Zhang Ye smiled and gave her a thumbs up, indicating that she need not worry.

He would not fight a battle that he wasn't sure of winning. As he had already anticipated this situation, he had arranged the order of his songs this way. The second song's style was decidedly unlike the first song's. Otherwise, there would be no way for him to sing it. There was still about an hour's worth of rest left, and he felt that he could use it to recover.

...

In the studio.

The competition was continuing.

Sunflower Under The Starlight had already stepped out on stage.

"Set aflame!

"I'm burning!

"I wanna see blood flowing!

"Set aflame!

"I'm burning!

"I wanna send souls flying!"

Sunflower had chosen a rock song and performed similar to the way he had in the first episode. The only difference was that this song was not as thrilling as his previous two. The audience was still very excited, but seemingly not as excited as they were during the first episode.

Next, it was one of the replacement singer's turn to appear on the stage.

A very tough-looking masked singer appeared before the audience.

God of War!

His mask had a postmodern style of design and incorporated many different artistic elements in it. With a black-gray color as the foundation, he looked like a singer with very explosive power.

He looked just as his name suggested.

The moment when this person opened his mouth to sing, a high pitch voice sounded out.

"Oh!

"You're the sun in my life!

"Lighting my path forward!

"Giving me endless power!"

By rights, if the audience was seeing a new contestant appear for the first time, they should anticipate it a great deal. But for some reason, today the audience's reaction was not that great. Everyone was surprised and still applauded, but it did not match up to the masked singers' expectations.

Some of the audience members even started talking about something else.

"Who do you guys think The Clown is?"

"I really don't know!"

"For those male celebrities above the B-list, who else could sing so swell other than Chen Guang and those Heavenly Kings?"

"That 'Opera' was damned fucking godly!"

"Yeah, who the fuck has ever heard a song without lyrics?"

"I've fallen in love with him!"

"Me too! The Clown is amazing!"

"I'm looking forward to his next song!"

"Indeed. And his voice has almost returned to normal. We couldn't tell from the last song since it was sung in falsetto, but if he sings using his real voice, we'll definitely know who he is!"

God of War finished singing.

The voting began.

Sunflower in the Starlight received 222 votes!

God of War had 177 votes!

About a hundred members of the audience abstained and did not cast a vote!

Sunflower in the Starlight won but did not seem too happy about it.

God of War gave a bitter smile since he could obviously feel that some of the audience members were not paying attention.

Then it was time for the last pair of contestants to come onstage.

The first to come out was the other replacement singer, Lord Peacock. Surprisingly, he sang a ballad song that was very pleasing to the ears as well as very popular.

The next to take the stage was the last singer for today, Sunset Glow. She maintained her style with the choice of a very calm song that she performed rather beautifully. Her performance today was even better than in the first episode.

"A song of yearning.

"Full of bitterness.

"A scene of loving.

"Full of sadness."

Sunset Glow had an overwhelming victory in the final vote!

Sunset Glow: 302 votes!

Lord Peacock: 115 votes!

There were still over 80 people who had abstained!

The program team staff could only smile wryly.

Zhang Xia looked to the judges next to her. "What's going on today?"

Chen Guang had figured it out. "The first pair's match was so spectacular that the audience's emotions have all been released."

Amy smiled and said, "Everyone has stopped paying attention to the other matches as they are trying to guess who The Clown is. After all, he revealed that he's at least a B-list celeb, which has decreased the range of possibilities."

Chen Yidong coughed and said, "I'm already browsing through the list."

His cell phone screen was illuminated and showed the latest Celebrity Rankings Index on it. He was scrolling through all the celebrities on the B-list and trying to match someone with The Clown.

If even the judges were doing so, what could be expected of the audience!

Everyone had been shocked by The Clown's non-lyrical song!

The filming of today's show was done according to the broadcast order. Next up would be the elimination round. Of Petal Shower, God of War, and Lord Peacock, only one could remain on the show.

Petal Shower was the first to perform. But after she stuck to using her stunning falsetto to finish singing the song, there was no doubt about the winner.

God of War sang with all his might.

Lord Peacock did not hold back either.

However, Petal Shower still clinched the victory with an absolute advantage. There was no other outcome as she had the highest support base among all the contestants on King of Masked Singers, and her singing was flawless as well. Unless a heaven-defying big name singer came along, it would be very difficult to shake her.

"Take it off!"

"Take it off!"

"Take it off!"

The audience shouted in unison!

God of War hesitated for a while.

Dong Shanshan looked at him. "God of War, please make your choice."

Eventually, God of War smiled and simply took off his mask.

When the audience saw who he was, they exclaimed in surprise!

"Brother Howling!"

"It's Brother Howling!"

"Damn, it's him!"

"I totally didn't expect that!"

"Ah!"

"I thought that it was his voice earlier when I heard it!"

Brother Howling was a nickname given by the netizens. His real name was Li Dongguo, a somewhat obscure name. But this man was last year's champion on a singing talent show that rode on the coattails of The Voice's popularity. Due to his singing style belonging to the type of screaming in which his voice would frequently explode in the extreme pitches, the netizens gave him this nickname. Since he was a very talented singer who came through the ranks of a talent show, a lot of people recognized him to be an elite singer. No one had expected that he would actually come onto the King of Masked Singers' stage!

"So he's still not good enough!"

"Brother Howling got eliminated immediately in his first appearance? He couldn't even make it past this episode?"

"Who said that he was an elite singer?"

"The professionals did!"

"Hai, not everything stands up to comparison!"

"Yeah, I did not think this way in the past and felt that Brother Howling was a fantastic singer. But when compared with people like The Clown, Petal Shower, and Sunflower, he's still not at their level. Is this the difference between an amateur and a professional singer?"

"God of War had the explosiveness, but the firmness of his voice is leagues away from Sunflower's control of his!"

"But Brother Howling is a champion who came up through the ranks of a talent show! How could he have lost so terribly?"

"What about Lord Peacock?"

"Take it off!"

"Take it off!"

The audience started to shout again!

After some time, Lord Peacock also chose to take off his mask!

"Wu Hefan!"

"Ah!"

"It's him!"

"It's Wu Hefan!"

"Damn, wasn't he overseas? When did he come back?"

Wu Hefan was another very popular celebrity. He was a professional singer who had won the Best Newcomer award in the Greater China region two years ago and was nominated for the Most Popular Celebrity award last year. He was dashing and was one of the best-looking people in the music industry. However, his singing and performance abilities had never been acknowledged or gotten the attention of the audience. This was due to the fact that he had always been singing relatively mainstream and catchy songs.

"So Wu Hefan can also sing quite well!"

"Yeah, I really did not expect for him to come and compete!"

"Aiyo, if I knew it was him, I would have voted for him instead!"

"Damn, he's my prince!"

"Our Wuwu got eliminated just like that? Nooooo!"

A lot of the female audience members' hearts were shattered by this reveal. Many of them stood up and started shouting Wu Hefan's name.

But Wu Hefan just laughed it off as he raised his microphone and said, "Actually, I am only here to participate and learn from my seniors. After this contest, I can say that I've indeed learned a lot from them." Then he gave a wry smile and said, "They really are amazing. I lost fair and square and have no objections."

Amy said in regret, "Little Bro, I knew it was you the moment you opened your mouth and sang."

Wu Hefan laughed and said, "Hello, Sister Amy."

Amy looked very young, just like the other members of Spring Garden. However, they definitely were not as young as they looked.

Amy sighed, "What a shame."

Wu Hefan was fairly cheerful. "It's alright, Sister Amy."

Amy said, "You chose the wrong song today. With your talent, you can easily sing much better than that."

Dong Shanshan suddenly smiled. "Actually, there's still a chance for the eliminated contestants to make a comeback."

Amy was taken aback. "Ah?"

Both Brother Howling and Wu Hefan looked at her.

Dong Shanshan smiled and said, "Before the grand finals begin, there will be a revival round for the eliminated contestants to compete for a spot in the grand finals."

Wu Hefan grinned. "I'll be back."

At once, Amy replied, "All the best, Little Bro. You can definitely do it!"

Chen Guang said, "All the best to you too, God of War. Your vocals are really good. Let's talk later if there's a chance."

When Brother Howling heard that, he got very excited as Chen Guang had always been his idol. "Thank you, Teacher Chen. I'll be very honored to hear your advice!"

Chen Guang quickly said, "It's not so much giving advice to you, but rather for us to learn from each other."

The contestants exited the stage.

Then it was time for the second episode's battle for Masked King!

Thinking of this, the judges were invigorated.

Some of the audience members shed their inattentiveness and concentrated fully on the next segment!

It was here!

It was finally here!

If the unmasking round was just a sideshow for many of the audience, then the following round was clearly the main event!

The Clown would be appearing onstage again!

And no one could guess what song he would be singing this time around!