

## **Superstar 1061**

Chapter 1061: Victory for the musicians!

The music industry raised a furor!

The people from the television industry were shocked by what they were seeing.

"The music industry is at war with the associations!"

"How fierce!"

"It's making my blood course with passion!"

"Good showing, brothers!"

"They really spoke up. There are this many of them coming forward? All of the veterans, singers, rookies, lyricists, and composers in the music industry have come forward?"

"This is an event that will definitely go down in the annals of history!"

"Just what will the final outcome of this battle be?"

"Dunno. Now we see how the authorities react!"

"It's definitely going to be hard to deal with. If it were just one or two people, it might not be so bad. But with this large group that even includes some of China's veteran singers, influential singers from the Political Department's Song and Dance Troupe, and the Heavenly Kings and Queens protesting against the ban on musical pieces, how could they handle it? I think this is going to be difficult to answer since the most important factor is still the SARFT's attitude on the issue. But they haven't issued a response to this yet!"

This was a big event in the music industry!

With the involvement of so many celebrities, the news had spread far and wide!

The netizens were very excited!

"Just one song is enough to cause such huge trouble?"

"I have to give it to The Clown!"

"Which celebrity could this fellow be!"

"Fight! Fight! Fight!"

"Supporting our musicians!"

"They have my support too!"

"I must really give a Like to the music industry this time!"

Many people were paying constant attention to the developments as this issue was getting way too serious. If it was not properly handled, it would cause a major shakeup!

...

Elsewhere.

Bai Li was currently on the phone with someone.

"Hello, Secretary Bai."

"Director Han, I've finally managed to reach you."

"I've been away for a meeting the past few days and just got back today."

"Have you heard yet?"

"Of course I've heard."

"What's going on over on your side? Why did you guys suddenly decide to roll out a ban on musical pieces? Who approved the decision? Who agreed to it?"

"Wasn't the SARFT going to introduce something similar? And weren't the directives going to be announced very soon as well?"

"We have indeed come up with a new white paper listing some music and film work directives, but when did we state it in a way like you? When did we say that we would not allow the broadcast and composition of music pieces that don't generate positivity? Have you even seen our documents? Do you all know what the intent of the white paper is? We simply wanted to standardize some regulations, not call for restraint or a ban without valid reasons! What has it become now? Look at how things have turned out. Many musicians refuse to accept it. Did you guys consider the consequences of your actions? Did you think of the negative impact caused by your mishandling?"

"Secretary Bai, the SARFT has its considerations and we have ours. After all, the scope of our work is different, and besides—"

"Are you sure you still want to go on about this? Fine, let me tell you this then. This matter was entrusted to me by Chief Wu personally. She's still overseas at the moment and can come back on today's flight. If my words are ineffective, fine. But when Chief Wu gets back tonight, maybe I should get her to contact you personally? Would that be better?"

At this, Director Han anxiously said: "How could I make Chief Wu personally call me?" He gave a bitter laugh and said: "Secretary Bai, please don't get me into trouble."

Bai Li said: "The SARFT is very unhappy with how the Beijing Ministry of Culture has handled things this time. It's not that I'm trying to get you into trouble; it's your own people who are messing things up! We only have one request right now, and that is to call for an immediate withdrawal of the guidelines that you all announced earlier, as well as those so-called directives by the relevant associations! When the finalized white paper is published by the SARFT, any new regulations introduced will be done in consideration of the SARFT's directives!"

Director Han said: "That's not really for me to decide."

Bai Li was annoyed. "Alright, I'll get someone who can make the decision on your behalf then!"

...

An hour later.

An executive from the Ministry of Culture was startled!

This executive was not from the local department of the Ministry of Culture, but a more senior leader above them!

Perhaps it was Bai Li or someone else from the SARFT who had communicated it to him. But it was only then that he realized that the so-called guidelines issued by the local department below was from some hearsay and actually very imprecise due to the fact that the SARFT had not officially passed down their directives yet. But because of the local department's authoritarianism, the other associations had misunderstood and treated the guidelines like an imperial edict by rushing to implement those orders. This resulted in an irreversible situation!

That executive spoke with the SARFT for a very long time.

These two organizations carried out a simple but in-depth discussion of the incident.

In the end, that executive from the Ministry of Culture made a call to the local Beijing office that started this trouble and chewed them out!

"It wasn't easy for our country to get such a high-quality domestic variety show produced. Why are you all causing all this trouble for me now! Don't you all want our domestic works to be successful? Don't you hope that our domestic works can wade into the international market? You're even insisting that all music pieces should only spread positivity? Music is a form of art, and the expression of art is very diverse! Why do they all have to generate positive energy? If you don't even have this bit of tolerance or artistry, how can you continue to be part of the business of cultural undertakings?"

"Sir, we..."

"Withdraw all those guidelines pronto!"

"Yes, alright, we understand!"

"If this happens again, I want you to pack up and get out!"

"We're sorry, sir! We misunderstood the policies! We will not repeat this mistake again. It, it was really a misunderstanding this time!"

"Leave such matters to our SARFT colleagues in the future. Did you all have nothing better to do than get involved in this affair?! Aren't you just stirring up trouble!"

In this world, the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Culture and the SARFT was without a clear boundary. Some responsibilities overlapped, while some were distinct. However, most of the decision-making on policies regarding the entertainment industry still lay with the SARFT.

"I-I understand!"

"I'll say this again: It better not happen another time!"

"Yes, sir! There won't be another time!"

As the executive from the Ministry of Culture was very understanding and had a good relationship with Wu Zeqing, the issue was resolved very quickly. Actually, even if this relationship with Wu Zeqing did not exist, he would still have to handle such matters. It was due to the strategic failure of his staff at the local office and their misunderstanding of the policy resolutions that led to such a strong backlash. The entire music industry was angered as a result, so he had to say something even if he did not wish to interfere. If things went on like that, then it would really spiral out of control and cause a huge mess. He had to handle it no matter what. He couldn't possibly let one bad apple spoil the whole barrel. The Ministry of Culture had always been very open-minded about things and seldom interfered with the SARFT's business!

Before long, the guidelines from earlier were withdrawn!

There was no explanation or clarifications made!

There weren't any signs that this would happen!

They were withdrawn just like that!

The netizens soon took notice.

"Aiya!"

"The directives have been withdrawn!"

"Quick, look at this. The guidelines from earlier are gone!"

"Did they accidentally delete them?"

"It's impossible that they'd accidentally delete them!"

"Then does this set the tone?"

"It's set! It's definitely been set!"

"Wow, there's an exec from the Ministry of Culture who gave a Like to 'The Internationale'!"

"Another exec from the Minister of Culture liked it!"

"Damn, you're right!"

Everyone was shocked to find out that The Clown's "The Internationale" had received several Likes from a few executives of the Ministry of Culture's upper management on their Weibo verified accounts.

One of the executives even left a comment. "Hur hur, this is a great song with great lyrics. I was reminded of things from long ago and felt a little touched. I'm really fond of those memories from that time."

The SARFT also issued a statement not long afterwards to appease the musicians. It clarified that the guidelines from before were not introduced by them and that their designated standards would only restrict some song titles and other works that were too vulgar and implied death. There was no intention of a large-scale blanket ban on music pieces and films! In reality, it wasn't that the SARFT or

the Ministry of Culture's upper management were seeking to compromise on those measures. From the start, they didn't intend to introduce them at all. It was all blindly caused by those below them!

They set the tone!

The netizens were stunned!

The musicians cheered at once!

And just a few minutes later, Zhang Ye's "A Letter to Home" and "The King Sent Me on Mountain Patrol" returned to the Top Chinese Music Chart and continued to rule the rankings!

Unsurprisingly, the #1 spot went to "The Internationale"!

"The Internationale" seemed to have steamrolled straight to #1 on the Top Chinese Music Chart's daily chart and even to #1 on the monthly chart!

Yes, #1 on the monthly chart!

In just a single day!

It charged its way right up to first place on the monthly chart in just a single day!

This was an extremely rare occurrence in the history of the Top Chinese Music Chart!

But The Clown managed to do it!

This song did it!

Chapter 1062: The grand finals approach!

Han Qi called The Clown.

"Teacher Clown!"

"Hello."

"We won! We won!"

"Yeah, I already knew."

"You're incredible! That song of yours is incredible! I can't believe that they really gave in!"

"I can't take the credit. This was due to the persistence and hard work of the entire music industry."

"But it was your song that roused the musicians!"

"Surely I'm not that great."

"But you really are that great!"

The guillotine hanging over the head of the music industry had finally been lifted. The music industry was cheering and jumping for joy, celebrating their win. But maybe it was better to say it was music and dignity that won!

Netizens made countless comments.

"We won!"

"The higher-ups are still pretty open-minded about things!"

"I have a feeling that 'The Internationale' will become a legend!"

"With this story, the song should already be considered a legend. Have you ever seen a piece of music that has such great appeal and influence?"

"A legendary song, and a legendary person!"

"But just who could The Clown be?"

"Hurry up and take off your mask! The suspense is killing me!"

"When will the grand finals of King of Masked Singers take place?"

"Yeah, I can't wait either. The Masked King these days is always either Petal Shower, Sunset Glow, or The Clown. It's always them fighting for the throne every episode. The new replacement masked singers aren't really a match for them at all. So I believe that the grand finals should be held quite soon?"

"Who do you guys want to see take off their masks the most?"

"The Clown!"

"Fuck, of course it has to be The Clown!"

"Right, only his identity still remains a mystery. No one has managed to guess it yet!"

On that night.

The King of Masked Singers program team suddenly announced that the next episode of the show would kick off the revival round of the competition. Whether it was the contestants who started in the premiere episode or the replacement masked singers, all of them would be entered into the revival round as long as they had not been crowned Masked King before. Meaning that even those who still remained in the competition, as long as they had not been crowned Masked King before, would be required to compete against the contestants who had been eliminated for the remaining spots in the grand finals, which would be broadcast live. A total of five episodes had been broadcast so far, in which The Clown had taken the throne of the Masked King thrice, Petal Shower once, and Sunset Glow once. That meant that only the three of them could advance straight into the grand finals of the competition.

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The program team contacted Spinach.

"Teacher Spinach, the revival round will begin soon."

"Alright."

"Please get ready."

"I can't wait."

...

"Teacher Marshal Persona."

"Hello."

"We'll be recording the revival round next week."

"OK, got it."

...

"Teacher King of Oddity."

"Is it beginning soon?"

"Yes, recording will start next week."

"Alright. How many spots will there be in the grand finals?"

"Other than The Clown, Petal Shower, and Sunset Glow holding three spots, three remaining spots are up for grabs."

"Understood."

...

Many of the eliminated contestants received this update from the program team. Some of them were anticipating it, some were nervous about it, and others were worried about it. But without an exception, all of them immediately went to prepare after receiving notification of this news. This was their final chance, and they all wanted to make the best of it!

Zhang Ye also received a call.

But this call was about something different.

Hu Fei said, "Teacher Clown, the issue has been resolved. We want to thank you for doing so much for the show. If it wasn't for you, the restrictions wouldn't have been lifted, and there wouldn't have been any meaning to the grand finals!"

"There's no need to thank me; I didn't do much."

"The revival round will be held next week, and the grand finals the week after that."

Hu Fei had called The Clown's cell phone number. So Zhang Ye had to deliberately disguise and change his vocal register when speaking. He said: "So soon?"

"We initially planned for it to happen after six or seven episodes were broadcast. But the disparity in talent is too great for the next replacement masked singers to compete against. So the program team called for a meeting where we decided that we wouldn't be adding any more replacement masked singers and instead move the date of the grand finals forward."

"I see."

"You won't need to do any prepping for the revival round. The main thing that I want to talk about is the details of the grand finals. These grand finals will be broadcast live nationwide, and the location will change as well to a larger venue. The voting format will also be changed to a public vote, that is to say, the television audience can also take part in the voting. On top of that, the grand finals will have two rounds, with the second round being an individual performance. Meanwhile, we have designed the first round with a segment where a contestant will perform with a guest partner. The contestants can invite a good friend of theirs and get them to put on a mask as well, then sing together on stage. This is an important segment because if the guest partner is not suitable for the competition, the contestant might not be able to advance to the second round and end up getting eliminated. That's why you'd need to prepare well for this and hopefully invite a professional singer. The more popular the guest partner is, the better. It would also help to garner more votes for the contestant."

This was Hu Fei's decision.

Zhang Ye had provided him with a program structure that had several formats for the grand finals. For example, in the Chinese version of King of Masked Singers in his previous world, two contestants were paired up into groups and the groups would verse each other in a knockout format. However, Zhang Ye knew that this format would not make the show exciting to watch, so he added another one that was similar to the format of the finals of I Am a Singer. He left that for Hu Fei to decide, and clearly, he had chosen the latter. This was quite a good choice since it would add to the viewing experience and anticipation of the audience.

"OK."

"Do you have any other questions? I can answer over the phone."

The Clown asked, "Are there any limitations to the choices of song?"

"There are basically no limitations. You can sing anything you want."

The Clown asked further: "For the group segment, can we choose to sing alone and not invite a guest?"

"Sing alone?"

"Is that allowed?"

Hu Fei shook his head. "That's definitely not allowed. As the show rules are set that way, you can either invite one or two guest partners. But they have to at least sing together with you."

"OK, I understand."

"That's good then. We'll see you in the grand finals."

"Alright, I'll prepare well."

After hanging up, Zhang Ye was in a quandary.

A celebrity guest partner?

If the performance wasn't good enough, they might get eliminated in the first round? Then there wouldn't be a chance to take part in the battle round for the overall Masked King of the grand finals?



This was a little troublesome to handle. His troubles stemmed from him not wanting anyone to find out about who he really was. If no one knew who he was, then how could he possibly invite anyone? Who could he invite?

His social ties within the entertainment circle was already abysmal, and he didn't know that many people either. There were even fewer choices if he needed someone who could sing. Zhang Xia? She was already on the guessing panel of judges. Chen Guang too. It would be impossible to invite them. How about Fan Wenli? Old Fan was even more impossible! Xiaodong? She was probably going to become someone else's guest partner.

Who could he find?

Someone was friends with him?

And had to sing well?

They even had to be a big name?

There was no one!

As he thought about it, it seemed like there was no one suitable among the people he knew!

Zhang Ye lit a cigarette and pondered for a long time but came up with nothing. This celebrity guest partner was simply too important. It directly affected whether or not he could become the Masked King of the grand finals, so he definitely had to consider everything carefully! Hai, if only he had known. He wouldn't have put this suggestion into the plan in the first place. This was as good as shooting himself in the foot.

There were only two weeks left!

What should he do until then?

Chapter 1063: A candidate to be the celebrity guest partner!

Next Saturday.

In the evening.

The television was on and tuned into Beijing Television.

His mother was sitting on the sofa and chomping on melon seeds. "Why isn't it starting yet?"

"Little Ye, is today the revival round?" his father asked.

Zhang Ye said, "Yes, and next week will be the grand finals."

His mother asked, "Who will be revived today? Hurry up and tell us!"

Zhang Ye laughed and said, "How would I know? I wasn't at the recording yesterday, so we'll find out later as we watch. I feel that Spinach has got quite a good chance though."

His mother said, "That King of Oddity from the first episode is quite good too!"

Ring ring ring. His cell phone rang.

Zhang Ye answered: "Sister Xiaodong?"

Xiaodong immediately asked: "Teacher Zhang, whatcha up to?"

"Hai, just watching TV at home," Zhang Ye said.

"Ummm, it's almost time for the college entrance exam. Did you not get selected to be a question setter this year?"

Zhang Ye chuckled and said: "I wasn't called up this year. They originally said that I would be asked to do it again, but with all the negative publicity surrounding me recently, and coupled with the questions that I set at last year's Beijing college entrance exam being a little too difficult, the examinees and their parents started protesting against my appointment two months ago. They were all afraid that I would become the national examination question setter this year, so I ended up not getting appointed. Actually, I don't really want to go too. It's really a thankless task."

"Then about that matter I brought up to you regarding my relative?"

Zhang Ye said: "It's always been on my mind, and I've already asked around for him. As long as your relative's score passes the Peking University cutoff grade, he'll be guaranteed an admission spot for any major that he chooses!"

This was a favor that Xiaodong had asked of him when he first joined the Goof Group last year. He hadn't forgotten all this while and had already helped her ask around. When it came to favors that people asked of him, Zhang Ye had always made sure to do the best he could.

Xiaodong laughed happily. "Thanks, Teacher Zhang."

"Don't mention it. It was no trouble at all." Then, he suddenly remembered the rules of the grand finals and how he didn't have a guest partner yet. He offhandedly asked: "Oh right, Sister Xiaodong, do you have any plans next Saturday?"

Xiaodong was taken aback. "Next Saturday? Isn't that day the night of the King of Masked Singers finale?"

Zhang Ye coughed and said: "Yes."

"Won't you be present at the venue that day? I have something to do that day, so I'll be going too."

Zhang Ye understood immediately. "Oh, so it's like that."

Xiaodong asked: "What about that day?"

"It's nothing. I was just wondering."

Turned out, Xiaodong was going to be at the grand finals.

Actually, Zhang Ye had already figured it to be so, but he wanted to make sure.

Who else was there then? There were only a few other people who he knew who could sing!

The revival round began.

Spinach, King of Oddity, Flowing Time, Marshal Persona, and several other contestants who had either been eliminated or not taken the throne of the Masked King before were all taking part in this episode, with the exception of Li Yu—Sunflower in the Starlight. Due to what had happened, Beijing Television excluded him after vowing never to work with him again, so only Li Yu was not present today.

This week's episode was intense and passionate.

The audience had already gotten to know some of the contestants whose identities have been revealed. At the same time, there was a lot of suspense for those who had not taken off their masks yet, with the identities of a few contestants still remaining a mystery!

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"The whistling winds!

"Sailing through the waves!

"When will my heart rest easy!

"Vast skies and wide lands!

"The corners of the world!

"But where are you, my dear!"

Spinach's (Liao Yiqi) song shocked the studio!

Compared to her previous performances, Spinach's progress was obviously a big leap forward. Zhang Ye also heard about how Grandma Zhang Xia had personally given her some guidance to help her polish her technique so that she could bring out the best points of her singing. The song she was currently singing may have also had a little to do with Zhang Xia's suggestions to her.

Sure enough, it was quite effective!

She sang this song really well!

...

"Aiyoyo.

"Are you coming?

"Heyoyo.

"Where are you?"

Yesterday's Daylily did not perform too well today. He had chosen an older folk song to sing and even rearranged it, but it did not manage to catch the attention of the audience.

He was probably going to miss out on the grand finals.

...

Performance after performance.

All of the contestants gave their very best!

They threw out all the tricks they had left, all for a ticket to the grand finals!

In the end, the results were out.

On TV, Dong Shanshan announced:

"The first contestant to advance to the grand finals is—Flowing Time!"

A round of applause rang out.

Flowing Time had the most votes out of all the contestants.

"The second contestant to advance to the grand finals is—King of Oddity!"

King of Oddity got very excited and threw his hands into the air!

"The final contestant to advance to the grand finals is—Spinach!"

When Spinach heard, she cried there on the spot!

She was crying!

They were tears of joy!

She had said that she would be back, and now, she had really come back!

With that, the three tickets to advance to the grand finals had all been assigned. The others would miss out on the night of the grand finals, and the eliminated singers gave their blessings and encouragement to the three who made it. They wished for them to carry a part of their desire into the grand finals and hoped that they would get a good place and gain fame along with it!

The revival round was over.

But the show was not done yet. In the closing minutes, a video introduced the finale. It introduced the competition format, how it would be broadcast live nationwide, and the first round segment involving a celebrity guest partner for each contestant. There were even a few gimmicky catchphrases thrown out to increase everyone's anticipation of the grand finals.

A voiceover sounded.

"Sunset Glow's heavyweight celebrity guest partner to aid her in the grand finals!"

The video onscreen cut to the back of a woman who was wearing a mask. But as her back was facing the screen, the viewers were unable to recognize who she was.

"Petal Shower's big name celebrity guest partner from the music scene is someone that no one does not know of."

The picture onscreen was overlaid with the words "mystery guest"!

Following, the celebrity guest partners for Spinach, Flowing Time, and the others were confirmed. Due to the show having been recorded just the day before, the program team had contacted the contestants on the day of after they had made it through to the grand finals to confirm their celebrity guest partners and communicated everything in detail.

The gender of Spinach's celebrity guest partner was unknown, with the image unclear after being pixelated. Only an introduction was made, which did not reveal the person's identity at all.

It was the same for Flowing Time and King of Oddity!

Gimmicky catchphrases were used!

Smokescreens were put up to mislead!

But it was undeniable that this really whetted the appetites of many who were watching. After the introductions were done, everyone was guessing who the invited celebrity guest partners were! They were extremely curious!

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Back at home.

His mother wondered, "Why wasn't there an introduction for The Clown's celebrity guest partner?"

"Yeah, he was the only one who didn't have an introduction for his guest partner," his father wondered as well.

Zhang Ye gave a wry smile and thought to himself, That's because this bro doesn't know who to invite yet!

At this moment, a call arrived.

It was The Clown's cell phone.

When Zhang Ye saw that, he immediately went into his own room and answered with a disguised voice: "Hello."

Han Qi asked immediately: "Teacher Clown, have you managed to invite your celebrity guest partner yet?"

Zhang Ye stayed silent for a moment. "Not yet."

Han Qi said anxiously: "There's only a week left until the live broadcast of the grand finals. The program team kept urging me to contact you many times. This..."

Zhang Ye said: "Give me a little more time. I'll definitely find someone."

Han Qi said: "Alright, alright. Please hurry then. You really have to get it done as soon as possible. How can someone like you who can sing so well be unable to invite any friends of yours to come? You must be asking for a lot, aren't you?"

Asking a lot, my ass!

This bro really doesn't have that many friends to begin with!

Before long, the news spread all over the Internet.

On Weibo.

"Who could Sunset Glow have invited? Why's it so mysterious?"

"That back looks a little familiar!"

"If she's the person that everyone's guessing she is, then could she have invited our goddess Xiaodong?"

"Wow, are you sure?"

"That would be wonderful!"

"Petal Shower seems to have invited a big name as well!"

"Could it be an A-list celebrity?"

"I heard that an A-lister has really been invited onto the show this time."

"Who, who?"

"I don't know. The biggest name on this stage should have been Li Yu. But he's no longer an A-lister anymore, so could there really be an A-lister coming?"

"I can't wait!"

"Eh, what about The Clown?"

"That's right, we didn't see anything regarding The Clown's celebrity guest partner, right?"

"Why didn't they make any mention of it?"

"I've heard something about that. It seems like The Clown's celebrity guest partner has not been decided yet."

"Surely not, right? He was the among the first batch of contestants to be confirmed for the grand finals. How long has it been since then? The grand finals are next week, but he still hasn't found a partner? Could it be that there's no one he can choose? Or maybe he couldn't get anyone to come onto the show? If that's the case, that'd mean that The Clown lied when he said that he was at least a B-lister. He's probably just some artist who's not that famous. Although he's really shot to fame, since he does not know any fellow big name artists, he couldn't invite any of them onto the show."

"That's quite possible."

"Fuck, can he really be that pathetic?"

"Even if he does not know any big names, he should at least know a few small-timers. Why can't he get them?"

"If he really invites a small-timer as a celebrity guest partner, wouldn't it be as good as giving up on the crown of the Masked King? This is the grand finals we're talking about. The others have all invited big

names who're at least B-listers, or if worst comes to worst, C-listers. It's been rumored that there's even an A-lister coming onto the show, but I don't know if that's true or not. If The Clown invites some unknown artist to support him, it'd be awkward if no one knows who that person is when they go onstage. He might even get eliminated right in the first round and lose his qualification to battle for the throne of the Masked King!"

"That's true."

At night.

Zhang Ye was lying in bed and getting ready to sleep. He kept this problem over in his head, unable to fall asleep. So he started browsing his Weibo and saw those comments. He suddenly sat up on his bed and rolled his eyes!

I'm not famous?

I don't know any big names?

Hey, don't make me mad!

All of a sudden, Zhang Ye thought of someone. Then he started thinking about how he should broach the subject and in what way he should do it. He knew that this person would be extremely difficult to invite!

Chapter 1064: Convincing the Heavenly Queen!

The next day.

Zhang Ye got up at five in the morning and started walking around in his room with his hands behind his back. He walked from his room into the living room, then from the living room to the balcony, all the while trying to think of ideas.

His mother yawned as she opened her bedroom door and came out. "Whoa, what are you doing?"

Zhang Ye turned around and said, "Thinking of something."

His mother looked at the clock. "This early?"

Still in his pajamas, his father also came out to have a look. "What are you doing up so early? Do you want to have breakfast?"

"No thanks. Don't worry about me. Go back to bed," Zhang Ye said.

The other contestants had invited very capable guest partners for King of Masked Singers. Although there wasn't a publicized list, Zhang Ye could just about guess who would be there. They were all B-list big shots, so if he wanted to take the crown of the Masked King in the grand finals, the guest partner he invited would be an extremely crucial factor. He already had a candidate in mind. Of all the people he knew, only she was still available as a choice to him.

Yes, that person was Zhang Yuanqi!

The famous Heavenly Queen of the pop music scene and film industry!

This fellow had been stirred up by the netizens' comments that said that he did not know any big name stars! If that was the case, then he would just need to find one to prove them wrong!

An S-list superstar!

The one of very few at the top of the entertainment circle!

How should he ask her?

How should he invite her?

If it were anyone else, they'd definitely not be able to get her to agree!

They wouldn't even have needed to consider it. An S-list celebrity like her would never agree to take part in a singing competition show. If she won on it, it would have been expected. But if she lost, that would be embarrassing. She also didn't need to take part in the show, because at her level, not many things could move her anymore. As such, the biggest celebrity the program team had on their contestants' invitation list when King of Masked Singers started its production was Li Yu, the front runner of the B-list Celebrity Rankings. They did not try to invite any A-list celebrities, much less an S-list Heavenly Queen. Beijing Television and the program team knew that those people would never agree to join their show!

The same was true in Zhang Ye's previous world. It would be almost impossible for the current, most popular Heavenly Kings and Queens to join any singing competitions. Like Faye Wong, would it be possible that she would join one? Or Andy Lau, would that be possible either?

This didn't even need to be touched on!

But luckily, Zhang Ye managed to come up with an idea very quickly. He didn't know if it would work, but with a sparkle in his eye, he quickly returned to his bedroom. He immersed himself into remembering those songs from his previous world that were considered classic male-female duets. Finally, he chose two of them and started writing the lyrics and musical notation down. Other people might not understand Zhang Yuanqi, but he did. She was someone who was especially nice and friendly to other people in public, but was in fact irascible in private. He knew that Zhang Yuanqi's greatest weakness was that a good song would appeal to her more than anything else.

He kept himself busy with the songwriting until 9 AM, when he finally finished it.

Zhang Ye picked up The Clown's cell phone and called Fang Weihong.

Du du. The call connected.

Zhang Ye spoke very carefully and switched to a gruff voice. "Hello."

Fang Weihong said: "Hello, who is this?"

Zhang Ye: "Is this Zhang Yuanqi's manager, Fang Weihong?"

"This is she," Fang Weihong said.



"This is The Clown." He got straight to the point.

Fang Weihong was stunned. "The Clown? The Clown from King of Masked Singers?"

Zhang Ye said: "Yes."

Fang Weihong immediately said: "We've been trying to find a way to contact you all this time. Sister Zhang has been particularly hoping to get to know you and has mentioned it to me several times already. What is it that you're calling me for?"

"I have something that I would like to seek Teacher Zhang's help for."

"What is it? Can I pass the message along? Or do you want to contact Sister Zhang directly?"

"Well, why don't we do it this way? I'll send two songs over first."

"Songs?"

"Yes."

Fang Weihong was worthy of being an elite manager of the industry. When she heard him say that, she could almost immediately guess what he wanted. "Are you calling about the King of Masked Singers' grand finals? Are you thinking of inviting Sister Zhang to be your celebrity guest partner?"

"Does Teacher Zhang have time?"

"I'm not too sure about that. I have to check."

"OK, I'll send the songs over first then."

"Alright...then. I can only help you ask. But whether it'll work, I can't guarantee. By the way, don't you have a lot of friends in the music scene? Why would you approach Sister Zhang for this?"

"Why does everyone think that I have many friends?"

Fang Weihong chuckled at this.

That's true.

It's not like that was a guaranteed thing.

Just like that Zhang Ye who had a pretty good relationship with Sister Zhang. He was very popular and experienced, but his social ties were just terrible. There was hardly anyone in the entertainment industry who liked him.

Fang Weihong said, "OK, I'll speak to Sister Zhang about this."

"Thank you."

After hanging up, Zhang Ye quietly waited for the outcome.

Ten minutes...

Half an hour...

One hour...

However, Fang Weihong's call did not arrive. Instead, it was Zhang Yuanqi who contacted him. She did not contact him on The Clown's cell phone, but on his personal phone's chat app.

Di di.

Zhang Yuanqi: "Show yourself."

Zhang Ye was startled, then replied: "I'm here."

"Did you write those songs for The Clown?"

Zhang Ye gulped.

"He just sent me two songs and I've taken a look at them. I think they're really good, so tell me the truth, did you write all of his songs for him?"

Zhang Ye played dumb. "Nope."

"Are you friends with The Clown? Are you two on very good terms? I have to spend so much effort just to get you to write me a song, yet you've written so many of them for The Clown in such a short period of time?"

Zhang Ye laughed and typed: "It's really not me."

"He invited me to appear as his celebrity guest partner in the grand finals."

"Oh, is that so?"

"What are your views on that?"

"I don't know. Go if you like, don't go if you don't want to."

"When will you write another two songs for me?"

Zhang Ye coughed. "Let's talk about that some other time."

"Who exactly is The Clown?"

"I'd like to know as well."

Zhang Yuanqi said stiffly: "Alright, I'm off."

Zhang Ye typed: "Bye."

Afterwards, Zhang Ye continued to wait. He was really unsure if he could invite Zhang Yuanqi, so he could only try to do it this way. If it really didn't work, at most he would just go ahead and reveal his identity to her. Based on his relationship with Old Zhang and his reputation, he believed that he would still be able to convince her to join him on the show.

In the afternoon, Fang Weihong's call finally arrived.

Fang Weihong immediately spoke when the call connected: "Is it convenient to ask about your identity?"

"Can I keep it a secret for now?"

"It's like this: You should know that with Sister Zhang's status, she doesn't usually take part in competitive variety shows. Although you're good at singing and Sister Zhang also lacks some good duet songs, but..."

"I know that."

"That's why I'd like to ask you about your identity. Sister Zhang's exact words were: If it were any of my better friends, I'd definitely help out. But if this is just a case of working together, then..."

"Is that how it is?"

"Do you know Sister Zhang?"

"...I know her."

"Are you close with her?"

"...I am."

On the other end of the line, Fang Weihong was surprised by this response.

They really knew each other?

And they're even quite close?

Fang Weihong was a little unsure. She couldn't just take the other party's words at face value as this was not a trivial matter, after all. So she asked: "Sorry for asking you so abruptly, but what does Sister Zhang like to drink?"

The Clown answered: "...Wine."

Fang Weihong was taken aback: "She seldom drinks."

The Clown said: "She often drinks."

Fang Weihong fell silent. Zhang Yuanqi had always been guarded whenever she was in the public eye and was the same even among her normal friends. As such, there were some things about her that no one would know from the news or hearsay from the industry. There really weren't many people who knew that Old Zhang liked to drink, and Fang Weihong was one of the few who did. So when Fang Weihong realized that The Clown did not fall for her trick when she tried to fool him, she understood that The Clown really knew about this!

She was sure of it!

This person definitely knew Sister Zhang well!

Who was he?

Just who could it be?

Fang Weihong wanted to ask, but hesitated and eventually stifled her curiosity. "Alright, I understand. I'll communicate this to Sister Zhang, so wait for my news."

"OK, thank you."

Chapter 1065: Mysterious partners!

On the other end.

After hanging up, Fang Weihong called Zhang Yuanqi.

Zhang Yuanqi was running in her home gym. When she saw her phone ringing, she stopped the treadmill and used a towel to wipe away her sweat before tossing it aside. Then she picked up the phone. She was clearly very curious about The Clown's identity and why he had thought of inviting her to be his guest partner.

"Sister Zhang."

"Did you find out who he is?"

"I didn't manage to find out anything as he didn't want to tell."

"Oh."

"But he knows you."

"How well does he know me?"

"He should be a friend of yours and seems pretty close to you."

"Oh? Did he claim so himself?"

"When I tested him by asking what drinks you liked, he said that you liked to drink wine. But when I tried to fool him by claiming that you don't drink, he didn't fall for it."

"...Pretty close to me?"

"That's for sure. How many people know that you like to drink daily?"

"Not many."

"Is there anyone who matches up with The Clown?"

"No one who can sing as well as him."

"Are you sure?"

"I'm sure."

"Then who could he be!"

"I've got no idea."

"Then what about the King of Masked Singers' grand finals? Will you go?"

"Give me The Clown's contact number."

"Are you really planning on going?"

"Hur hur, I should do him this favor since he's an old friend of mine. I wanna see him when he shows his face at the venue. I want to see just which friend of mine can sing so well yet keep this secret so well hidden."

They hung up.

Zhang Yuanqi kept quiet for a long while before she turned to look for pen and paper. She flipped her planner open to a blank page and scribbled some names on it. Then she shook her head and crossed them out. She wrote down another two names but shook her head and crossed them out as well.

...

The next day.

Beijing Television.

The set for the rehearsal had already been arranged for. Han Qi and some of the program team staff were currently waiting there, with the band also standing by. They were just waiting for the leads to arrive now.

This was not the original recording studio but a bigger set that was arranged for separately and could accommodate more than a thousand audience members. The stage had been redesigned, and it looked much more magnificent than the previous one. It incorporated a lot more advanced equipment that had been designed to the highest standards as specified by the program team. The live broadcast set was specially designed for the show. Beijing Television had started planning for it ever since they'd known the King of Masked Singers premiere episode's viewership rating. To ensure that the show would be produced to perfection, they invested a lot into it regardless of the cost. They had been very "lowkey" in the variety show industry for far too long. As it was not easy for them to get this chance to change things, the station definitely didn't want to miss this opportunity!

Hu Fei walked over. "Are they here yet?"

Han Qi checked her watch. "They should be here soon!"

"Who could The Clown have invited as his guest partner?" Dafei asked curiously.

Han Qi smiled wryly. "I don't know. Teacher Clown didn't say."

Xiao Lu said, "We'll find out in a while when they arrive."

The Clown was the first to arrive. As usual, he was already in his costume with his mask on.

Then, just a few minutes later, The Clown's celebrity guest partner arrived. She walked up to them with her high heels click-clacking. When they heard that and looked to her, all they could see was a person in a red mask!

Hu Fei was taken aback.

The program team staff blinked in surprise.

Zhang Ye disguised his voice and said, "You're here?"

A woman's voice came from beneath the mask. "Yes."

Zhang Ye noticed that Old Zhang had also deliberately lowered the tone of her vocal register. If he didn't know who she was, he probably wouldn't have been able to figure out her identity.

Hu Fei greeted, "Hello, I'm the executive director of King of Masked Singers, Hu Fei."

The masked woman shook hands with him. "Hello."

Hu Fei said, "Can I ask? Who might you be?"

The masked woman said, "I'm not anyone famous, so I won't be giving my name."

Zhang Ye rolled his eyes.

You're not famous?

Even if we don't mention this stage, are there any celebrities who are more famous than you in the entire country?

Dafei said, "Then how should we address you?"

The masked woman thought for a moment before answering with a laugh, "Just call me Wild Rose."

Wild Rose?

The title of that song sung by The Clown?

Hu Fei asked, "Then when can we begin rehearsing?"

Wild Rose said, "Anytime."

Hu Fei looked to the person standing next to her. "Teacher Clown?"

The Clown said, "Anytime."

Hu Fei said, "Alright, let's get started then."

Han Qi immediately led them inside. "Teachers, this way please." She was studying Wild Rose so intensely that she kept looking at her every now and then. But even after looking for a long time, she still could not guess who she was. Not famous? Unwilling to give her name? Afraid that no one would recognize her? Could Teacher Clown really be what the netizens claimed him to be? That he was just lying about himself being a B-list celebrity? So he didn't actually know any famous celebrities? And so got a rando to be his guest partner?

The Miracle Wheels band was already waiting for them.

As well as Music Director Bai Yuanfei, several professional musicians, and piano teachers.

The Clown handed the music score to the band and then gave them some instructions. Following, Wild Rose also went over to communicate with the band for a bit. She listed one by one the things she

needed for some parts of the song regarding the rhythm and pauses. At this point, everyone still did not know how Wild Rose would sing.

Then the rehearsal began.

When she opened her mouth to sing, everyone in the studio was stunned!

The Clown was the first to begin.

Wild Rose followed after him.

Everyone already knew that The Clown's singing was very good. As a result, they expected that even if The Clown's invited guest partner was not famous or might even be a newcomer, her singing would surely not be too bad either. But nobody expected that Wild Rose would give such an earth-shattering performance. When she sang, her voice stunned everyone!

They only needed to rehearse it once!

It was flawless!

It was so professional!

After they exited the stage, Xiao Lu rushed up to The Clown and asked, "Teacher, who is she?"

The Clown smiled and said, "If she doesn't want to say, I must keep it a secret as well."

Xiao Lu asked with wide eyes, "Is she really an unknown female singer?"

The Clown did not say anything.

Next to them, Dafei added, "Many newcomers have really good singing nowadays. It's just that there's either no opportunity for them or they only have average looks, so they can't get famous. In reality, there's plenty of people who can sing very well in our country."

Xiao Lu said, "Oh, so that's why."

But Xiao Lu still felt that this woman did not look like a newcomer from any angle!

I'm not well-educated, so please don't try to fool me!

The Clown asked, "Is the melody alright?"

Bai Yuanfei said, "Yes!"

Hu Fei nodded. "It's quite good."

The Clown said, "Then we're good?"

"Yes!" Hu Fei approved of it and said, "I'm looking forward to your two's performance on the night of the finale. Oh right, there's still the second song. Would you like to rehearse it later as well?"

"Sure," The Clown said.

When Wild Rose heard, she said, "I have something to do. If it's alright, I'd like to leave."

Hu Fei was stunned. Why was she in such a hurry? What was so important? Didn't she just arrive a bit ago?

But Zhang Ye knew that she was indeed a busy person. It was quite flattering that she took an hour out of her day to rehearse with him. He said, "Thank you very much."

Wild Rose laughed. "You owe me a favor."

Zhang Ye said, "OK, I'll be sure to return the favor."

"I'm leaving now." Wild Rose turned around and left without saying anything more.

The program team staff looked at Wild Rose's receding figure, then at The Clown. They felt that these two people were a little strange. They were at this stage, so surely there wasn't a need to hide who they were, was there? Weren't they trying too hard to maintain their mysteriousness? They kept themselves so secretive that not even the program team staff knew who they were. How could they go about the promotions now? Hai, they were still hoping to analyze and deduce The Clown's identity based on his invited celebrity guest partner. If they knew who his friend was and which circle they belonged to, his identity should get more obvious as the possibilities would be reduced even further. But it looked like they had overthought things. Since it was like this, they could only respect the contestants not wanting to reveal their identities. There wasn't much they could say about it. The competition's grand finals would be in another few days anyway, so they could still find out when the time came for them to take off their masks. They were also very curious about the identities of this pair of mysterious partners!

Chapter 1066: The grand finals arrive!

The grand finals were approaching.

The huge promotional campaign for King of Masked Singers was also in its final stages. Whether it was television commercials, online video hosting site advertisements, newspapers, or advertorials, they spared no efforts in the show's advertising.

The discussions online were also in full swing.

"Have you guys seen the new promo?"

"I've seen it, I've seen it!"

"Haha, Sunset Glow's invited celebrity guest partner looks so familiar!"

"The Clown's partner has been decided as well!"

"Why was The Clown's guest partner skimmed over with just one line?"

"Yeah, there wasn't even a back revealed or the likes, nothing at all. What's going on here?"

"The exact words used were 'invited a mysterious guest partner.' Who is this mysterious guest partner? There weren't even any words like 'heavyweight' or 'famous' attached to the introductory lines."

"Could it be that the guest partner isn't someone famous?"



"That might be possible."

"Damn, could our resourceful netizens really have guessed right?"

"Is The Clown really not that famous? Are all the people that he knows just C or D-list celebrities? That's why they didn't even know how to write the introduction and just used 'mysterious guest partner' instead? And simply gloss over it?"

"Surely not, right? I was still looking forward to it quite a bit."

"Then that'd be really bad for The Clown."

"That really is bad. If the guest partner is not someone famous, how can fight for the throne of the Masked King?"

"If this is how it is, then I expect Petal Shower to win even more."

"I'm more optimistic about Sunset Glow's chances!"

"I'm Flowing Time's braindead fan!"

"The overall situation is indeed disadvantageous for The Clown. Although 'The Internationale' brought him a great deal of popularity and supporters, there are also many people who do not like the song. The controversy surrounding it is pretty big."

...

Back at home.

Call after call came in.

Zhang Ye had not been slacking these past two days. Many people were looking for him, mostly for the same reason.

His old colleague, Ha Qiqi.

"Director Zhang, can you get us a few tickets?"

"How many do you need?"

"Our group from the Central TV Documentary Channel would all like to go, so they've appointed me as the representative to ask you about it. I guess about a dozen tickets or so should be enough."

"Sure, that won't be a problem."

"Thanks, Director Zhang."

Then it was his relatives' turn to call.

"Little Ye."

"Oh, Third Uncle."

"A few of my colleagues would like to attend the grand finals of King of Masked Singers. Can you get us a few tickets?"

"Of course."

"Just three tickets would suffice."

"Sure, I'll get them for you."

Finally, even Dong Shanshan came looking for him.

"Zhang'er, help me to reserve five tickets, alright?"

"Damn, you're the host and you're asking me?"

"Hur hur, the tickets for the grand finals are too sought after, with so many people waiting to get one. I can get one or two tickets, but five's too difficult. You have greater influence than me in the program team, so do me this favor, please?"

"Sure, I got it."

"I'll treat you to dinner some other time."

"You keep saying that, but I've never been treated by you before."

"I'll definitely treat you this time."

"Alright, I'll take your word for it."

After handling these trivial matters, Zhang Ye went back to practicing his songs.

He had been practicing the songs he lined up for the grand finals for two full days. For this reason, he even deliberately found a place where no one could disturb him, leaving early in the morning and only coming home late at night. He tirelessly practiced over and over again until he had lost count of the number of times he had sung them. However, he still felt that it was unsatisfactory and even practiced until he nearly lost his voice. Only then did he quickly stop and rest for a while. After eating some instant noodles, he thought about it again and finally realized where the problem lay.

It wasn't that he didn't sing well!

It was just that Zhang Yuanqi had sung too well!

Having eaten all those Singing Skill Experience Books, Zhang Ye thought that he had become invincible by now and would not be inferior to anyone else when it came to singing. But after listening to Zhang Yuanqi's sample of the song, he realized that he was the frog in the well. Actually, even if Zhang Ye were to compare himself to the likes of Petal Shower and Chen Guang, he still probably couldn't sing better than them. He might be a little better in certain areas, but there were also many areas that he did not do as well as them. Zhang Yuanqi's singing had shocked him plenty and made Zhang Ye feel that he couldn't hold the stage alongside her. This was his stage to begin with, but with Old Zhang supporting his act and after hearing a sample of her singing, Zhang Ye knew that he would become the support act instead if it stayed this way. Other people might not be able to hear it, but he could feel it. This definitely wouldn't do!

What should he do?

He couldn't ask Old Zhang to sing badly on purpose, could he? That would be such a loss of face!

The only way was to raise his own level. The grand finals would only be held this once and there was only going to be one winner to speak of. It was even a live broadcast, so Zhang Ye definitely had to give it his all!

He immediately brought up the game ring's virtual screen. He had so many Reputation Points now that he could just use them as he liked. He didn't have to worry about not having enough for now.

He activated the Lucky Halo (Upgraded)!

-100,000!

-100,000!

He immediately tapped on Lottery Draw (One)!

Additional Stakes: 500!

The wheel began to rotate!

The needle started moving!

One revolution...

Two revolutions...

Three revolutions...

It stopped in the Skills Category region.

The Treasure Chests (Small) appeared.

[Musical Arrangement Skill Experience Book] × 501.

Musical arrangement?

He received this item from the lottery draw?

Zhang Ye was taken aback but was still pretty satisfied with it. In the past, the arrangement his songs mostly followed were the original arrangement of the songs in his previous world. There were some slight variations, but there wasn't too much. His songs were still mainly based on the arrangement he listened to, and he needed to adhere to the opinions of the band. After all, Zhang Ye was not a professional in this field, so there were some arrangements he could only leave to the band and music director to decide. If he could arrange his own songs, then things would definitely be different. He would be able to experiment more daringly and freely by adding in all the aspects that he liked. Being able to arrange his own music would also make the songs better suited to his style and allow him to perform them even better!

This was good stuff!

He was going to eat it!

Zhang Ye started studying the books one by one.

Next, he began his second round of the lottery draw.

He added an additional stake of 500 just like before.

The Lucky Halo (Upgraded) was once again activated as well!

One revolution...

Two revolutions...

The needle came to a stop!

It was the Skills Category region again!

[Singing Skill Experience Book] × 501: Enhances the player's singing technique.

He had received this skill experience book before, the exact same one. It was precisely because of this skill experience book that Zhang Ye was able to make a qualitative leap in his singing, and it was exactly what he needed most right now as well.

Zhang Ye immediately started studying them without hesitation.

He had received 500 books last time and 501 books this time. It wasn't until he "ate" the last book that a system message sounded from the game ring!

He had maxed out on the skill!

There was no way to learn any more!

This was a similar case like the Fruits of Strength and Fruits of Stamina, of which 1,000 Fruits were the maximum amount he could eat. As he could not learn from that last skill experience book, it could only go to waste.

After he deactivated the Lucky Halo, Zhang Ye immediately gave it a try. He tried singing that song again, which he had sung so many times that he was starting to get sick of it. As expected, the effect was entirely different now. Even Zhang Ye himself was surprised at this, although the improvement in his singing was not as obvious as after the first time he had eaten the books. Because, as he gained more of the skill, the effect of the skill experience book would become less obvious. But no matter what, they were still 500 books and they effectively maxed out his level for this item gained from Lottery Draw (One). It was still an improvement, albeit a minor one. Moreover, Zhang Ye's singing skill that had been upgraded was not just in one single aspect. It included improvements to his portamento, technique, breathing, etc. This was considered an overall upgrade! Everything related to his singing skills were improved!

He stayed up for yet another night.

Trying out his singing.

Arranging the music.

Repeating it over and over again.

Then continuing to practice the songs.

Eventually, his parents could no longer look on.

"Little Ye, you must take a break. What are you doing that's keeping you up night after night?" His mother said, "Why are you risking your life like that?"

Zhang Ye laughed. "I'm helping someone write a song. Don't worry about me. Just go to sleep, Mom and Dad."

His father pointed to the sky outside. "Your mom and I have already had enough sleep. Look at what time it is. It's light out."

Zhang Ye replied perfunctorily, "OK, I'll go to bed in a bit."

His mother nagged, "Quickly!"

"I know." Zhang Ye buried himself into his work again.

The fellow always behaved this way. He always wanted to do his work to his very best, or at least to the best of his abilities. Otherwise, he would keep doing it over and over, repeating it until he got it perfect. Perhaps he was a perfectionist deep down. Further, this grand finals were extremely important to him.

It wasn't until the day before the grand finals that Zhang Ye managed to complete things. He had a meeting with Old Zhang over the phone, as well as with Bai Yuanfei and the band afterwards.

Bai Yuanfei was astonished. "Did you arrange the music all by yourself?"

Zhang Ye said: "It's not too bad, right?"

"This is something that even the most professional arrangers would barely be able to do, don't you think? How about the dance choreography and costume effects, have you thought about those yet? I think the duet between you and Wild Rose can have a little more visual effect. I can reveal to you that the other contestants have all given considerable thought to effects like visual presentation and fog machines. It's going to have a great visual impact for sure. I'm not really well-versed in this area, but we have professionals who can help you design something on our team, do you want to—"

"That's not for me," Zhang Ye laughed. "I'll just sing normally."

Bai Yuanfei said: "But you'd be disadvantaged for sure."

Zhang Ye said: "It's fine. I don't like all those fanciful effects anyway."

Bai Yuanfei said: "Alright, I understand."

"You have my gratitude for all your hard work."

With this, Zhang Ye was fully prepared for the grand finals!

Chapter 1067: The live broadcast begins!

Saturday.

On the day of the grand finals.

Though it was only a bit after three o'clock in the afternoon, large groups of people were already lining up outside of Beijing Television. Some of them were distributing bottled water, some were distributing clothes, while others were distributing LED lightboards. Everyone was behaving in a very orderly manner as they began preparations to show support for their favorite contestants tonight!

"Where are Teacher Flowing Time's fans?"

"Gather over here, please!"

"Fans of Petal Shower, come quickly. We're distributing clothes over here!"

"Everyone, let's standardize our outfits to show our support for Little Sunset (Sunset Glow)!"

"Are there any fans of Teacher Clown around? You guys can get free bottles of water over here!"

"There are still three available LED lightboards for King of Oddity. Are any of you going to be seated in the front rows? Those who are seated near the front rows, please come and get one. Since the cameras focus there, those who are seated at the back, please don't take the LED lightboards."

"King of Oddity posted on Weibo that if he can gain a spot in the top three, he would sign autographs for his fans at the venue after the competition ends. Everyone will get one!"

"Ah? Are you serious?"

"Then how many will he have to sign?"

"Teacher Flowing Time posted that if he gets crowned as the grand champion on King of Masked Singers, he'll move up his new album's release date and hold a fan meeting with everyone this week. He's hoping that everyone can give him their support and vote for him!"

"I've already instructed everyone at home to vote for Flowing Time tonight!"

"Sunset Glow has also been canvassing for votes in advance. She started a lottery on Weibo two days ago! That's how I got my admission pass for today. Someone even won the latest model of a laptop!"

"The celebs have all poured in a lot of money for this!"

"Yeah, the celebrities are all trying their best to get votes."

"Only The Clown's Weibo has been inactive. He never posted anything!"

"Damn, why isn't Teacher Clown asking for votes?"

"Who knows!"

"As they said, he's probably not very famous and the celebrity guest partner he's invited should also be quite an unknown newcomer, so why isn't he worried? All the more he should be asking for votes in advance!"

At the live broadcast venue.

The program staff were having a hectic time.

"Check the equipment again!"

"There's a bit of a problem with Camera 5!"

"Equipment team, handle it!"

"There's only three hours left!"

"Are the contestants and their celebrity guest partners here yet?"

"They're all here except for The Clown's celebrity guest partner!"

"Wild Rose isn't here yet?"

"Not yet."

All the contestants had arrived in advance along with their guest partners.

However, The Clown's celebrity guest partner was the exception. By rights, everyone should have already reached the venue since this was such an important live broadcast event. But Wild Rose was still nowhere to be seen, and they were only missing her presence as of now.

Han Qi rushed to find The Clown. "Where's your partner?"

The Clown said evenly, "She has a busy schedule. Don't worry."

Han Qi didn't know how to react. "You're really calm, aren't you? Could you call her and hurry her up? There's not much time left."

The Clown shook his head. "There's no need."

He understood Old Zhang quite well as she was the same type of person as him. Since she had agreed to do something, she would definitely do it well. So there was no need to hurry her. After knowing each other for some time, there was some trust between them.

A distance away.

Flowing Time and King of Oddity overheard.

Flowing Time said, "Only The Clown's partner isn't here yet?"

Flowing Time's partner sneered, "What's with this diva behavior? We're rehearsing soon. Is she going to make all of us wait for her?"

In a room close by.

King of Oddity was also not too happy to hear this. "What's going to happen now? Are we going to go ahead with the rehearsal?"

The program team employee said, "We're not going to wait. Let's rehearse."

King of Oddity's partner smacked his lips and said, "These newbies are behaving too ridiculously!"

Just as he said that, the program team received an update: Wild Rose has arrived!

The rehearsal began!

In reality, it was not really a rehearsal but simply something for everyone to go through the motions to find their positions. For example, they had to know where the cameras were located and where to stand when they went up onstage. They had to run through the general process once.

The contestants and celebrity guest partners gathered next to the stage all at once.

When Zhang Ye saw Sunset Glow, Petal Shower, and Spinach, he nodded at them in greeting. Then he glanced at the partners beside them. Although they were all wearing masks, their figures looked very familiar. The other contestants and their partners also exchanged greetings as they scrutinized each other. Zhang Ye was naturally one of those whom everyone had their focus on. Many of the contestants and their partners were sizing him up.

Then Wild Rose finally arrived, late.

Flowing Time's partner glanced at her and shook his head slightly.

Petal Shower looked at Wild Rose and blinked several times.

Even though she was late, Wild Rose showed no timidity at all. Instead, she smiled gracefully. "I'm sorry. I got caught in a traffic jam on the way here. Let's get started."

Dafei said, "Alright. Now that everyone is here, we can begin the rehearsal!"

Sunset Glow and her partner were also looking at Wild Rose with eyes full of speculation.

Was she really a newcomer?

She didn't look like it!

Her voice sounded somewhat familiar?

But it also felt like she had deliberately changed the tone of her vocal register?

If she was a newcomer, why would she need to deliberately change her voice? Was she afraid that someone would recognize her?

...

The sky was gradually getting darker.

The time for the grand finals was approaching.

Zhang Ye's parents and several of his relatives also came to attend the recording and were currently lining up with their admission passes. The audience members were already getting admitted into the venue. They were verifying their admission passes and performing security checks at the front gate.

His mother exclaimed, "Why are there so many people?"

His eldest sister smiled and said, "It's the King of Masked Singers' grand finals, and it's even going to be broadcast live, so of course there's going to be a lot of people."

His third sister called out, "Why are the people up ahead not moving? I can't wait!"

His third uncle said, "What are you so anxious for? We'll definitely get in."



His third aunt said, "It's not like the seats will run away. Be patient."

Almost all of Zhang Ye's family members were here today. If not for his grandparents' legs being not as strong as before, coupled with their high blood pressure making them unable to be in crowded places for long, the two seniors would probably have come as well.

Not far away, Ha Qiqi, Zhang Zuo, Little Wang, and the others were also standing in line.

"It's so hot."

"It's not our turn yet?"

"The security check is taking too long."

"Let's patiently wait. If it wasn't for Director Zhang, we wouldn't have even gotten the tickets. How many people do you think have a chance to watch the grand finals at the venue? We're very fortunate."

This was the King of Masked Singers' grand finals!

It was a feast for the music and television show industry!

Attention from the industry insiders, the entertainment industry, the entire country's audience, and even the authorities were all focused here tonight!

...

At Zhang Ye's maternal grandma's house.

His grandpa and grandma turned on the television.

"Has it started yet?"

"Not yet."

...

His paternal aunt's house.

His paternal elder cousin and her best friend who ran a blogshop together had been waiting at their TV for a long time.

"Who do you like?"

"I like all of them."

"I only like The Clown, hehe."

...

At Peking University.

Many Peking University students who weren't on break yet were using the Internet in their dormitories to access the live broadcast on the television station's website. Some students even brought back a TV set from somewhere and hooked it up to an antenna to watch the live broadcast.

"It's about to begin!"

"Hurry and tell everyone!"

"I have a TV in my dorm. Whoever wants to come here and watch, hurry up!"

"We must support the show that was produced by Professor Zhang!"

...

The audience was shown in!

The stage was ready!

The countdown to recording had begun!

It was getting more and more rowdy online!

"There is only one show tonight—King of Masked Singers!"

"It's starting, it's starting!"

"Supporting Petal Shower!"

"I love Sunset Glow the most!"

"Flowing Time!"

"Flowing Time!"

"Let's go, The Clown!"

"Every one of them has a chance of winning tonight!"

"I'm looking forward to the crowning of the grand champion of King of Masked Singers!"

At 8 PM.

Under everyone's attention, the live broadcast of King of Masked Singers' finale began!

Chapter 1068: Spinach in the lead!

The live broadcast signal came on!

Dong Shanshan appeared on the television screen!

Amid the cheering and screaming, Dong Shanshan descended from above. She was, in fact, sitting on a platform that was being lowered from the rafters. The stage was covered with fog and mesmerizing lights were shining. "Welcome to the King of Masked Singers, brought to you exclusively by Bright Fruit Cocoa. We're in the theater of the live broadcast of tonight's finale, and I am your most lovable, beautiful, sexy, and slightly artistic host—Dong Shanshan!"

A burst of opening remarks.

The audience's applause thundered!

Countless people were waving their LED lightboards and screaming in excitement!

Dong Shanshan's current popularity was much different from before. On the LED lightboards the live audience members were holding up today, other than for the contestants, many had Dong Shanshan's name on them. Some people were attending the event today just to support Dong Shanshan. They were all her diehard fans!

The platform was finally lowered down onto the stage.

Dong Shanshan elegantly walked off it and said as she strode onstage, "It's the night of the grand finals, and we'll see the most exciting battle between experts in this theater tonight. The grand champion of King of Masked Singers will emerge here tonight. The rules of the competition are very simple: The winners and losers will be decided by our live viewers. When the competition begins proper, the contestant's number to vote for will be displayed onscreen. Cast your votes and choose your grand champion so that they may be crowned Masked King tonight!"

The venue was changed.

The stage setup was also changed.

Zhang Xia was seated in the audience in the first row.

Chen Guang, Amy, Wang Zhuishu, and the other judges were also seated in the audience. For tonight's live broadcast, they were not tasked with commenting and were only here to watch the show.

The competition's rules for the grand finals had long since been leaked. The result of today's competition was no longer just for the live audience to decide, but for all viewers. The voting channel would be opened right from the first performance of the first round. Whichever contestant placed last in the celebrity guest partner round would immediately get eliminated and not be able to advance to the next round. Voting would only close after the last contestant performed their song in the second round. The contestant with the highest number of votes at the end would then be crowned Masked King, and the results for the first and second rounds were equally important as the votes were cumulative. Further, the program team had planned for a segment during which the contestants could take off their masks at any time between the first and second rounds, meaning they could reveal their identities without needing to wait until the end of the show to do so!

A King of Masked Singers' discussion thread was created on Weibo.

"They're about to begin!"

"Who'll perform first?"

"They go according to the number of times that they've been crowned Masked King."

"Then the first person should be Spinach? She gained entry via the revival round and came in third."

"Who do you guys think will be eliminated in the first round?"

"Other than Petal Shower and The Clown, I think everyone else is in danger of being eliminated!"

"Haha, place your bets!"

"The betting's open! I'll bet on Flowing Time getting eliminated!"

"My bet is on Spinach."

At the venue.

The competition had not yet begun, but the atmosphere was exploding and chaotic!

Zhang Ye's parents, his uncles and aunts, as well as everyone else were all influenced by this atmosphere!

Dong Shanshan announced loudly, "As of now, the voting channels are open. Let's welcome today's first performer onstage—Spinach! And her guest partner—Celery!"

Dong Shanshan immediately exited the stage.

The onstage lights switched to a different style.

The audience was also very cooperative as they immediately turned quiet.

Suddenly, a voice singing in a cappella rang out!

Spinach stepped out onto the stage!

"You said the snow was pure.

"I said the skies were dark."

Another woman's voice followed.

"I said our dreams were forever green.

"You said your soul was gray."

This song became very popular in the past two years and was one of the top ten most requested songs during karaoke. But when it was performed by the two of them, it sounded like it upstaged the original. They actually added some operatic elements into it and the song seemed to have a heavy feel of Peking opera to it. It was especially enjoyable to listen to.

The dancers came out onto the stage, all of them dressed like Peking opera singers!

This was a classic example of a "traditional meets modern" performance!

Old Zhang had already gone to change into her costume. Zhang Ye was watching the TV alone in his waiting room and nodded approvingly. He rather liked this song that Spinach was performing today.

All of a sudden, without any warning.

Spinach's partner was sustaining a high note when she ripped off her mask!

When the audience managed to react, they were stunned!

Chen Guang pointed to the stage. "Han Ke?"

Zhang Xia smiled. "That's my old friend's granddaughter!"

Han Ke, a C-list celebrity and the granddaughter of Han Aiguo, a famous singer of the older generation in China. Han Aiguo was on the same level as Zhang Xia and a friend of hers who debuted together with her. At the same time, Han Aiguo and Liao Yiqi's grandfather were good friends of many years, so Han Ke and Liao Yiqi practically grew up together as best friends. This was why no one found it unexpected that Han Ke would be on the stage today, even though they were surprised!

Spinach smiled and also took off her mask. In fact, she had already taken off her mask, and everyone knew who she was already. But when her face was unmasked, the audience still cheered her on with screams and applause!

The viewers watching their TVs at home were also very excited!

"It's Han Ke!"

"Han Ke really came onto the show?"

"They're no doubt childhood friends! How supportive!"

"I like Han Ke a lot!"

"She was a child star, and I especially liked those TV dramas that she acted in when she was young! She's still as pretty even after growing up! I'm fairly sure it's only because of Liao Yiqi that she's here. If it were anyone else, she probably would not agree to come onto the show as a celebrity guest! After all, she hasn't sung for the past one or two years!"

"Let's vote!"

"Right, let's quickly vote!"

"Vote for Spinach!"

"I'm going to vote for Spinach just because of Han Ke!"

"Haha, I'm doing this for Han Ke too!"

At the bottom of the screen, the tally was being calculated and displayed in real-time.

In an instant, Spinach's tally had jumped to the top—with 870,000 votes and almost breaking a million! Meanwhile, the remaining contestants who had not yet performed also received some votes, although they didn't get much.

The live audience was shouting.

"Liao Yiqi!"

"Liao Yiqi!"

"Han Ke!"

"Han Ke!"

The duo of Spinach and Celery was really not to be underestimated.

When it came to the end of their song, Spinach's tally had reached 990,000 votes. She was in first place for the time being with a rather eye-catching result!

Dong Shanshan came back onto the stage. "Hello, Little Liao. Hello, Little Han."

Han Ke raised her microphone. As she had already taken off her mask, the backstage crew switched off the voice transformer on her microphone. She greeted Shanshan with her real voice, "Hello, Sister Shanshan."

Dong Shanshan smiled and said, "Long time no see."

Han Ke giggled and said, "Yeah, Sister Shanshan has become even more beautiful."

The two of them clearly knew each other. In the past, they had both done an endorsement for the same product and filmed a commercial for it. Sometimes, this was just how small the industry was.

Dong Shanshan said happily, "So you're here tonight to support your best friend?"

Han Ke nodded and looked at the audience. She said, "When Little Liao called me about this, I was actually filming outside of Beijing. After she told me the details, I rushed back without another word. It goes without saying I would've come back even if the sky was falling."

This episode, once a duo finished performing, they were allowed to say some words onstage. They could either have a short chat or canvass for votes; anything was fine. It was not as restrictive as the past episodes. However, Spinach and Celery did not really talk about anything else. Perhaps they were embarrassed about asking for votes, so the two of them just bowed to the audience and left the stage after a few words.

Chapter 1069: Out of control grand finals!

In the front row.

Zhang Xia commented, "Little Liao sang very well today."

Chen Guang also said, "Yeah, she really did quite well."

Amy laughed and said, "Ever since the revival round, Spinach has transformed into another person. It's like she's suddenly been enlightened. She's a surefire favorite to win today."

Wang Zhuishu said, "I think she'll do well too."

On the last stage, Spinach's popularity was not considered particularly high. At the least, it was quite far off from Petal Shower and The Clown's level of popularity. But ever since the revival round, Spinach had started to really accumulate a good deal of popularity and left an impression on many in the audience. They all started to like her. Although the celebrity guest partner Spinach had invited was not that famous and was just a C-list artist like herself, they sang the song wonderfully.

Following their performance, the next contestant came out!

The second person to take the stage was Sunset Glow!

By rights, Sunset Glow should have appeared much later. After all, she had been crowned the Masked King once. Although she wouldn't have gotten a better spot in the appearance order than The Clown, she could still have chosen between appearing as the second to last or third to last contestant. But as she probably had some considerations regarding her song and the atmosphere in the studio, Sunset Glow chose to be the second contestant to go on stage.

On the stage, a familiar tune started playing!

Zhang Ye also found it very familiar. It turned out to be "Super Star"!

The audience was screaming.

"This song?"

"Sunset Glow is really that singer?"

"This song is the best!"

"Where's her celebrity guest partner?"

"Yeah, where's the celebrity guest partner?"

There was only Sunset Glow onstage.

The masked Sunset Glow raised her microphone and sang.

"Praising your smile,

"Your knitted brows break my heart.

"I cannot notice me,

"I only feel what you feel."

Suddenly, the stage was covered in fog!

With a loud rumble, all the lights went out!

When the lights came back on, another masked woman had appeared onstage. When she opened her mouth to sing, the theater was stunned for a moment before erupting into thunderous applause!

"Wherever you go,

"Bring my soul along with you.

"It's captured in your spell,

"What use is leaving it?"

Her celebrity guest partner had taken the stage as well!

This voice sounded all too familiar!

Zhang Ye smiled.

Zhang Xia smiled.

Many of the audience members knew this voice as well!

But what was even more surprising was yet to come. The lights went out again, with only a few columns of light remaining. The effect was especially artistic.

Vaguely, Zhang Xia, Chen Guang, and the others discovered someone standing up beside them.

The audience also saw this. From out of the blue, Amy had taken out a mask and worn it over her face, then strode forward and made her way up onto the stage as well. With a smile, she stood alongside Sunset Glow and the other celebrity guest partner!

Their three voices chorused in unison!

"You're a zap, you're my light, you're my only fairy tale.

"I love just you. You are my super star.

"You decide, I abide. There is nothing better here. Loving just you. You are my super star."

The audience went crazy!

No one had expected that Amy would also go up onstage!

Sunset Glow chose to remove her mask at this point in time. When it was off, the face of someone who looked particularly quiet was revealed—Spring Garden's Li Xiaoxian!

Next to her, one of them removed their mask as well—Amy!

The last person to take off her mask was Sunset Glow's celebrity guest partner—Xiaodong!

All the members of Spring Garden had assembled!

This lineup was a really powerful one!

At their televisions.

The home audience was also taken by surprise.

"It's really Xiaoxian!"

"Sunset Glow is Li Xiaoxian!"

"Damn, for real?"

"I didn't believe it when the netizens analyzed who she might be!"

"I always thought that the singing of Spring Garden's trio was just so-so. They've always sung group songs that talk about lovey-dovey subjects, so I didn't hear anything special. I never expected Li Xiaoxian's singing to be so good! She can also sing good by herself! So this isn't just some pretty girl group; they really have the skills to back themselves up!"

"Vote for her!"



"Yes, vote!"

Spring Garden was the country's most popular girl group with no others coming close. The group was so popular that all of its members were practically B-list celebrities and worth a lot. If the three members were separated individually and looked at, they might not be much. But when these three B-list celebrities joined together, their influence was absolutely comparable to that of an A-list star!

Zhang Ye's three sisters were also screaming and shouting from their seats in the audience.

When they finished singing, the entire place was chanting their names!

Sunset Glow (Li Xiaoxian) lifted her microphone and said, "Thank you. Thank you, everyone. And thank you to my two sisters who are here to support me. I was actually very nervous for today's grand finals, but I feel much better with them standing here with me. Hello, everyone, I am Li Xiaoxian!"

Applause and screams rang out once more!

"Xiaoxian!"

"Xiaoxian!"

"Xiaoxian!"

Li Xiaoxian said, "I really didn't think that there would be so many people who like me." She smiled. "I wasn't confident at all about joining King of Masked Singers, and I felt really perturbed. I was afraid that I would be too embarrassed if I lost, so I didn't let anyone know that I was joining the show at the beginning. I was too scared to tell anyone about it."

Amy grumbled, "You didn't even let me know."

Xiaodong said with a giggle, "You've kept it under wraps quite well."

Li Xiaoxian blinked. "Sorry about that, my sisters."

Xiaodong laughed. "It's fine, you're forgiven." Then she looked at the audience and into the cameras. "Everyone, remember to vote for our dearest Xiaoxian."

Amy suddenly pointed her microphone at the audience. "Did Xiaoxian sing well today?"

The audience was unanimous. "Yes!"

Amy asked, "Should you vote for her?"

The audience replied, "Yes!"

Amy and Xiaodong were trying their best to get votes for Li Xiaoxian.

Everyone noticed that Sunset Glow's tally was currently soaring. It shot up to two million votes, double that of Spinach's tally. She had replaced Spinach and was in first place for the time being!

The third contestant to appear onstage was King of Oddity!

He had revealed his identity already, so everyone knew who he was. But when the crowd saw him coming onstage with his celebrity guest partner, they were still surprised for a bit!

Their costumes were too extravagant!

They were both wearing golden robes!

They were even wearing bejeweled crowns that looked extremely expensive on their heads. These were definitely not provided for by Beijing Television and were probably rented by their talent agencies!

Their song was titled "The King's Sorrow"!

The audience was startled!

"How much did they spend on that?"

"Wow, they're so stunning!"

"I must vote for them just based on their costumes!"

"They're so willing to spend on their outfits!"

"How extravagant!"

"Awesome!"

"This visual impact is so great!"

They began singing. The entire song felt like some sort of stage play with a lot of people taking part in the performance. At times, people would come out for a dance. At other times, a chorus would come out and accompany the main singers!

When they were a minute and a half into the song, King of Oddity's celebrity guest partner took off his mask!

Li Yue 1 !

A famous singer from Hong Kong!

A B-list celebrity!

When her identity was revealed, King of Oddity's tally rocketed up. King of Oddity was not considered a very popular singer in the music industry, or at least was not known as a great singer. However, it was different for Li Yue. She held a lofty position in the pop music scene, and she was very popular and worth a lot!

The song ended.

When Zhang Ye saw King of Oddity's tally, he was startled and frowned a little. King of Oddity had almost managed to catch up to Sunset Glow with over 1.8 million votes now and was already ahead of Spinach by a mile. In truth, Zhang Ye felt that Spinach's group sang the best among the three groups that went first. The song Sunset Glow had sung was not exactly suited for a competition as it did not allow her to showcase her singing skills. As for the King of Oddity's "The King's Sorrow," he sang average. He clearly made several mistakes and his form today was not really that good. But why did the results of the voting turn out this way?

Zhang Ye realized that something was wrong!

This had deviated from the premise of the show!

When King of Oddity and Li Yue started asking for votes, Zhang Ye felt this feeling even stronger!

King of Oddity said, "I hope that everyone can vote for me. Thank you."

Li Yue smiled and said, "King of Oddity's next album is about to get released, and the album will be titled King of Oddity. Although he doesn't want me to reveal too much, I still want to say this."

King of Oddity looked at her and tugged at her.

However, Li Yue insisted on speaking. "He has decided that all the proceeds for the King of Oddity album will be donated to charity, which will be used to aid children. When I heard about it, I felt really touched. For a singer who is so kind-hearted, he totally deserves your votes!"

King of Oddity quickly waved it off. "I'm just doing something that's within my power."

The applause from the live audience wouldn't end!

"Donating everything?"

"Is he serious?"

"King of Oddity is such a kind-hearted person!"

"Yeah, he definitely deserves praise!"

"It's rare that a celebrity can be so charitable. There really aren't many like him!"

"That's so nice of him!"

"Supporting King of Oddity!"

"Just by that commitment of his, I must support him!"

"How generous!"

But there were also doubters.

"Wasn't there some negative news coverage about King of Oddity some years ago? Something about him verbally abusing a reporter after drinking? Cussing out a waiter? He even beat someone up in the past? What's with this about donating his album sales to charity now? What's with him making this declaration on this occasion? Is he trying to get more people to vote for him? Why do I find him so pretentious?"

"Those are just rumors. How can you believe all that?"

"King of Oddity is a very nice person. He's willing to donate all of his album's proceeds. Why don't you do the same if you can!"

"Passerby transforming into a fan!"

Zhang Ye had also heard of that news regarding King of Oddity. He did not know if they were true, but at least on today's stage, King of Oddity felt like two different persons on and off stage. His talk and attitude were entirely different, and that left Zhang Ye unable to distinguish how he really was. In his opinion, it was a good thing to contribute to charitable causes. But to use that as a tactic to ask for votes on this occasion, it didn't seem to be in good taste!

Meanwhile, King of Oddity's tally kept climbing!

Right after he announced that he would be donating to charity, his tally shot above Sunset Glow's!

Over 2.3 million votes!

King of Oddity was in first place!

And his tally was still continuing to rise!

Hu Fei was very happy.

The program team's staff were also beaming.

This was because they were constantly receiving news updates of the show's viewership rating and the constantly increasing number of people tuning into the show. So they were not exactly bothered by these developments.

Only Zhang Ye fell silent.

He suddenly thought that he should have intervened in the competition's grand finals format and rules, and that he should have participated more actively in the show's production.

It seemed out of control now!

The tallies no longer had anything to do with the performance itself!

Whoever invited the more popular celebrity guest partner?

Whoever had the more extravagant costume?

Whoever gave the most touching speech?

All of that would decide who would get the most votes?

This was not the original vision that King of Masked Singers had!

Chapter 1070: The Clown's turn to take the stage!

At TVs.

There were numerous sets of eyes focused on Beijing Television.

"King of Oddity is first, while Sunset Glow and Spinach are second and third, respectively!"

"This is so intense!"

"Did King of Oddity really sing that well? How is his tally so high?"

"He did say that he would donate to charity, after all!"

"Isn't that way of canvassing for votes a little disingenuous of him?"

"Yeah, it's too phony. But people still buy into it!"

"I don't like King of Oddity's way of canvassing for votes. If we're talking purely about the songs, Liao Yiqi (Spinach) should be in first place! If not, it should be Sunset Glow instead!"

Many people understood how things ought to be.

But more people who were confused seemed to be around.

Some people did not care about what you did and only cared about what you said. If you said it well and put it beautifully, claiming to do all sorts of extravagant things, then everyone would think that you were good. Furthermore, King of Oddity's outfit was indeed overly extravagant and his invited guest partner was also a big name B-lister. Coupled with his declaration to donate to charity, it was completely within reason that he had such a tally. But as for how he had performed, it probably did not matter any longer.

However, when it came to the next contestant's turn, a lot of people finally understood what it meant when people said that there was always someone who could do something better!

...

The next contestant to appear was Flowing Time!

He was the famous Hokkien singer—Zhao Qiquan!

Flowing Time sang one of his own Hokkien songs but the lyrics had been changed by him. His part in the song was sung in Hokkien but his partner's portion was sung in Mandarin! His partner's singing was not very good and could even be considered amateur. He barely managed to stay on-key, although his intonation wasn't too bad overall. His singing voice was also fine but if it were really to be assessed, then it couldn't be considered good at all. Anyone could come along and probably sing more professionally than him.

At the beginning, the audience was even feeling somewhat disappointed.

But when they came to the end of the song, Flowing Time's guest partner ripped off his mask!

With that, the audience became so excited that they jumped to their feet!

"Holy shit!"

"Jiang Hanwei!"

"It's Jiang Hanwei!"

"Old Jiang got invited onto the show?"

"Indeed! Flowing Time has well-connected friends in the entertainment industry!"

"Even Old Jiang is here?"

"Damn, there's really an A-lister on the show!"

"Yeah, I heard someone mention it before. I thought it was just a rumor!"

"King of Masked Singers has finally managed to invite an A-lister!"

"This is so awesome!"

"Old Jiang sings pretty good!"

Jiang Hanwei!

A famous martial arts star!

The number one star of martial arts movies!

A famous A-lister from China!

Jiang Hanwei had sung the theme songs for his movies before, but he was not a true singer and only did so in the capacity of a guest or as a side job. So he wasn't going to be a complete professional at singing. However, his popularity was still a force to be reckoned with. In fact, he probably did not even need to sing. He could just show his face and the votes would still come in! Zhao Qiquan did not have this kind of influence. His popularity was not considered to be that widespread, but it was different for Jiang Hanwei. He was a true-blue A-list celebrity who was not ranked at the bottom of the A-list rankings!

"Let's vote!"

"There's no need to think any further! Let's just vote for Flowing Time!"

"I'm Old Jiang's diehard fan!"

"Old Jiang must be the most famous celebrity among all the invited guest partners!"

After they finished singing.

Dong Shanshan went back onstage. "I had not expected that Teacher Jiang would be here."

Jiang Hanwei laughed loudly as he clapped Zhao Qiquan on the shoulder. "I had to come and give my support since this old friend of mine invited me. Everyone, please remember to vote for Old Zhao and vote generously. If Old Zhao is crowned as the grand champion of King of Masked Singers, I promise to reveal Old Zhao's wife to everyone!"

Flowing Time gave a wry smile. "Must you be so hard on me?"

Dong Shanshan was surprised. "Teacher Zhao got married?"

Flowing Time coughed, "Yes."

Be it the live audience or the people watching on TV, all of them flew into an uproar!

"What?"

"Didn't Old Zhao get divorced just the year before last?"

"He got married again?"

"With who?"

"Why wasn't there any news about it?"

"Holy shit, what the hell have the paparazzi been doing?"

"Hurry up and tell us! Who is Old Zhao's wife?"

Jiang Hanwei suddenly added, "Haha, I can divulge this right now: Old Zhao's wife is also a celebrity, and you all definitely know who she is!"

All at once, everyone's curiosity was piqued!

Jiang Hanwei said with a laugh, "I promise on Old Zhao's behalf that as long as he gets crowned as the grand champion, I'll expose her to the world! May I do that, Old Zhao?"

Flowing Time said helplessly, "Alright, alright, I give."

The media present at the venue went on high alert!

Jiang Hanwei shouted, "Hurry up and vote. I'll be counting on all of you!"

Flowing Time bowed slightly as he went off the stage with Old Jiang.

The audience at the venue was screaming nonstop.

"Jiang Hanwei!"

"Jiang Hanwei!"

"Jiang Hanwei!"

There was hardly anyone shouting Flowing Time's name. Most of them were directed at Jiang Hanwei. No one present today had not watched Jiang Hanwei's movies before. Almost everyone here was a fan of his!

Immediately, the TV audience started voting!

500,000!

1 million!

2 million!

3 million!

Flowing Time's tally went over 3 million votes!

He had firmly taken first place!

He was far ahead of everyone else!

Zhang Xia laughed and said, "This Old Jiang really knows how to get the votes."

Amy had returned to her seat by now. "He's in first?"

Wang Zhuishu suddenly looked to his left and right. "Eh, where's Old Chen?"

"I don't know. He was still around just a while ago." Chen Yidong was also puzzled.

The next minute, they were surprised to see a familiar figure appearing on stage. This person was wearing the same outfit as Chen Guang had when he was seated beside them earlier. The only difference was that he was now wearing a mask!

It was time for the next group's performance!

They were "Petal Shower" and "Humble Light"!

Petal Shower sang, "Why aren't you leaving yet?"

The Humble Light faced her and sang, "I wanna watch the sea with you here."

This was a song by Chen Guang and Fan Wenli!

It was originally a duet sung by them!

By this point, the audience knew who they were even if they had not yet taken their masks off!

Petal Shower was Fan Wenli!

Humble Light was Chen Guang!

"I guessed long ago that it was Old Fan!"

"It's really her!"

"I like her! I really, really like her!"

"I knew it had to be her!"

"Hahahaha, Old Chen is a judge!"

"Giving the couple who perform together a Like!"

"Their singing is wonderful!"

"Old Chen and Old Fan are so impressive!"

"The two biggest names in the music industry have joined together, and they're even a couple with great understanding. On this stage, who else besides The Clown will be a match for this pair?"

"Even The Clown might not be able to beat them!"

"Right, The Clown's invited guest partner seems like a newcomer."

The performance ended!

Everyone stood up and applauded them!

Dong Shanshan walked onto the stage with a smile. "So Petal Shower's actually Teacher Fan Wenli! No wonder you sang so well. I am a fan of yours."



Fan Wenli smiled and said, "Thank you, Shanshan."

Dong Shanshan looked at Chen Guang. "Teacher Chen has always been a judge on the guessing panel. I understand that the program team had also invited you to join the competition, so why didn't you choose to participate?"

Chen Guang chuckled. "I was considering it, but my wife told me out of the blue one day that she was going to compete on King of Masked Singers to challenge herself. I thought it was better that I didn't join since I was really afraid that it would be too embarrassing if I lost to her on the show."

The audience was tickled!

They chatted for a while but did not ask for any votes.

Chen Guang and Fan Wenli had always been like this. Even if you requested that they shout "quickly vote for me" to the television audience, they would not do it.

When Zhang Ye saw their tally, he frowned again.

Flowing Time was still in first place with 3.8 million votes.

King of Oddity was in second place with 3 million votes.

Petal Shower had taken over third place with 2.9 million votes.

The audience was stunned.

"How can this be?"

"She's only in third place?"

"Old Chen and Old Fan sang so well!"

"Yeah, this song should be the best sung one today, followed by Spinach's song. But why is Petal Shower merely in third place? And why is Spinach in last place?"

"Was it simply because she did not ask for people to vote for her?"

"It shouldn't be like this."

"I didn't vote for Petal Shower because I already knew that she was Fan Wenli and guessed that Chen Guang would be her guest partner. Their performance had nothing to look forward to!"

"Yeah, there was more to look forward to in Flowing Time's performance. Who could his wife be?"

"No one was able to guess who Flowing Time's and King of Oddity's guest partners were!"

"Petal Shower and the others were given too much attention during the course of the competition. So there's nothing fresh and exciting to look forward to with them."

"But Petal Shower sang really well!"

"The other contestants publicized performing charitable acts or exposing their love life. They even invited some big names and spared no efforts in canvassing for votes, so how could Petal Shower and

Spinach possibly compete with them? There's nothing wrong with these tallies. If they really want to catch up in the rankings, there's still a chance to do so in the second round where they'll be performing solo!"

"Hopefully, Petal Shower can catch up. I feel that she deserves to become the grand champion!"

A lot of people were very surprised by this tally.

Including Zhang Ye, who was quite unhappy.

If Petal Shower and Spinach had truly sung badly, he likely could have accepted this. But the issue here was that both of them had sung outstandingly. From a professional point of view, they were the two groups who had performed the best today. Hence, Zhang Ye could not accept that they were not higher in the rankings!

It was his turn next!

It was time for him to take the stage!