

Superstar 1201

Chapter 1201: Those seven spots!

The next day.

It was the annual Mid-Autumn Festival again.

In the morning, Zhang Ye loaded up small and large packages into the car and drove to the studio. Without anyone's help, he carried everything and went upstairs.

All of the staff were present.

"Director Zhang!"

"Boss, what's with all that?"

"Whoa, why are there so many things?"

"Let me help you!"

"Just leave them there."

Everyone quickly came over to help.

He brought over a lot of things, and they weren't exactly cheap either.

There was an entire hamper containing Brain Gold products in it, prepaid gift cards with a value of 1,000 yuan each, mooncakes, and many other goodies.

Zhang Ye opened up a box and said to everyone with a smile, "Come, my comrades. I'm giving out these items for the Mid-Autumn Festival. Everyone will get a share, so please distribute them among yourselves. All of you may go home after you've collected your items. Rest well during the holidays and send my greetings to your families. You've all worked hard recently." Zhang Ye was quite a stingy person and did not really earn that much, but he was still a very generous person. Be it the staff's welfare or salary, those who worked at his studio were earning more than the industry standard.

Zhang Zuo smiled and said, "You're handing out this much stuff?"

Little Wang grinned and said, "This isn't considered much!"

Little Zhou smiled. "Boss is the greatest!"

"Oh right, we still haven't congratulated our boss yet," Wu Yi suddenly said.

Everyone immediately responded.

"Haha!"

"Director Zhang, congratulations!"

"Congratulations on your engagement!"

"Who's our female boss going to be?"

"Yeah, Director Zhang, share with us."

Seeing them kick up a fuss, Zhang Ye felt rather amused. "I can't say right now, but everyone will know soon enough."

At this moment, Chenchen strolled in. Old Rao's house was not far from Zhang Ye's office; it was only a few floors down. In the past, when Rao Aimin had to go out for some errands, she would always leave Chenchen with Zhang Ye. But it was even more convenient for her now. Whenever Rao Aimin needed to go out, she would send Chenchen straight up to Zhang Ye's office since there were surely going to be people around to take care of her.

Chenchen looked at all the gifts lying on the floor and said, "Zhang Ye, you're giving out things?"

Zhang Ye smiled and said, "Yeah, why?"

Chenchen nodded. "I want a share as well."

Zhang Ye said in amusement, "You aren't even my employee."

Chenchen was not happy to hear that. She spoke like a little adult and said, "I come up here every day to help you supervise their work. Without me, your studio would have closed down long ago."

Zhang Ye exclaimed, "Looks like I should thank you then."

"You're welcome." Chenchen then opened up a box of mooncakes and sat and chowed down.

Everyone laughed hard.

The items were quickly distributed.

After chatting and joking around for a bit, everyone sat down for a meeting.

Zhang Ye sat at the head of the table and said, "Everyone, please enjoy your time off during this two-day holiday break. After the Mid-Autumn Festival, it'll be time for us to get busy again. I'll give everyone a heads-up, so be ready. On top of that, I want to announce something. When we get back from the holidays, I plan to officially begin my assault for a spot in the S-list!"

Zhang Zuo said, "Of course we must."

Ha Qiqi gave an easy smile. "You're already at the top of the A-list, so the next target is definitely a spot in the national S-list. Even without you saying, we know what to do. All of us have always been working hard in that direction. A few years from now, we'll be doing everything with that target in mind."

"Right!"

"Our target is to reach the top!"

Everyone expressed their stance.

But Zhang Ye said, "No, you guys might've misunderstood what I meant."

Ha Qiqi was taken aback. "Eh?"

Wu Yi asked, "Then what did you mean?"

Zhang Ye said with a smile, "I'm not talking about getting there in a few years' time. I'm talking about doing it immediately, right now."

Everyone exclaimed, "What's the time frame of 'right now'?"

Zhang Ye answered, "Within the next few months."

Everyone vomited blood and started sweating!

Within the next few months?

Break into the S-list?

What the fuck! Are you dreaming?

How is it possible to get into the S-list in just a few months' time?

Ha Qiqi quickly said, "Director Zhang, you're still young and stand out more than anyone else. We're in no rush. You can slowly gain more experience and win more awards to add to your popularity score. All that cannot be done in just a month or two. If you're talking about doing so within a year or two, we might be able to fight for it and push our way up. But to get there within a few months? Even with the momentum of your current daily popularity growth, we still couldn't catch up, isn't that so?"

This was too hasty.

Everyone felt uneasy.

Zhang Ye said, "I know this isn't going to be easy—that's why we need to fight for it. I still have time to get there? I'm 26 and turning 27 this year. I may look like I'm still young and have plenty of time left, but don't forget that I still haven't exactly broken into the Asian scene yet. I don't even have the qualifications to take aim at the international scene. If I were to take a few years to slowly slog my way up to the top of domestic showbiz, how old would I be? I would be past 30! Furthermore, the scene is changing too quickly these days. You guys should have realized that there's a lot of 'fresh meat' out there who are getting more and more popular by the day. They're likely to gain more than half the entertainment industry's market share from here on out. Who can predict what will happen to the domestic entertainment industry in a few years? Who can say for certain? I've never depended on my looks to make a living anyway. If I just continue slogging ahead, then when the times and trends change, I might not even be able to get into the S-list after two or three years. Opportunities are not gained by slogging but by fighting."

Everyone fell silent.

Little Wang said, "But there's a Heavenly King who's on the downturn. If we wait another one or two years, it's highly possible..."

Zhang Ye shook his head and said, "I've never, ever had the mentality of getting lucky this way. That Heavenly King might not have a good product right now, but he might just suddenly become popular again around the world. Don't take those people in the S-list to be pushovers. If I were the type to wait for those at the top to slip up, I wouldn't have gotten to where I am now. That's how cruel show

business is. You've never experienced it before, so it's probably very difficult to understand. But I've always been on the front line witnessing these events, so I know. If I were to slightly lower my guard, I would probably get replaced by someone the very next day."

He gave an example. "Ning Lan is very popular, right? Back then, Sister Ning was also in first place in the A-list rankings, but what happened in the end? She was unable to squeeze into one of those seven spots. I've heard a few people in the industry saying that Sister Ning had been waiting for one of the Heavenly Queens to give up their spot. But after many years of waiting, that Heavenly Queen has yet to relinquish her seat to anyone."

Ha Qiqi took a deep breath. "Is this what you've decided?"

"Yes, that's how I've decided I want it to be." Zhang Ye nodded seriously. "In the next few months, I must definitely get into the S-list. It's not a joke; I am being totally serious here."

Everyone in the studio knew that if the media heard about this, it would definitely cause a huge uproar!

A total of seven people sat on the thrones of the Chinese S-list rankings, and they were the top seven celebrities of the entertainment industry. They were virtually unmovable, even by a lightning strike. Just think of it this way: Every time a change occurred in the S-list, it would cause a great shake-up and reshuffling of the entertainment industry. In this world, this could be considered the biggest event in the entirety of show business!

But today?

Zhang Ye was thinking of forcing his way to the very top?

He wanted to pull down one of those seven people standing atop the pyramid and replace them? And he wanted to do so within a short few months? How brave would he need to be to attempt that!

"Alright, let's do it!"

"We'll listen to whatever you say!"

"Whatever you say, we'll do!"

"Damn, I guess we can only fight!"

"I'll come up with a proposal and give it to you after the holidays!"

"How else can we have it? Since the boss has spoken, let's do it!"

Everyone echoed their compliance but were really quivering on the inside.

Is this doable?

Can they really do it?

Chapter 1202: Project Proposal: Reach the Summit!

The mid-autumn festivities weren't over yet.

It was the last day of the public holidays 1 for the Mid-Autumn Festival. At noon, Zhang Ye celebrated the festival at his maternal grandma's place. Right after they finished lunch, his three sisters started pestering him with questions.

His second sister stamped her feet. "Brother, are you going to tell us or not!"

His eldest younger sister blinked. "Just who is our sister-in-law?"

His third sister said, "Brother, we're gonna get angry if you don't tell us!"

Zhang Ye laughed heartily. "Another time, I'll tell you guys another time."

"Then write a song for us to make up for hurting our feelings," his second sister said.

Zhang Ye said annoyed, "Write what song?"

His third sister said, "A song to praise your little sisters."

His eldest young sister nodded. "Heehee, good idea."

So Zhang Ye ad-libbed, "Sister, you ride on the prow / Brother will pull you along... ai, this song doesn't sound right." He changed songs and sang again, "Sister, bravely march forward / Keep marching and don't look back... ai, this isn't right either." After he sung those two songs 2, he suddenly realized that these two songs had practically nothing to do with blood-related sisters.

Then, Zhang Ye's cell phone rang.

It was from the studio.

Little Wang said: "Boss, the project proposal has been completed!"

Zhang Ye said: "Aren't you all taking a break over the holidays?"

"You've only given us a few months to reach your target, so who would have the time to go on a break? Every one of us has been putting in overtime to get the proposal out. We're just waiting for you to look at it."

Zhang Ye laughed and said: "Alright, you've all put in a lot of good work. I'll be right over."

"OK, we'll be waiting for you." Little Wang hung up.

Zhang Ye turned around and said, "OK, I've got to go."

In the living room, his maternal grandma asked, "Where to? You're not staying for dinner?"

"I can't, Grandma. I still have some work waiting for me at the studio and will probably be very busy over the next few days. You and Grandpa have to pay attention to your health, alright? If there's anything, just give me a call. I'll be off now." Zhang Ye bade farewell to his grandparents and patted his little sisters on the head before hurrying downstairs.

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In the afternoon.

At Zhang Ye's Studio.

It was pretty packed as everyone had squeezed into the conference room.

Zhang Zuo took out a copy of the proposal. "Director Zhang, please have a look."

"Alright." Zhang Ye took it from him and browsed through it. "Who wrote this?"

Ha Qiqi smiled and said, "Basically of us discussed it before coming up with it together."

The proposal had a very ambitious title. As Zhang Ye had set his sights on the very top seven spots of the entertainment industry's pyramid, the proposal was titled: Reach the Summit. It was even emblazoned in English at the bottom. They kept it locked up in the safe before Zhang Ye's arrival, and everything done until now made it feel like they were handling the American government's Apollo project with all the secrecy surrounding it.

Zhang Ye skimmed through it and felt quite satisfied with the proposal. In the past, he had always been battling alone and would often do as he liked, or flip-flop on his decisions as he wished. He relied only on instinct for everything he did, including his work. But it was different now. With a team, his work productivity increased since there were more people helping him handle all kinds of issues and projects.

"Very good." Zhang Ye nodded.

Zhang Zuo said, "Then shall I briefly outline the proposal guidelines?"

Interested, Zhang Ye said, "Sure."

Zhang Zuo bluntly said, "Actually, we aren't very confident about completing our 'Reach the Summit' plan, because every step we highlighted is rather difficult to achieve. Rather than calling it a proposal, it might be better to say that these are milestones. But since we're trying to take one of the seven spots, the proposal was written in a more idealistic manner. What's more, all of the steps highlighted have to be achieved to realize the plan. If anything is missed, there won't be a chance of bringing the plan to fruition. This proposal was written with us bravely aiming for the unthinkable."

Zhang Ye gave a smile and said, "That's how it should be done. We shouldn't be afraid to fail, but we should be afraid of not daring to dream."

Zhang Zuo heaved a sigh of relief at Zhang Ye's acknowledgment. He was really afraid that Zhang Ye would reject the proposal as it was too "absurd" in nature. He said, "For the first step of the 'Reach the Summit' plan, we hope that you take home the most coveted domestic literary award that will be announced in the next few days, the Yanhong Literary Prize."

The Yanhong Literary Prize was named after a person.

It was one of the three most coveted awards in the literary world and the winners were chosen once every four years.

Zhang Zuo said, "As we all know, awards weigh heavily in the Celebrity Rankings Index. In the calculation of a celebrity's popularity score, awards contribute in large part. What's more, this is one of the most coveted awards in the literary world, so it means even more. The effects of receiving it would be very positive, so you must get it. Although another top prize called the Qilu Literature Prize will be awarded

very soon, that award is more skewed towards longer works like full-length novels and similar works. You don't have a chance of winning that one since you don't have any full-length novels, as Ghost Blows Out the Light isn't considered traditional literature. But it's different for the Yanhong Literary Prize, which is targeted more towards poetry and prose. You're definitely one of the hot favorites to win this award that will be given out to five people in total. Logically speaking, you have the best hopes of winning, because in the field of poetry, be it the quality or the number of works produced in the last four years, no one should be able to compete with you."

Ha Qiqi took out an invitation letter. "This was the fax our studio received this morning, sent over by the people from the Yanhong Literary Prize committee. They've included you in the list of nominees, which number 30 candidates in total. We've also compiled the list for you. The final results will be based on the votes given by the judges."

The most coveted literary award?

He really hadn't won an award like that before.

Zhang Ye said while looking through the list, "Alright."

Wu Yi said, "But there are a lot of variables."

Zhang Zuo agreed, "What we just talked about was based on the best possible outcome of our predictions and analysis. The greatest variable in this is your relationship with the literary world. You've never gotten along with them, nor have you been a member of the Writers' Association or any literary organizations. All this time, you've always been doing your own thing outside of the system, so I'm afraid that'll inherently affect your scores. After our final analysis, we came to the conclusion that your best chance of winning is 50/50. It's all going to be down to luck."

Of those in the top seven spots, their greatest difference with Zhang Ye was that they had a lot of distinctions. With so many distinctions, it meant they accumulated a lot of popularity. All of them had so many awards to their names that you could just pick one of them and they would easily have multiple honors, such as being the kings or queens of the silver screen or the equivalent. All of the highest honors were basically a dime a dozen to them. The reason why those seven people were so popular was that they had all the highest honors and awards, which added to their popularity. If Zhang Ye wanted to take one of their spots, he couldn't lose out on this aspect. He had already won the most coveted awards in hosting, mathematics, variety and documentary shows, but he had almost no achievements in the literary field that he was most famous for. In a way, this was really quite unacceptable.

He could only try to fight for it. This most coveted award in the literary field was incredibly valuable. Be it popularity, fame, or qualifications, it would undoubtedly be a huge help to Zhang Ye's quest in trying to reach the summit!

Zhang Ye said, "This is good. You guys only need to think of the plan, not how it's realized. No matter what the chances are, that's my business. You just need to be responsible for planning and leave the execution to me."

"How impressive, Director Zhang!"

"Understood!"

"I'll go and contact the media!"

"It's time to publicize this."

"I'll go and liaise with the judging panel!"

Everyone felt determined to complete the first step in the "Reach the Summit" plan!

Chapter 1203: 'I died for Beauty—but was scarce'!

The Yanhong Literary Prize winners were about to be revealed.

And soon, the winners of the Qilu Literature Prize would also be announced.

Being two of the most coveted awards in the literary world that were given out once every four years, a lot of people paid attention to it regardless of if they were from the literary or the entertainment circles. Many of them even predicted the results.

"Old Tao has high hopes of winning this time."

"He lost by a whisker for the last Yanhong Literary Prize."

"I hope Teacher Sheng can win the award. He turns 78 this year, and of the earliest batch of pioneers, he's the only one who hasn't won any of the most coveted awards in the literary field."

"Sun Fang is quite good too."

"Sun Fang is too young and has too few works to speak of."

"This year looks to be rather interesting."

"Why?"

"Haven't any of you seen the nomination list? Zhang Ye's one of the candidates for the award."

"Haha, Lord Zhang has finally made it into the list of candidates for the most coveted award in the literary field."

"Yeah, Zhang Ye debuted just after the previous Yanhong Literary Prize was given out. This is the first time that he's been included in the list of candidates for the most coveted award, but we'll have to see if the literary circle will want to award it to him or not."

"Right, there's so much suspense."

"If he can win this award, then Zhang Ye would be really awesome!"

"Yeah, he's already gotten the most important awards for hosting, mathematics, documentary and variety shows. If he added the literary field's most coveted award to his list of accolades as well, it would be damn impressive! But then again, this guy is already impressive! There are many people who have won high honors before. For example, Li Ke has won more than ten of the various Film Director and Best Picture awards in the country. But to be able to cross over into different industries and win the best

awards in each of them like Zhang Ye did, there really hasn't been anyone like this before. Every one of his high honors would be as valuable as five such awards that other people have won!"

"Based on his works, Zhang Ye deserves to win this year's Yanhong Literary Prize for sure. Who's been in the limelight as much as him over the past four years in the field of literature? Whether it's in the field of poetry or prose, Zhang Ye doesn't have any opponents at all. That 'When You Are Old' he posted on Weibo two days ago has been shared so many times by so many people. The only problem now is whether those people on the judging panel of the Yanhong Literary Prize would want to, or dare to, award it to him. After all, no matter how well-received Zhang Ye's works are to the general populace, the final results still have to depend on the votes of those people from the literary world. Furthermore, it's been proven countless times in the history of all the greatest literary awards—the uncertainty of winning such an award is huge."

"Zhang Ye to compete for Yanhong Literary Prize!"

"Can Zhang Ye add a top literary award to his list of accolades?"

"All attention on the results of the Yanhong Literary Prize!"

"The Writers' Association extends another invitation to Zhang Ye! Will Zhang Ye finally join?"

"Winners of Yanhong Literary Prize to be revealed tonight!"

A majority of the attention from the media was focused on Zhang Ye as he was the most well-known person in the list of nominees. Who else was there to watch?

On Weibo.

Zhang Ye's friends all sent their blessings.

Songstress Zhang Xia: "Wishing Little Zhang good luck."

Singer Li Xiaoxian: "In the literary field, I'm Teacher Zhang's diehard fan. This humble fan hereby wishes her idol a great victory and to take a step up to the summit of the literary world!"

...

There was heated discussion among the public.

Meanwhile, everyone at Zhang Ye's Studio was thrown into chaos because the Writers' Association had sent over an invitation yesterday for Zhang Ye to join them as a member. Afterwards, one of the main judges on the panel of the Yanhong Literary Prize called a press conference to answer about the invitation.

Ha Qiqi said anxiously, "Director Zhang!"

Zhang Ye was doing his makeup and did not answer her.

Zhang Zuo was standing behind, urging him, "Why don't you just join?"

"Yeah, we have nothing to lose by joining." Ha Qiqi checked her watch and said, "We still have to go to the award ceremony venue tonight, but there won't be time if we don't answer them!"

But Zhang Ye just said to the makeup artist, "Don't overdo it, just some light makeup will do."

Wu Yi was also trying to persuade him close by. "Have you forgotten about our plan to reach the summit? This award is of great importance to us and you really have to win it. Now that their side is asking you to join them, that means this is their condition for you. It's a good thing since it means they've decided to give in and agree to let you in to the Writers' Association. It also means that the literary world has officially given you their recognition, so that would mean the Yanhong Literary Prize is in the bag!"

Zhang Ye continued ignoring them.

Little Wang dragged Zhang Ye's agent, Rao Aimin, over.

"What is it?" Rao Aimin said impatiently, "I was just making dinner."

Little Wang said gloomily, "Big Sis Rao, Director Zhang's throwing a tantrum again. Nothing that any of us says is of use. Please help us change his mind. Otherwise, the most coveted award that should be his will be gone for sure."

Rao Aimin acknowledged her.

Zhang Ye looked over. "Old Rao, come with me to the awards ceremony tonight?"

Rao Aimin sneered at him. "I finally managed to grab a few days of peace and you're already giving me things to deal with?"

"Alright then, I'll go by myself." Zhang Ye shrugged.

Ha Qiqi looked at Rao Aimin.

Little Wang gave Rao Aimin's arm a strong nudge.

Suddenly, a call arrived. It was from a member of the Yanhong Literary Prize's judging panel. This was the umpteenth time they were calling to check if Zhang Ye had filled out his application to join the Writers' Association.

Little Wang didn't know what to say. "We..."

Rao Aimin took two steps and said in an unhurried tone, "Pass it to me."

Little Wang quickly handed the telephone to her.

Rao Aimin said to the employee on the line, "Are you crazy or what? How can you be so annoying by calling so often? The judging panel should just do their job and vote, what's with all this nonsensical crap that you're giving me....Who am I? I'm Zhang Ye's agent! Whatever it is you want, speak to me!"

She broke that person off with a few lines!

Everyone at the studio was dumbfounded listening!

"Sister Rao!"

"Aiyo!"

We were hoping you'd persuade Director Zhang, but you're not helping matters like this!

They finally understood why Rao Aimin, a person who was not from this field, had ended up being Zhang Ye's agent. Their tempers were far too alike. Each of them was more bad-tempered than the other!

Zhang Zuo gave a bitter smile and said, "Director Zhang, this is the Yanhong Literary Prize we're talking about!"

Little Wang stamped her feet anxiously. "Why are you being like this, Director Zhang?"

Zhang Ye smiled as he got up and looked at them. "Because it would look really ugly!"

Because it wasn't beautiful?

Because it would look really ugly?

What kind of reason was that!

In the entire room, perhaps only Zhang Ye and Rao Aimin would understand what it meant by "looking ugly." Zhang Ye really wanted to reach the summit and win this important award of the literary world, but he couldn't let it become something that would work against him.

...

On the same night.

At the Yanhong Literary Prize awards ceremony venue.

Reporters from all the different media outlets and the nominees for the award, as well as many authoritative figures from the industry, were present.

When Zhang Ye arrived, he immediately got surrounded by reporters.

It was Elder Qian who came over to help him escape. "Little Zhang, come, come, come, sit over here!"

Elder Qian was a person of distinction in the literary world. At the couplet competition a very long time ago, Elder Qian was the judge and guest. Zhang Ye had known him for several years, and he could be considered one of the few friends Zhang Ye had in the literary world. At that time, Elder Qian had also invited Zhang Ye to join the Writers' Association, but was tactfully rejected by Zhang Ye's "Facing the Sea as Spring Blossoms."

Zhang Ye smiled and said, "How are you doing, Elder Qian?"

"What do you think?" Elder Qian guffawed.

Zhang Ye said, "What do I think? It looks to me you wouldn't have a problem running the 10,000-meter race."

Elder Qian grunted, "You must be trying to kill me!"

Zhang Ye: "Haha! Oh right, are you part of the judging panel for the Yanhong Literary Prize?"

Elder Qian shook his head. "No, but I am the main judge for the Qilu Literature Prize, which will be given out sometime later. I was invited as a guest this time. Quick, take a seat."

Soon after, the awards ceremony began!

The winners' list was revealed!

A leader of the literary world announced, "I'll be announcing the final voting results of the 7th Yanhong Literary Prize awards. The five winners are respectively: Tao Chihao!"

Applause sounded from the audience!

Everyone in the writers' zone looked over at Teacher Tao.

"Sheng Nian!"

Applause rang again!

"Xue Li!"

Xue Li's jaw dropped in excitement and looked to be in disbelief!

"Qiao Huayi!"

Old Qiao smacked his thigh and laughed happily.

The final winner was about to be announced!

There was only one spot left!

The leader deliberately paused for a moment before saying loudly, "Chen Bang!"

The five award winners were revealed and made their way up on stage to collect their prizes!

However, the media and many of the writers were looking at one another in speechlessness. Some of them even drew in a deep breath!

Zhang Ye's name was not called!

The Yanhong Literary Prize really was not awarded to Zhang Ye!

But Zhang Ye just looked very calm and did not show any change in expression.

Elder Qian looked at him very startled. "Little Zhang, you didn't join the Writers' Association?"

Zhang Ye smiled and said, "No, I didn't."

Elder Qian facepalmed. "Aiyo, you sure are great. I thought that you had joined since I heard they sent the application form to you. All you had to do was to sign it!"

Zhang Ye said, "I didn't sign it."

"This is the once-every-four-years Yanhong Literary Prize." Elder Qian said, "Are you going to throw it away just like that?"

But Zhang Ye corrected, "Elder Qian, it's not that I don't want this award, nor did I throw it away. If that were the case, why would I be sitting here today? This is the greatest respect I can show to the Yanhong Literary Prize. Whether or not I get it, I've turned up and even dressed up to attend the ceremony." He

pointed at what he was wearing, then laughed and said, "I've already given it my best and done what I had to do, but the prize did not choose me."

Elder Qian fell silent.

The young writers around him also fell silent.

Yes. Zhang Ye had done all he could. What was the role of a writer?

It was creation!

It was writing!

It was picking up one's pen!

Zhang Ye had done all that, so what else were they expecting of him?

The awards ceremony came to an end!

Before Zhang Ye could even leave his seat, he was mobbed by a swarm of reporters!

"Teacher Zhang, what do you have to say about not winning this award?"

"I heard it was because you offended the judging panel of the Yanhong Literary Prize, so does that mean that there won't be a place for you in the future issuings of this award? That you will be excluded from here on out?"

"Did you join the Writers' Association?"

"We received news that if you had agreed to join the Writers' Association and become a member, you would definitely have been awarded a Yanhong Literary Prize today!"

"Why didn't you agree to join the Writers' Association?"

"Teacher Zhang, will you be back to fight for the Yanhong Literary Prize in another four years?"

Zhang Ye did not accept their interview and walked off silently.

Online, the news had spread as well.

"What?"

"They're really not giving it to Zhang Ye?"

"Holy shit! The Yanhong Literary Prize is getting more and more pointless!"

"I've never even heard of three of the five winners before!"

"The value of this year's Yanhong Literary Prize is really too low!"

"Zhang Ye is not in the list of winners? Are you kidding me?"

"Zhang Ye's poems are not even good enough to win the award? Oh my God, just how high is the entry barrier of the Yanhong Literary Prize? Don't scare me like that!"

"Is there even a need to explain? They wanted Zhang Ye to join them, but Zhang Ye totally ignored them!"

"It's over. Even if Zhang Ye wants to have a go at the top award of the literary world, he has to wait another four years."

"Would the Yanhong Literary Prize's judging panel give it to him even if he waits another four years?"

"This is not cool at all!"

"Actually, Zhang Ye would've been capable of winning if he had just bowed down and joined the Writers' Association. They set the conditions for him, but it was just that he chose not to follow their wishes! Look at it now, it's all over for him!"

Countless citizens questioned this outcome!

Some experts and scholars raised their doubts to the Yanhong Literary Prize committee. There were even some people who slammed the decision and thought that this year's Yanhong Literary Prize had greatly damaged the reputation of one of the top awards in the literary world!

There were scoldings!

There were criticisms!

The Yanhong Literary Prize's judging panel was thrust to the forefront!

Later, when the committee officials realized the severity of the situation, they immediately issued a response to explain why Zhang Ye was not qualified enough to win the award. They came up with reasons like how he was too young, how he had not joined any literary organizations before, how some of his works were too radical in thought, were too aggressive and harsh in nature, etc, etc. In short, all they were saying was that with Zhang Ye's qualifications, he was not yet deserving to be awarded this year's Yanhong Literary Prize and that their judging panel was not biased against him.

Then, right at this moment.

Zhang Ye posted a poem on his Weibo.

" I died for Beauty—but was scarce 1 "

I died for Beauty—but was scarce

Adjusted in the Tomb

When One who died for Truth, was lain

In an adjoining Room—

He questioned softly "Why I failed"?

"For Beauty", I replied—

"And I—for Truth—Themselves are One—

We Brethren, are", He said—

And so, as Kinsmen, met a Night—

We talked between the Rooms—

Until the Moss had reached our lips—

And covered up—Our names—

When this poem emerged, it shocked the entire literary world. The voices of controversy became even more intense!

When a few writers and poets who had been awarded previous Yanhong Literary Prizes saw this poem, they were rocked by a sadness stemming from the bottom of their hearts!

For beauty?

You died for beauty?

All of them understood what Zhang Ye was trying to convey. They knew that if Zhang Ye had agreed to join the Writers' Association, his name would surely be on the Yanhong Literary Prize!

But he didn't do so!

Because that would look really ugly?

For such a poem, for such a person, was he really unqualified to win one of the most coveted awards of the literary world? What was this top award set up for in the first place? What was its selection criteria? Was it meant to be a selection of works? Or was it meant to be a selection of people? Or perhaps, all of it was simply the product of the judges' personal preferences?

On Weibo.

The reaction of the people was completely one-sided.

"Zhang Ye is so cool!"

"What a good 'I died for Beauty,' it's making my blood boil!"

"Just based on this poem alone, which of the five winners of this year's Yanhong Literary Prize can compare to Zhang Ye? Huh? Tell me, which of them can compare?"

"It's just an important award of the literary world, isn't it? It's not like the Yanhong Literary Prize is the only one out there!"

"Yeah, the Qilu Literature Prize that will be given out a few days later is the true highest honor of the literary world! It's much more valuable than the Yanhong Literary Prize for sure! Teacher Zhang, win that for us!"

"Fuck, the Qilu Literature Prize is only meant for full-length novels."

"I don't care, I'll give my support to Zhang Ye in any case! No two ways about it!"

"Teacher Zhang, we're cheering you on. Even if you didn't win this time, there are still chances in the future. There will surely be a place for you among the winners of the highest honors of the literary world! Just keep pursuing the beauty that you believe in! That's what we like about you!"

"Beauty—more important than anything else!"

"Furious approval of Zhang Ye!"

"The Yanhong Literary Prize's judging panel must be blind!"

Chapter 1204: Zhang Ye's new novel!

The next day.

The uproar over the Yanhong Literary Prize had died down. This was how cruel it was at the level of the highest awards. Even if anyone had doubt, even if everyone was protesting for Zhang Ye, the award that was held once every four years was already given. No one could change the results. Those five names would be entered into the annals of the Yanhong Literary Prize, into the annals of the literary world, while Zhang Ye missed his only opportunity to do so. After several years, the majority in the literary field were still not acknowledging Zhang Ye, whom they viewed as someone who had come from an unconventional background.

Everyone thought the issue had blown over.

Everyone thought Zhang Ye had been felled by the thing called "beauty."

In the morning.

At the studio.

Several colleagues arrived at work in a listless mood.

"You're here?"

"Yeah, morning."

"Hai, have you seen Director Zhang's poem?"

"I've read it already. This industry is just cruel like that."

"After reading that poem, I feel that Director Zhang's decision was right. It's getting really ugly in the entertainment industry these days. There's so much compromise, betrayal, and out-of-control hype, so there's nothing wrong with doing things a little more beautifully!"

"But he threw away the most coveted award because of that."

"The plans to reach the summit have gone up in smoke!"

"Ai, we couldn't even complete the first step of the plan, so it'll only get harder from here."

"I don't think there's any hope of reaching the summit this year. Our Director Zhang has offended too many people and industries. The further he climbs, the more pressure there will be on him. He's paying

off his past debts. There are probably a lot of people who are waiting for Director Zhang to fall, and many of them should be applauding as well. He wants to reach the summit? If Director Zhang drops his guard even for a second, just watch, countless people are sure to rush up to try to take a chunk out of him!"

Everyone was chatting among themselves.

Ha Qiqi had just bought breakfast and stepped into the office.

Then, footfalls came from upstairs. "Let them try. To be honest, I've never lost the many conflicts that I've had in all these years. I would really like to see who can take a chunk out of me."

It was Zhang Ye!

Zhang Zuo said, "Ah?"

Little Wang said in surprise, "Why are you here so early?"

"What do you mean by early?" Zhang Ye laughed and said, "I haven't left since I got back here yesterday. Quick, did anyone buy breakfast?"

Ha Qiqi unwittingly answered, "I did."

Zhang Ye jogged over to her and plopped down. He grabbed some soup dumplings and stuffed them into his mouth. After he ate a few of them, he even pretended to be polite and said to Ha Qiqi, "Have some too, Sister Ha."

Ha Qiqi was speechless.

What do you want me to eat!

You didn't even leave any for me!

Wu Yi asked curiously, "You didn't sleep the entire night?"

Zhang Ye inserted a straw into a cup and slurped on soy milk. "Yeah."

Seeing Zhang Ye in such a good mood, Zhang Zuo was feeling very curious. Based on Director Zhang's temper, he would've flown into a rage at a time like this. Why was he still acting so calmly? He probed, "Director Zhang, has our previous plan to reach the summit been canceled? Will the plan still be carried—"

Zhang Ye asked in surprise, "Why would it be canceled?"

Zhang Zuo smiled bitterly. "But we couldn't even achieve the first milestone."

After he finished drinking the soy milk, Zhang Ye smiled and said, "I've said before, you guys only need to think of the plan. As for how it will be realized, that isn't for you to worry about. That's my business."

As they spoke, it gradually turned into a meeting, so everyone sat down.

Ha Qiqi said, "Our first step of the plan was for you to win one of the most coveted awards in the domestic literary world so that you could polish up your credentials to help push your popularity higher. With the newly gained popularity from winning the award, the second step would be to publish another

novel like Ghost Blows Out the Light. We would then try our best to make it a bestseller. You haven't written a novel in a long time, so that should help you increase your popularity within the literary field and bring it to new heights. In that way, we could've taken another big step towards the realization of our plan to reach the summit. But now that you didn't manage to win one of the most important awards in the domestic literary world, the next step would be—"

But Zhang Ye pointed upstairs and said, "I've already started on a new novel."

Zhang Zuo exclaimed, "You've already begun writing it?"

"Yeah, what else did you guys think I was doing all night?" Zhang Ye suddenly remembered something. "Oh right, hurry up and contact the publishing firm. We can already get the process started."

Ha Qiqi asked, "When will you finish writing it?"

Zhang Ye looked at the calendar and said, "I'll try to finish it in two days."

Two days?

Was he writing a short story?

"OK."

"Understood."

"I will go and liaise with the publishing firm!"

Nobody asked further.

Zhang Ye did not say anything else either. After he finished eating, he ran upstairs. Everyone heard his office door shut. Until evening, no one saw Zhang Ye take a step out from his office.

The next day.

It was past 5 PM.

The office door opened and Zhang Ye came downstairs sporting an unkempt look.

Everyone stood.

"Aiyo!"

"Director Zhang, you finally came out!"

"Quick, come and eat dinner. I've already bought something for you!"

"You nearly scared us to death! You didn't even open the door when we knocked."

But Zhang Ye laughed and said spiritedly, "Little Wang, print the draft out."

He had finished writing it within two days, but there was a heavy price to pay. Zhang Ye had barely gotten any sleep these past two days, as he spent close to 20 hours a day typing in front of the computer. He had always been like that and was someone who would work himself to death. Everyone knew his character.

Little Wang ran upstairs to print the draft.

20 pages.

50 pages.

100 pages.

The draft was printed out page by page.

Everyone in the studio was getting more and more dumbfounded as they watched.

Ha Qiqi said in a startled manner, "Why are there so many pages?"

Zhang Zuo quickly flipped through the printed pages to have a look. "Th-This many words?"

"There are around 200,000 words or so. I'm not sure since I didn't count," Zhang Ye said offhandedly.

200,000 words!

Everyone was shocked!

It didn't even take two days, but you've already written 200,000 words? Damn, there were fast writers around, but wasn't that still way too fast! Was a grave robbing novel that easy to write?

When everyone gathered around to read the draft, they were stunned again!

"What?"

"This, this isn't a grave robbing novel!"

"Director Zhang, what happened?"

"Is this a romance novel?"

"Or is it about marriage?"

"This doesn't fit with what we discussed, Director Zhang!"

Everyone in the studio looked at each other and felt that this was too risky. You can't be writing a novel about marriage just because you're getting married, right? This kind of novel does not have much of a market and is not easy to sell! Having written Ghost Blows Out the Light, the people had expectations of his new novel. As long as they gave it a similar title such as Ghost Blows Out the Light 2, the book sales wouldn't do too badly. So they couldn't comprehend why Zhang Ye would touch on the topic of marriage for his new novel!

Zhang Ye smiled and said, "This is it. Contact the publishing firm and get the book out there as soon as possible."

He said that with a lot of certainty, so they had to do as they were told.

After gobbling up his dinner, Zhang Ye was so happy that he even had some Erguotou to drink. Afterwards, he walked into the empty conference room and took out his cell phone to make a call.

It was a call to Elder Qian.

Du du. The call went through.

"Elder Qian, have you had dinner yet?"

"Oh, it's Little Zhang? I just finished eating, why? Is there something that you're looking for me for?"

"You mentioned that you were on the judging panel for the Qilu Literature Prize?"

"Yeah, what's the matter?"

"How does one qualify for the Qilu Literature Prize?"

"Why are you asking? The nomination for the Qilu Literature Prize depends on the literature in question. We go through the better literature that's published within the last four years, and every member of the judging panel is tasked with nominating one or two novels to the shortlist. These books will then be placed into the final selection pool and be voted on so that five winners will be chosen to receive the final award."

"Oh, then why don't you help me nominate a novel?"

"Whose novel is it?"

"Mine."

Elder Qian laughed aloud after being taken aback for a moment. "Your novels won't do. Be it that Ghost Blows Out the Light or Legend of Wukong, none of those books fulfill the requirements to get nominated, nor are they considered literature in the traditional sense of the word. The Qilu Literature Prize emphasizes more on literary merit, so I'm afraid I can't give you a pass on that."

Zhang Ye said in amusement: "Don't worry, it's my new novel I'm talking about."

Only then did Elder Qian take him seriously again. "Do you intend to compete for the Qilu Literature Prize?"

"Yes," Zhang Ye said.

"Are you serious?"

"Does it sound like I'm joking?"

Elder Qian did not quite understand. "But why?"

Zhang Ye answered with a laugh: "For beauty."

Why did he fail?

For beauty!

And why did he stand again?

Still for beauty!

Elder Qian stayed silent for a few seconds before saying: "What's the title of the novel?"

Zhang Ye placidly answered: "Fortress Besieged 1 ."

Chapter 1205: The Qilu Literature Prize Judging Panel

On this day.

The nominee list for one of the most coveted literary awards, the Qilu Literature Prize, was released!

The list was packed with several dozen names and novels!

Spring Returns, Han Dong

Love by the Lake, Liu Tianqi

River Maple, Li Duan

Fortress Besieged, Zhang Ye

And so on.

This was the grandest affair in the literary field. After the warm-up that was the Yanhong Literary Prize, the Qilu Literature Prize selection attracted even more attention.

The Yanhong Literary Prize, Qilu Literature Prize, and another literary award made up three of the most coveted awards in the literary field. Although they were supposed to be equal in standing, some basic differences in value and influence still existed between the three awards. It was headed by the Qilu Literature Prize since full-length novels were the most influential to the mainstream. So the Qilu Literature Prize was considered the most prestigious of the three highest awards in literature and also the most difficult title to achieve in the literary field.

Just like the Mao Dun Literature Prize, Lu Xun Literary Prize, Lao She Literary Award, and other literary awards 1 of Zhang Ye's previous world, it was clear that the Mao Dun Literature Prize was the most prestigious of all.

The Qilu Literature Prize was basically the equivalent to the Mao Dun Literature Prize back in Zhang Ye's previous world!

Online.

"It's finally here!"

"The Qilu Literature Prize, what a heavyweight!"

"I wonder who the winners will be this time!"

"Master Liu Tianqi should be able to win, right? The committee owes him one from the previous time!"

"That's difficult to say. Just look at the Yanhong Literary Prize awards. Everyone felt that Zhang Ye had a very good chance of winning, but how did that turn out? He didn't get anything at all, so it's really too difficult to make any predictions."

"Don't bring up the Yanhong Literary Prize anymore, ptui!"

"Haha, the officials on the Yanhong Literary Prize committee have been badly scolded the past few days."

"Yeah, even for someone like me who's not a fan of Zhang Ye feels that he has been wronged this time. When Zhang Ye got into fights, I criticized him. When he created trouble, I couldn't bear to look. But when he deserves the honor, I have to give it to him. We have to be reasonable here. His poetry and essays are truly deserving of the Yanhong Literary Prize!"

"Previous poster's view is very fair. I am not Zhang Ye's fan either. I feel that the seven Heavenly Kings and Queens all know how to behave better than Zhang Ye, but his results and contribution to the literary world cannot be denied."

"Eh, have a look at this, quickly!"

"A look at what?"

"Huh, why is Zhang Ye's name on the nominee list?"

"Ah? Damn, it's really there!"

"Zhang Ye? Fortress Besieged?"

"What is this? What book is this Fortress Besieged?"

"Zhang Ye hasn't written that book."

"You silly people, there are so many authors out there who are named Zhang Ye. I personally know of two literary figures named Zhang Ye."

"Hai, so that's how it is. I was surprised for a moment there."

"He really does have a common name."

"Haha, that's what I thought too! Would Zhang Ye know how to write literary fiction 2 !"

"I love Ghost Blows Out the Light the most!"

Everyone joked around some and did not take the appearance of this name too seriously after that.

Even the media reporters and industry insiders did not think too much about it. Zhang Ye's previous books were all famous, and everyone had really not heard of him writing a book titled Fortress Besieged.

The reporters were all busy working on their drafts, with some of chasing after interviews with several key authors, while others were writing reports to help the general public understand more about the literary awards.

Such as the following: The literary field's awards are unlike those given out in the film and television industry. In the film and television industry, there are all sorts of different top award ceremonies held in China, in Hong Kong, and also globally. It's possible for one person to win a lot of them, like Zhang Yuanqi, or even Ning Lan, who had won the highest honors in the film and television industry more than once. It's even possible to win the same awards repeatedly. Perhaps they would take the crown of Best Actress this year, and then win it again during the next year. Even though it rarely happens, it's still a

possibility. However, it's different for the highest honors of the literary field. Here, although there are no hard and fast rules outlining it, there are some practices and traditions that have gained the consensus of the Chinese literary field. For one, an author could only win one of the highest domestic honors in their entire lifetime!

Take for example.

Once a certain person won the Yanhong Literary Prize, the future Yanhong Literary Prize committees would never let them be nominated again. No matter how good that person's future works are or how well they do, it wouldn't matter. This is due to the fact that they've won it before. Furthermore, once either one of the three highest honors were won, they would lose their qualification to receive any of the other two highest honors.

If they'd won the Yanhong Literary Prize before, they wouldn't have a chance of winning the Qilu Literature Prize.

If they won the Qilu Literature Prize, there wouldn't be a need to win the other awards anyway.

This was generally how it was.

The public was getting rowdy.

Especially in the literary field. It was as though they were in the opening of the Olympics. Many of the literary figures were currently very active, appearing on all the different major television stations and enjoying the attention that this grand literary affair was shining on them.

...

Meanwhile.

The members of the Qilu Literature Prize judging panel were almost coming to blows with each other!

Someone banged on the table and shouted, "I don't agree with this!"

Someone said with a darkened expression, "Why was Zhang Ye placed in the shortlist?"

Elder Qian explained, "I was the one who nominated him."

That person said, "Elder Qian, no one has read this book before, and it hasn't even been published yet, so how could you nominate it? This hasn't been done in accordance with the rules at all!"

Elder Meng, who had quite a good relationship with Elder Qian, banged the table and said, "Quiet down, all of you. This is a small room, you guys don't have to raise your voices for us to hear you. Let me say this, Elder Qian has not done anything wrong at all. The novel Zhang Ye wrote has already been allocated an ISBN number from the publisher, and all the formalities surrounding it have also been completed. Although it hasn't officially been put up for sale yet, the award's rules only state that all nominated works shall have an assigned ISBN number. There isn't any stipulation that the book has to have tens of thousands of copies published before it can be shortlisted for the award."

A female member of the panel said, "But no one has read this book before."

Elder Qian smiled and said, "I did."

Elder Meng sighed, "I did as well."

A middle-aged member of the panel asked curiously, "How was it?"

Elder Meng smiled wryly and said, "I don't know how to put it, but if you really want me to use a word to describe it, I can only say it was 'shocking.' You all can read it for yourselves to find out."

Shocking?

Elder Meng used the word "shocking" to describe it?

Just how high was that praise?

Zhang Ye? He could even write literary fiction?

Why does it not sound believable at all!

Someone mentioned, "But he's such a controversial person. Just look at what happened at the Yanhong Literary Prize award ceremony. They were criticized so miserably, so we better not get ourselves into such a mess as well."

Elder Qian looked at the several of them. "Is the Qilu Literature Prize given out for the person or for the book?"

One of them answered, "The book."

Elder Qian said, "I don't care what Zhang Ye's character is like. I'm not bothered about what kind of personality he has either. It also does not matter to me whether or not he's part of the Writers' Association. All I know is that in the current field of literature, there aren't any books that can compare with Fortress Besieged! No one else can write something as good as it!"

This was no longer a matter of high praise. This was the utmost affirmation that one could give a person or a book!

No one else can write something as good as it?

No other books can compare?

How is that possible!

After the meeting was over, everyone went their separate ways.

"Where's the book?"

"In the library."

"OK, I'll go and read it."

"Me too. I've already read all the other books that were nominated to the shortlist, so there isn't a need to go through those again. It's only this Fortress Besieged that I've never heard before."

"Let's head over together then."

"I'd like to see just what kind of a novel someone like Zhang Ye who used to write grave robbing and children's stories in the past can come up with."

...

The next day.

It was another scheduled meeting for the Qilu Literature Prize judging panel.

The meeting was presided by Elder Meng, who was carrying out the selection progress meeting.

Elder Meng said, "In another two days, we'll be announcing the winners of the award. Let's discuss them. By the way, has everyone read the nominated titles?"

There was silence across the board.

Elder Meng asked, "What's the matter? No one has anything to say?"

A female member of the panel said, "Was Fortress Besieged really written by Zhang Ye?"

Elder Meng laughed and said, "It wasn't written by me, that's for sure."

Elder Qian looked at her. "Little Yan, what's your evaluation of it?"

The woman took a deep breath and thought about it for a long time before finally saying, "For someone who can write a book like that, I don't think there's even a need for them to compete for any sort of award in the country! No author in China can write that kind of book. If I were to vote, I would surely vote for it. Not for Zhang Ye, but for the book!"

Another member of the panel said with a wry grin, "I haven't come across a book like that in many years. Reading it gave me an indescribable feeling. It's not even possible to call it 'shocking.' All I want to do right now is run home so that I can read and analyze Fortress Besieged a few more times. The knowledge and language in this book is simply profound!"

Someone said, "How is it possible that Zhang Ye wrote a book like that! For someone who used to write grave robbing novels and fairy tales, this is too great of a leap!"

All of them had given Fortress Besieged a read!

The first feeling that came to them upon finishing it was disbelief!

How were they going to vote?

Was there even a need to vote?

Elder Qian spoke, "When I first met Little Zhang for the first time, I said that if there was anyone from our country who could win one of the top international literary awards in the next 5 to 15 years, it would be Zhang Ye. From the looks of it, my prediction is slowly coming true."

"But the Qilu Literature Prize..."

"How can we possibly award it to him?"

"Zhang Ye is too controversial a person!"

"He's someone who operates totally outside of our domestic literary arena."

Elder Qian said, "You're all members of the judging panel and have the freedom to vote as you wish for whomever you think deserves to win the Qilu Literature Prize. No one can stop you."

"Hai."

"This is really tricky!"

Many of the judges on the judging panel got headaches due to this problem!

Zhang Ye had given them a colossally difficult decision to make!

Chapter 1206: The release of Fortress Besieged!

In the morning.

At the studio.

After catching up on two days of no sleep, Zhang Ye returned to work.

"Good morning, Director Zhang."

"Director Zhang, you're here?"

"Have you had enough rest?"

"Don't pull that many all-nighters in the future."

"Yeah, you scared us to death."

Everyone said a few words of concern to him.

Zhang Ye laughed and said, "The kind of life I lead is tiresome. I can be as free as I want when I have downtime, but when I get busy, I'm especially busy. I'm used to this. Oh right, is there anything going on these next few days?"

Ha Qiqi smiled and said, "Nothing important, but tomorrow will be the launch of your novel."

Zhang Ye said, "Oh? They've finished printing it already?"

Ha Qiqi said, "The publishing firm put in overtime and finally managed to meet 200,000 copies for the first print run. We did not have much time to carry out any heavy promotions for the novel as it was too rushed. Otherwise, if we had had a month to prepare, the marketing would surely have been very effective. Since we couldn't promote it properly, we aren't really sure how the sales will do."

Zhang Ye said calmly, "It's fine. Just sell however much we can."

Ha Qiqi nodded. "Starting from now, we'll be following up with the promotional work for the novel. The money has already been paid, so we'll start seeing the ad campaigns today."

"Alright, great job," Zhang Ye said.

Zhang Zuo suddenly said, "Eh, are they going to announce the winners for the Qilu Literature Prize tomorrow as well?"

Little Wang was giggling as she looked at a monitor. Then she got stunned. "Eh? This nominee list!"

The nearby people instinctively looked over.

"What's the matter?"

"There's a Zhang Ye on the nominee list?"

"Haha, it must be someone with the same name."

"Let me have a look. Heh, you're right!"

"How coincidental, there's really an author with the same name as Director Zhang."

"Eh, the nominated novel is titled Fortress Besieged?"

"Whoa, what a coincidence! It even has the same title as Director Zhang's new novel?"

Having said that, everyone in the studio froze!

What?

The author's name was Zhang Ye?

And the novel's title was also titled Fortress Besieged?

What the hell! Coincidence, your sister!

Isn't this Director Zhang himself?!

Wu Yi was dumbfounded. "Director Zhang, did you get nominated for the Qilu Literature Prize?"

Little Wang's eyes nearly popped out of their sockets. "Surely not, right? What's with this?"

"Ah?" Zhang Ye said in surprise, "Didn't I tell you guys?"

Zhang Zuo exclaimed, "When did you tell us? No one knows about this!"

Zhang Ye sighed. "I must've been too tired. I've been sleeping so much the past two days that I forgot all about it. Yes, Fortress Besieged was nominated."

Ha Qiqi said in disbelief, "How could it be that your marriage-themed novel was nominated for the Qilu Literature Prize? Doesn't that award only shortlist literary fiction?"

Little Wang said, "Yeah, what's with this?"

Zhang Ye said in amusement, "Haven't you guys read the novel?"

Everyone shook their heads. They had been too busy liaising with the publishing firm, readying the promotional materials, and handling other matters, so who would have the time to flip through the novel page by page and read it carefully?

Zhang Ye smiled and said, "Didn't I say it before? We'll continue with the plan to reach the summit. If we can't complete the first step of our plan, then we'll combine it with the second step. It's probably a good thing that I didn't manage to win the Yanhong Literary Prize. If I did, I couldn't have been nominated for the Qilu Literature Prize. Comparing the prestige of these two awards, the Qilu Literature Prize is actually the more coveted of the domestic literary awards." With that, he spread his hands. "But of course, I don't know if I can win this time either."

The studio staff got very excited!

They thought he had missed out on getting a high honor of the Chinese literary field, but who could have expected that Zhang Ye's new novel would actually get nominated for the famous Qilu Literature Prize as well? This was excellent, great news for them! The only thing that made everyone feel a little doubtful was that Director Zhang had taken less than two fucking days to finish writing this novel that contained 200,000 words of pure bull...pure literature, so would he really be able to win the highest honor in the literary field?

Could he really do it?

Why did it feel like it was hopeless no matter how they looked at it!

Surely the Qilu Literature Prize wasn't that "cheap," right?

However—

Qian Zhongshu!

Fortress Besieged!

They couldn't possibly know what these four words stood for back in Zhang Ye's previous world!

...

Later that morning.

The promotions began.

On an ad page in the Beijing Times, the cover of Fortress Besieged, along with Zhang Ye's photo and a written introduction by him, were printed.

Fortress Besieged.

Marriage is like a fortress besieged.

Those who are outside want to get in.

And those who are inside want to get out.

—Zhang Ye's first novel, themed around marriage, will meet everyone on the bookshelves tomorrow!

On the other newspapers and some discussion forums, advertisement spots had also been purchased for the novel!

The official Weibo of Zhang Ye's Studio also posted an announcement.

Following, Zhang Ye's personal Weibo shared the announcement post and added simply: "My new novel will go on sale tomorrow at all major bookstores. Everyone, please join in and support me."

This news had come too abruptly!

It was so sudden that it left everyone in the industry, as well as the public, unable to react to it!

It was so sudden that many of the media reporters felt like they had a rude awakening!

"A new novel?"

"Why wasn't there any news about this beforehand?"

"Zhang Ye wrote another novel?"

"Eh, Fortress Besieged?"

"Why does it sound so familiar?"

"Yeah, it sounds familiar to me too. I seem to have seen it somewhere."

"Fuck! Look at the Qilu Literature Prize's nominee list!"

"Ah, yes. It's the Qilu Literature Prize, I remember it now!"

"Zhang Ye! Fortress Besieged!"

"Your grandpa! So it wasn't actually someone with the same name? Fuck!"

"Oh my God! Zhang Ye has been nominated for the Qilu Literature Prize!"

"The novel was nominated even before its release? Just what kind of novel is it!"

"Zhang Ye is getting married soon; is that why he's chosen to touch on the topic of marriage with a literary novel? But it's been proven in recent years that this sort of novel doesn't sell well. What's more, this is even literary fiction?"

"Zhang Ye will be competing for the Qilu Literature Prize?"

"That can't be, right? He's never written literary fiction before. In the past, he's only dabbled in genre fiction 1 . This is Zhang Ye's first time writing a full-length novel, so how could he possibly win an award for it? And we're talking about the Qilu Literature Prize here. Do you think the award is like the cabbages in the market? Anyone can get one if they want one? Aiyo, let me process this for a moment! This is mind-blowing!"

The power of the people was limitless.

Having missed out on the Yanhong Literary Prize, Zhang Ye was in the news. When his nomination for the Qilu Literature Prize was revealed, it spread through the Internet like wildfire!

"Come and see this, quickly! Zhang Ye will be releasing a new novel!"

"Is Face-smacking Zhang making a comeback?"

"I must buy a copy of it tomorrow and see how it is!"

"I don't like literary novels, they're too contrived! I can't understand them!"

"I don't like them either, but we're talking about Zhang Ye's novel. Even if I won't read it, I must still buy two copies and leave them at home. Can't help it, I'm a braindead fan of his, after all!"

"Hahaha, me too!"

"Supporting Teacher Zhang!"

"Supporting Face-smacking Zhang in his fight for the Qilu Literature Prize!"

"I'll reserve my judgment on how the novel is. I hope he didn't forcefully put something together just so he could release a book."

"I would buy the novel even if he wrote rubbish. I just want to see how Zhang Ye will write a marriage-themed novel. There might even be a description of Zhang Ye's wife that could help us guess her identity!"

"Zhang Ye is too crafty! He knew that people are paying attention to his marriage, so he came up with a marriage-themed novel. He's obviously just trying to make a quick buck!"

"Haha, then will you buy it or not?"

"Of course I...will buy it while holding back tears!"

"We'll find out tomorrow if his novel is any good! The release of Fortress Besieged tomorrow will also be the day that the results of the Qilu Literature Prize are announced. It's all going to happen on the same day!"

Even before its release!

Fortress Besieged was trending!

Chapter 1207: Fortress Besieged sells like crazy!

The next day.

On the day of the book's launch.

In the morning, a huge crowd had gathered at the Xidan Bookstore entrance. Over 200 people joined the long line and blocked off the main entrance of the building entirely.

"Don't push, don't push."

"Please line up and don't cut in line."

"They're about to open."

"Why are they taking so long? I've been here since 6 AM."

"Bro, I was here earlier than you. I heard that there were some others who came here even earlier than me."

"Ah? What time were they here since?"

"There was someone who arrived at 4:30 AM."

"Man, surely they couldn't have gone to such an extreme, right?"

"Why not? Who knows if we can even get hold of a copy of the book."

Everyone was chatting as they stood in line.

A passerby on his way to work was baffled at the sight. That person did not know what was going on, so he stopped in his tracks and had a look. "What are you guys lining up for? Did Hardshell Technologies release a new cell phone? Why didn't I hear about it? In any case, this isn't where the exclusive retail store is. It's over there. Why are you guys lining up at the entrance of the Bookstore?"

Someone in the line said, "We're lining up to buy a book."

That person said in surprise, "What book are you buying?"

A female student said, "Zhang Ye's Fortress Besieged!"

The passerby said in a startled voice, "What? Face-smacking Zhang has released a new novel?"

The girl nodded and said, "That's right. There're some rumors that this marriage-themed novel will contain some critical information about the identity of Zhang Ye's fiancée!"

"Damn, it's that interesting?" That passerby had a look of excitement in his eyes as he immediately ran to the back of the line and joined it silently.

It was finally the start of business hours.

When the main doors were unlocked and the passageway into the Bookstore was opened up, the staff were stunned by what they saw. They could only watch as shadows came rushing toward them. Some of the female staff were scared stiff and had their jaws drop. They did not know at all what was happening!

The crowd rushed straight into the Bookstore!

"Where is it?"

"Over there!"

"I can see the bookshelves!"

"I want a copy of Fortress Besieged!"

"Give me ten copies! Pack them up!"

Only then did the staff members realize what was going on. When they finally came back to their senses, the shelves where Fortress Besieged was placed were already emptied out. Only a bare promo board was left standing!

"Why are they all gone?"

"My God, I was here since 6 AM!"

"There must still be some stock left in the warehouse!"

An executive of the Bookstore was also alerted. He came downstairs dumbfounded by the happenings and quickly said, "Calm down, everyone, calm down. I've already gotten someone to transfer more stock from our warehouse. The books will be here immediately!"

...

Shanghai.

At Xinhua Bookstore.

"I want a copy of Fortress Besieged!"

"Give me two copies, thank you!"

"Fortress Besieged!"

"Why did they limit the amount that we can purchase?"

"Each person can only purchase one copy? What kind of rule is that?"

...

Tianjin.

At the Liberation Bookstore.

"Do you still have a copy of Fortress Besieged?"

"There aren't any left."

"What's going on? I lined up for a very long time!"

"We only received 200 copies, and they've all sold out. Why don't you all go down to West Street and ask around to see if they still have any stock left."

"They don't have anything left at West Street. I just came over from there!"

...

Throughout the morning.

Crazy scenes like these played out at major bookstores around the country.

Many of those working at the bookstores and booksellers were feeling a little dumbfounded. How was this called book buying? This was clearly book snatching! Fortress Besieged was available as a single volume book and had a very high word count. Together with Zhang Ye's reputation, the publishing firm had set a very high market price for the novel. But based on what they were experiencing, it seemed like everyone was buying the book as though it did not cost a thing. They did not even browse through the contents or flip through the pages and simply picked up the novel before heading straight to the cashier!

The media was dumbfounded!

Many of the onlooking passersby were also dumbfounded!

Is this what Zhang Ye's appeal is like? Is he really that awesome? In all of China, which author could cause such a scene on the release date of their books!

At 10 AM, Fortress Besieged was sold out at 13 bookstores across the country!

At 10:30 AM, Fortress Besieged was sold out at 35 bookstores across the country!

At 11 AM, Fortress Besieged was sold out at 57 bookstores across the country!

The stock of Fortress Besieged was decreasing!

Some of the booksellers who had gone out of stock even called Zhang Ye's Studio in their anxiety.

At the studio.

Little Wang was on the phone. "We don't carry any stock of the book here....Right, you can get in contact with the publisher and distributor....It's no use even if you tell me about it; we're not in charge of this matter." After hanging up, Little Wang didn't know whether to laugh or cry. She told everyone, "A bookseller just called to ask for a thousand copies of the book."

Wu Yi said excitedly, "The demand is too explosive!"

Ha Qiqi laughed out loud and said, "Looks like we absolutely need not worry about the sales!"

Zhang Zuo came back in a hurry from outside and panted, "You guys should really go out there and have a look. It's crazy in the bookstore across from us! It's packed with people!"

Even Zhang Ye got butterflies in his stomach. "Surely it can't be that popular, right?"

Noticing his disbelief, Zhang Zuo quickly said, "It's true, you can go and have a look for yourself!"

Zhang Ye said, "The promo campaigns haven't even fully run yet and the release was done so hurriedly, so how could we have sold that much?"

Ha Qiqi laughed and said, "That's because you didn't consider your reputation. If it were some random dude, they definitely couldn't achieve this. But who are you? You're the best writer among the celebrities and the most famous person among the authors. Moreover, this marriage-themed novel arrived just in time to coincide with your own marriage too. On top of all that, the winners of the Qilu Literature Prize will be announced today. With Fortress Besieged also nominated for the Qilu Literature Prize, the popularity of the book has been pushed to a high point."

Then, Zhang Ye's cell phone rang.

Zhang Ye answered the call from Yao Jiancai.

"Old Yao, what's up?"

"Why can't I get a copy of your novel?"

"Ah?"

"My daughter intended to get it, but it was already sold out at all three of the bookstores she went to!"

"Hai, I didn't expect it'd sell so well on the first day."

"Don't say anything else, you just need to quickly get me ten copies of your novel right now."

"Whoa, I don't have that many copies on hand either. The publishing firm didn't bring over that many. I can at most spare you three copies. As for rest, we'll talk about it again when I get excess stock."

"Alright, three copies is fine too. I'll get my wife to go over to your studio and get it from you later. Mimi can't wait to get her hands on it."

"Alright."

Then the doorbell rang.

Little Wang, who was standing closest to the door, opened it.

Chenchen walked in. "Zhang Ye."

Zhang Ye said, "What are you doing here? I'm busy and don't have time for you."

Chenchen pouted and ignored him. Her little eyes looked over to the stack of Fortress Besieged books sealed and neatly placed in a corner of the studio. She walked over and put five copies into her arms.

Zhang Ye stared at her. "What are you doing?"

Chenchen said nonchalantly, "People want a copy of your novel."

Zhang Ye chuckled, "Who?"

Chenchen pointed downstairs. "Old Sun and Old Zhou. They said they didn't manage to buy it."

Old Sun? Did she mean Grandpa Sun?

Old Zhou? Was she talking about Uncle Zhou?

Zhang Ye rolled his eyes. "Take the copies then."

Chenchen hurried away.

A short while later, the little kid came back again.

Zhang Ye said in a speechless manner, "What are you doing here again?"

Chenchen said, "Zhang Ye, give me another 20 copies."

However, Zhang Ye noticed an awkward bulge in her pocket and could not help but grow suspicious. "What's that in your pocket?"

Chenchen clutched her pocket. "It's none of your business."

"Hey, let me see." Zhang Ye went up to her and searched through her pocket.

"Leave me alone!" Chenchen wasn't having any of it, but Zhang Ye overpowered her with his strength. An item fell out from her pocket.

Everyone saw exactly 250 yuan in cash fall out!

Chenchen could only say, "I sold your books at 50 yuan each at the entrance of the neighborhood. It's higher than your market price. Zhang Ye, give me another 20 copies."

Zhang Ye was floored. "Your sister, are you replenishing your stock from me!"

Everyone burst into laughter!

She even knew how to markup the price?

They had never come across such a young scalper before!

But from this, it showed how popular Fortress Besieged was. It was really selling like crazy!

Chapter 1208: How can such a person exist?

Later that afternoon.

At Eastern Publishing Firm.

The phone lines were constantly ringing, but the staff were no longer trying to answer every call!

"The stores are pressing us for more books again!"

"The Bookstore wants to order another 4,000 copies of Fortress Besieged!"

"There isn't any leftover stock that we can ship out from the first print. Increase the print run!"

"We've already contacted the production line to do so!"

"Aiyo, this release has gotten way too explosive, my God!"

"200,000 copies of the first print and we're already sold out?"

"How can that be possible?"

"Why would it not be possible? The various major bookstores have relayed the statistics back to us. The sales for Fortress Besieged have emptied their inventories by 70%. Going by this rate, we'll be out of stock by tonight! 200,000 copies sold in a day? In the publishing world, there has never been anyone who managed this before!"

200,000 copies for the first print run, this was really not a low figure!

For most new authors, a first print run of 10,000 to 20,000 copies was very common. Publishers would tend to only raise that figure to 100,000 copies for best-selling authors and would use that figure for a year's worth of projected sales. The publishing industry was experiencing a slump as the impact from various online publishers were having a great effect. If a novel could sell 100,000 copies a year, it would be considered a very popular title. However, no one at Eastern Publishing Firm could have expected that even with 200,000 copies of Fortress Besieged printed for its first run, it was still not enough to last them a day of sales!

This was crazy!

This was totally crazy!

Over there, a female editor was fast walking over.

Everyone looked at her with smiles on their faces.

"Little Li!"

"Well done!"

"You've made a great contribution again!"

"Editor Li, you're looking great!"

Someone even led a round of applause for her!

Li Mei was a little embarrassed. "It's all to the credit of Teacher Zhang for trusting us with his book. I didn't really do much at all."

Li Mei was the newbie from the publishing firm who had struck the deal with Zhang Ye back then. At that time, Zhang Ye had just fallen out with his previous publisher and many of the other publishers were trying to sign him. Eastern Publishing Firm stood no chance of getting him as they were not well-known and were considered a small-time publishing firm in the industry. So they just sent an inexperienced employee to handle the negotiation to try to convince Zhang Ye to sign with them. To the expectations of no one, Li Mei managed to convince Zhang Ye and even got along very well with his mother. Afterwards, all of his works related to publishing were given to Li Mei to handle. In these past two years, the relationship worked fine without any hiccups. Many of the other publishers kept trying to headhunt Zhang Ye in the hopes that they could get a slice of the pie. But they could not understand why Zhang Ye kept choosing to work with Eastern Publishing Firm only and never once gave the rights of his books to any of the other publishing firms. It was also the same for Fortress Besieged!

Li Mei had now become a very reputable person in the publishing industry!

Ever since then, Eastern Publishing Firm had gained a firm foothold in the industry!

At the editor-in-chief's office.

Li Mei cautiously knocked on the door and went in. "Editor-in-Chief, you're looking for me?"

The editor-in-chief looked at her and clasped his hands with a smile. "Little Li, you're here? Quick, take a seat. What would you like to drink? I have some rather good tea here."

Li Mei anxiously waved her hands at that. "That's not necessary, that's really not necessary."

The editor-in-chief laughed heartily. "Have you seen the sales figures for Fortress Besieged yet?"

"Yes." Li Mei was quite happy with the results too.

"You're really great!" The editor-in-chief said in a pleased tone, "I didn't think we could get it again, but who could've guessed that Teacher Zhang would still let us have the publication rights to his new book!"

Li Mei said, "Teacher Zhang is actually very easy to talk to. He's not as ill-tempered as rumored. As long as we do well in our work with him, he won't switch publishers so easily. He's not extremely particular about the royalty fees either. A little more or a little less doesn't matter to him. That's just how he is."

"It was you who handled his account well." The editor-in-chief said with a smile, "How long have you been working at the firm?"

Li Mei counted. "Over three years."

The editor-in-chief nodded. "Upper management has decided to give you a promotion."

Li Mei was taken aback. "Ah?"

The editor-in-chief smiled. "Starting from tomorrow, you will be in charge of the Distribution Department."

Distribution Department?

In charge of it?

Li Mei was stunned!

...

The sales for *Fortress Besieged* blew up!

During the day, many people opened the book to read it as soon as they got their hands on it.

Sometimes, a book wasn't a good read even though it sold well, because a myriad of factors affected the sales figure of a book, like the promotional material or the fame of the author. *Fortress Besieged* had sold so crazily well because of Zhang Ye's popularity. Just like if Zhang Yuanqi or one of those seven Heavenly Kings and Queens released a book, their sales would definitely not be bad. But as for how good the book really was, that depended on the content inside.

At Peking University.

Yao Jiancai's daughter, Yao Mi, came running back to her dormitory.

"I've got 'em!"

"How many do you have?"

"My mom sent three books!"

"Give me one!"

"I want one too!"

"I wonder if it's any good."

"This is our Chinese Department's teacher's book you're talking about, how can it not be good!" Even though she said that, Yao Mi wasn't very sure of it either. Zhang Ye was dabbling for the first time in longform literary fiction about marriage. Compared to the *Ghost Blows Out the Light* that he had written, it was an entirely different genre. Yao Mi did not really know how good this book was.

So they sat down in the dormitory and started reading it together.

They spent the next few hours reading.

All of a sudden, one of her roommates yelled, "Heavens!"

Yao Mi was also very surprised. "Th-This is such a good read!"

A girl next to her said, "What do you mean by a good read? That's such a plain description! It's simply not enough to describe this book!"

Yao Mi asked, "Then how would you describe it?"

The girl declared, "This is a fucking godly read!"

That's right!

It was a godly read!

The few of them felt a sense of extreme shock!

...

At Zhang Xia's house.

Grandma Zhang was sitting back in her chair and reading a book.

Her nearby son called for her to take her medicine several times, but she did not hear him.

"Mom."

"Ah?"

"It's time to take your medicine."

"Oh, alright."

"What are you reading? You look lost in it."

"Hur hur, it's called Fortress Besieged."

"Zhang Ye's new book? Is it good?"

Zhang Xia hesitated for a moment before giving the most appropriate evaluation she could think of. "It's not a matter of it being good or bad, it's a shocking read!"

Her son said, "Then I'll read it too."

But Zhang Xia laughed and said, "You're such a restless person and have been so ignorant about things since childhood, so I doubt you'll be able to understand the intricacies and cultured language contained in this book. Such a book can only be written by someone with great wisdom. Little Zhang is really surprising. If he ever decides to venture into the literary circle, he would probably shock a great deal of foreigners. I believe that they don't yet know about this great talent that has emerged in China."

After taking her medicine, Zhang Xia continued reading Fortress Besieged. She sat there reading for the entire day.

...

At a certain author's studio.

The author, Chen Xian, also received a copy of the book. Someone from his studio brought it back for him, but he threw it aside without reading it.

"Teacher Chen, about tonight's Qilu Literature Prize..."

"Just leave it to fate, it's out of our control."

"You have a very good chance of winning."

"Hopefully, but it's difficult to say until the very end."

"Do you think that Zhang Ye has any hopes of winning?"

"Well, can he write literary fiction?"

Chen Xian just shook his head. In the field of poetry, there was probably no one who could outdo Zhang Ye in the whole of the literary field. This had been verified time and again. But when it came to novel writing, especially longform literary fiction, no one would be afraid of Zhang Ye. That was because no one had ever seen him write anything like this before, so they did not take him seriously. It was only due to the controversy surrounding the Yanhong Literary Prize that the Qilu Literature Prize committee had nominated him. It was simply a nomination, so of course they wouldn't award the prize to him.

But when he received a call, Chen Xian felt a sense of unease come over him.

It was his old friend on the line.

"Old Yu?"

"Chen Xian, did you get a copy of Fortress Besieged yet?"

"I have one, what's the matter?"

"Have you read it yet?"

"Why would I want to read it?"

There was a two-second pause on the other end. "I suggest that you give it a read."

Chen Xian was startled. "...Alright."

After hanging up, he immediately found the book and flipped to the first page.

An hour later, Chen Xian's expression had completely changed. After he closed the book, he took a deep breath and tasted a bitterness in his throat, like he had taken some Chinese traditional medicine!

Could he write literary fiction?

Thinking of this question he posed earlier, he already knew the answer!

That's right!

He really could write it!

Chen Xian had been stunned. Even if he was one of those from the literary circle who denounced Zhang Ye several years ago, even if he was extremely biased against Zhang Ye, he was still very shocked by this book!

How can such a book exist?

How can such a person exist?

Chapter 1209: Ascending to the altar!

At night.

7 PM sharp.

All the major bookstores across the country had sent in their statistics. The premiere release of 200,000 copies of Fortress Besieged was wiped clean at 6:57 PM. Not a single copy was left on the shelves in the market!

The publishing world was shaken to its core!

The industry was also in an uproar!

Who said that the publishing industry was in a slump?

Who said that physical books were already a thing of the past?

Faced with a book whose sales figures rocketed to the stars, many of the publishing firms hurriedly held meetings. A lot of authors who hadn't intended to read this book were now flipping through it in curiosity. Some netizens were even pleading to buy it off others by offering up to a 100 yuan for the book. It had become a very sought after book on the market!

Then, all kinds of book reviews started appearing!

Fortress Besieged dumbfounded the entire Chinese literary field!

Classic Quotes:

1. If the poem has any meaning, so much the worse for it.
2. You're not annoying, but you're completely useless.
3. Life, it's been said, is one big book. Should life indeed be so, most of us writers can only claim to be book critics. Possessing the book critic's skill, we need not read more than a few pages to churn out a pile of commentary and wrap up a book review in no time.
4. If a person does not go out to see the world by 20, he is a failure; by the same token, if he is still out seeing the world at 30, he is a failure.

5. Nothing happens on accident. The different masks we wear make it inevitable.

6. Husbands are women's careers. Not having a husband is like being unemployed.

And so on and so forth.

Every word contained in Fortress Besieged, every sentence, every line was crazily picked out by people who dissected and studied them until they couldn't help but call it wonderful!

On Weibo.

The netizens were passionate and excited!

"How godly! So godly!"

"Any sentence found in the book can be considered a classic!"

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

"Is this really what Zhang Ye's literary novel is like?"

"Damn, this is the most awesome book I've ever read!"

"I can see all the goosebumps that I'm getting!"

"Your sister, who said that there was a great reveal of Mrs. Zhang inside the book!"

"Pfft, previous poster, did you really believe that?"

"I also never expected that Fortress Besieged would actually be like this. I thought this was a pure romance novel. Isn't Teacher Zhang not yet married? Pfft, why do I feel like he's going to get divorced? Look at what he wrote in his book, describing marriage as a grave of love. I wonder if Teacher Zhang will get a beating from Mrs. Zhang tonight!"

"Hahaha, he deserves it if he does!"

"Supporting Mrs. Zhang Ye, make him kneel on a washboard!"

"What a godly book this is! And what a godly author!"

"Fortress Besieged is great!"

"Motherfucker, I've been pulled into Zhang Ye's fan base!"

"Me too. Fortress Besieged has fucking left me with no resistance. Zhang Ye's skill at indoctrinating people into his fan base is too strong! He silently creeps up and gets us hooked without knowing! But I think my parents are even more fanatical than I am. Those two don't usually pay attention to anyone in showbiz but became Zhang Ye's fans after reading Fortress Besieged!"

"My grandma too!"

"I never used to read literary fiction since I didn't think I could appreciate it. But Fortress Besieged really is different from other works of literary fiction! This book is a drug!"

"I'm addicted to it as well!"

"I've read many of the other books that were shortlisted for the Qilu Literature Prize, but none of them are comparable to Fortress Besieged. Could Zhang Ye really win this highest honor?"

"Who knows? He should have gotten the Yanhong Literary Prize, but his relationship with the literary world is just no good!"

"So what if it's not good? Just with Fortress Besieged, even if Zhang Ye fucking points right at those people from the literary circle and scolds them, he should still win the award! This book is really amazing. Even if they don't like him in the literary field, even if he has offended many authors before, they must still award it to him!"

"I suppose the literary field is dumbfounded!"

"Fortress Besieged is a killing blow!"

...

At the studio.

News from all over the place was being reported back.

Ha Qiqi and the others were constantly getting good news and feeling excited and inspired!

"It's sold out!"

"The number of reservations have broken records too!"

"Its popularity is growing exponentially!"

They sorted the information into a chart for Zhang Ye to look at. The number of Zhang Ye's Weibo followers soared yet again, as well as all other aspects of his popularity.

Even though this was not really an important statistic, it solved a problem. Most of Zhang Ye's newly gained followers were the middle-aged to the elderly and were more learned people. Fortress Besieged helped him attract a large number of new fans! This was certainly good news for him. There were always limitations for every celebrity's fan base. Some celebrities, like the Korean celebs, focused only on the younger crowd for their target audiences. Meanwhile, others like Dong Shanshan targeted male otakus, with a large number of them making up their fanbases. Zhang Ye's fan base spanned a relatively larger demographic. There were men and women, people in their teens, twenties, and even thirties. But attracting new male and female fans in their forties and fifties or even older was a very rare occurrence!

If a celebrity's fanbase demographic coverage was smaller, it meant their growth potential was limited.

A celebrity who only targeted young teens would probably end up as only an A-list celebrity. Even if they could attract half the country's teen audience as fans, that number would still be limited. Similarly, a celebrity who only targeted either men or women would also find their growth limited as they progressed further up the entertainment circle. Their fanbase would become saturated by their target audience as no new fans would join.

Therefore, the coverage of one's fanbase was very important!

Fortress Besieged had undoubtedly helped Zhang Ye open up a new channel of fans. This new group of fans was really important for him to raise his popularity. If he wanted to break past the A-list and take one of the seven spots above him, the first thing he needed to lose was an "imbalanced" fanbase. Otherwise, he would have already lost at the starting line!

It was almost 8 PM.

Weibo fell silent.

Everyone in Zhang Ye's Studio also fell silent.

This was because it was almost time for the Qilu Literature Prize winners to be announced. Countless people across the country switched on their radios and quietly listened in to Central Radio's broadcast.

Wu Yi was wiping off his nervous perspiration. "How nerve-wracking!"

Ha Qiqi clutched her chest. "Stop talking, you're making me nervous too!"

Little Wang couldn't listen and covered her ears.

Zhang Zuo and the others were staring at the radio in silence.

Zhang Ye was smoking at the window and waiting in anticipation as well. He had already done all that he could, even bringing that "atomic bomb" of the literary field, Fortress Besieged, from his previous world over to this world. Whatever happened next would depend on fate. Whether his plan to reach the summit could be carried out smoothly in the short term depended on the results of this award!

The awarding method for the Qilu Literature Prize was different from the other two literary awards. It was the top literary award among the three and also the most special. In all decades until now, the Qilu Literature Prize had been awarded based on tradition. The winners were always announced over the radio to the public, and there was neither an award ceremony nor any trophies given out. However, the voice announcing the results was always intriguing to all of those from the literary arena and was the most sacred moment for the literary field!

The broadcast started.

The people were heatedly discussing it.

Zhang Ye's parents had long since tuned in to the radio station on their cell phones.

Zhang Xia made her son take out a very old radio that he spent a long time fixing before getting to work again.

In the dormitories at Peking University, there were no sounds of games or music. Instead, from many rooms came the sounds of a century-old radio station.

Bzzt...Bzzt...

Static sounded for a moment.

Then the voice of the radio announcer came on without any unnecessary chatter. "Dear listeners, good evening. We will be announcing the five winners of the Qilu Literature Prize that is held once every four years. They will be revealed in ascending order of votes received—"

Zhang Ye extinguished his cigarette and came over.

Ha Qiqi almost stopped breathing.

Little Wang clasped her hands and prayed, "Let Director Zhang be on the list! Please!"

The radio announcer said, "Love by the Lake by Liu Tianqi."

Wu Yi exclaimed!

Ha Qiqi shushed him. "Quiet."

The judging panel had voted for the five winners, and the results were ranked in ascending order. The fifth place winner would be announced first, so there was no need to get too anxious.

The radio announcer said, "Spring Returns by Han Dong."

At Han Dong's home, his relatives all cheered!

"Second Uncle, it's you! It's you!"

"You got it! You've won!"

Han Dong also felt very excited!

The radio announcer: "Two Summer Days by Zhang Yi."

At Zhang Yi's home, her husband was howling. As a female author, winning the Qilu Literature Prize was the greatest affirmation she could get. When Zhang Yi realized she had won, she got so excited she had to take several aspirins to prevent a heart attack. Her hands were trembling!

The third winner had been announced!

There were only two left!

The radio announcer said, "Gentle Eyes by Zang Weiguo!"

At Zang Weiguo's home, his children and grandchildren reacted explosively around him!

When Zang Weiguo heard his name, he started crying. He finally won it. In the thirty years of hard work he put in, he had finally received this highest honor in exchange. Although he wasn't in first place, it was still enough to make him cry. He never thought that he would win first place and felt that it was a miracle that he could even win the Qilu Literature Prize!

There was only one spot left!

The winner with the most votes for this year's Qilu Literature Prize was going to be announced!

Little Wang was perspiring from the suspense!

Ha Qiqi was feeling extremely nervous!

Why wasn't it announced yet?

Why hadn't Director Zhang's name been mentioned yet?

Zhang Ye took a deep breath and closed his eyes.

Wu Yi stamped his feet impatiently. Quick! Announce it already!

The entire literary world was waiting for that last name to be announced!

Many of the citizens had pricked their ears up and were wide-eyed as they waited to find out who it was!

When this last name was about to be announced, the radio announcer paused for a moment before saying with a magnetic voice, "Fortress Besieged by Zhang Ye."

Silence was the only sound in the studio.

Little Wang then screamed!

"Ah!"

"He said Zhang Ye! He said Zhang Ye!"

"It's us! We've won!"

"We're first in the vote!"

"We've gotten it! We've gotten it!"

Screams!

Shouts!

The studio erupted!

Little Wang and a few of the female staff all threw their hands up as they cheered. One of them even got so emotional she cried!

Everyone was hugging one another, screaming and shouting. This really had not been easy. They had won this award with great difficulty! Two days. Zhang Ye had used just two days to dabble in the field of literary fiction to gain the highest honor in the literary field this year by winning the most votes. This could only be described as a miracle and as a dream. Such a result could only be achieved by Zhang Ye!

Today, Zhang Ye had risen to the top of the Chinese literary world!

Zhang Ye and Fortress Besieged had ascended to the altar!

Chapter 1210: Director Zhang's creative process is particularly arduous!

Presently.

Congratulatory calls were coming in one after another.

Zhang Ye had taken the top honors in the Qilu Literature Prize!

Further, the Qilu Literature Prize was the highest honor in the field of literature!

He had won this award in the most perfect way. It was a best of the best performance and the highest of the highest prizes he had won. It was flawless, and there was nothing else in the Chinese literary world that was a greater honor!

Elder Qian called. "Congratulations, Little Zhang!"

Zhang Ye laughed and said: "Elder Qian, how can you do this? If you already knew that my name was on the winner's list, why didn't you tell me earlier? I was cooped up for the entire day at my studio with my colleagues anxiously worrying for me. Everyone thought that I wouldn't have a chance of winning. In any case, how did I end up getting first place for this year's Qilu Literature Prize? Who voted for me?"

Elder Qian said: "I don't know, actually. The voting process is anonymous; we place our votes into sealed boxes which are then handed to a professional to take care of. Once the voting is done, it's out of our judging panel's hands. I, too, found out that you took first place when I heard the announcement over the radio."

"Thank you."

"Don't thank me, it was the book that was good."

"Let me treat you to a meal someday."

"Haha, alright, I'll be waiting for it."

Following, a call from his mother arrived. She sounded very excited.

"Son, you're amazing!"

"Thanks, Mom."

"Your dad also sends his congratulations!"

"Alright, I'll continue to work hard."

Li Mei from Eastern Publishing Firm called as well.

"Brother Zhang, I'm calling to congratulate you on behalf of the publishing firm. The boss has asked me to convey his congratulations to you. And for me personally, I just want to say that you're really awesome!"

"Thank you."

"For the second edition's print run, we can add 'winner of the Qilu Literature Prize' to the cover. With this highest honor given to it, Fortress Besieged will fly even faster off the shelves!"

"Sure, I'll leave it to you all to plan."

"We've already started on it. Shall I send you the cover after we're done with the design?"

"There's no need, I trust you guys."

"Thank you, Brother Zhang!"

He received over a dozen calls!

Yao Jiancai, Zhang Xia, Dong Shanshan, Yu Yingyi, and many other close friends sent their congratulations!

The news was also reporting about it!

"Qilu Literature Prize winners' list announced!"

"Zhang Ye goes against all odds to take top honors!"

"Zhang Ye reaches summit by winning highest honor in literary field!"

"Yanhong Literary Prize suffers terrible face smacking!"

"The judging panel of the Yanhong Literary Prize expresses: No comment!"

"Fortress Besieged—a masterpiece on the topic of marriage!"

"Zhang Ye slaps the faces of the Yanhong Literary Prize committee: You want to ignore me today? Tomorrow you'll never measure up to my expectations!"

Congratulatory messages flooded Weibo!

"This is so impressive!"

"He really won it! And he even got first place!"

"Zhang Ye has ascended onto the altar!"

"He has taken yet another top honor! Zhang Ye's popularity is going to soar like crazy!"

"It's going to increase by a lot this time."

"Fortress Besieged is a well-deserved winner!"

"You're right. Even if Fortress Besieged won every domestic literary award there is, it wouldn't be an issue! Even if there are many people from the literary field who bear a grudge against Zhang Ye, this award must still be given to him! Alright, I won't say any more. I need to quickly get back to reading it again. I need to read it a few more times to grasp it fully!"

"So fast? I still haven't finished reading it!"

"I'll get back to reading it too! Congratulations to Lord Zhang!"

"Lord Zhang did not disappoint us!"

"The faces of Yanhong Literary Prize committee have probably turned green from anger!"

"Hahaha, those fools! When I think about that explanation the Yanhong Literary Prize committee gave, I can't help but laugh. They were saying that Zhang Ye did not have the qualifications to win the Yanhong Literary Prize and came up with all kinds of reason to justify it. But in the end? He won the Qilu Literature Prize and slapped them so hard their faces became swollen! The Qilu Literature Prize is much

more prestigious than your Yanhong Literary Prize! If the most coveted literary award in the country recognizes Zhang Ye and even gave him top honors, how can you people say that he's unqualified to win the Yanhong Literary Prize? What a joke!"

"One of the headlines in the news put it really well! 'You want to ignore me today? Tomorrow you'll never measure up to my expectations!' Hahaha, that's so cool!"

"I need to give a Like to the Qilu Literature Prize committee. They must have resisted a great deal of pressure to award the prize to Zhang Ye! This should also be an official acknowledgment of Zhang Ye by the literary circle, right?"

"Who cares if they acknowledge him or not? All I care about is whether I can get my hands on a copy of Fortress Besieged tomorrow!"

"Me too! I've been listening to you people praising it to the high heavens, yet I haven't even laid eyes on it!"

"This is killing me! Damn it, I should just go queue up at midnight!"

"Does anyone still have the first edition of Fortress Besieged? I'll buy it for a high price!"

"My advice to everyone is to not buy it in a hurry. See whether you like it first, as literary fiction is not something that everyone can appreciate. You might not be able to understand it."

"Fuck, this is the highest voted book that won the Qilu Literature Prize! Even if I don't understand it, I still must read it!"

"The majority of people can't even buy this book anymore!"

The people were heatedly discussing this!

News about it was appearing everywhere!

Industry insiders were also starting to react to this news!

Some industry peers were lauding Fortress Besieged and marveling at it. A lot of plot and word analysis of Fortress Besieged also appeared. Of course, there was no lack of criticism either. Some authors who had always despised Zhang Ye joined forces to nitpick and find fault with the novel. This included two old judges on the Yanhong Literary Prize committee. However, no one took these people's words seriously. A lot of people did not even care about them. The Qilu Literature Prize had acknowledged Zhang Ye, so it was meaningless for this group of people to say anything!

Why did they give him the award?

There was no why!

The fact was that they had given it to him!

...

On that same night.

The Qilu Literature Prize money arrived. It was just 50,000 RMB, no more, no less.

The five Qilu Literature Prize winners were "showered" with attention without exception by the media reporters. Of them, Zhang Ye was the most heavily "showered" upon.

The reporters were clogging the entrance of the studio!

"Teacher Zhang!"

"Are you around?"

"We're reporters from the Morning Post!"

"We're reporters from Beijing Television!"

"Please accept our interview!"

The door was not open, but they could still be heard from inside the studio.

Ha Qiqi smiled and said, "Director Zhang, shall I go handle them?"

"Yes, I'll go and lie low." Zhang Ye was still on the line making calls. He spoke on the phone as he walked upstairs with a smile: "Teacher Su, thank you for your concern. Yes, the reporters are here."

The door opened and Little Wang ushered the reporters inside.

Ha Qiqi smiled. "Hi, everyone. Director Zhang still has some work to handle. I'm Zhang Ye's Studio's external communications manager, so you can all ask me questions if you have any."

The reporters immediately pushed their cameras and microphones to the front!

The Beijing Times reporter said, "Congratulations to Teacher Zhang for winning the highest domestic honor in literature!"

Ha Qiqi nodded. "Thank you."

A different reporter quickly asked, "Regarding the sales figures of Fortress Besieged, what kind of expectations did you all have?"

Ha Qiqi shook her head and said, "We really didn't have any expectations. We don't do estimates for such things, wanting to concentrate on completing whatever needs to be done, that's all. Director Zhang's own words for this book were to 'sell however much we can.' This is actually Director Zhang's first foray into writing this type of novel. It was an attempt at switching from genre fiction to literary fiction. So, to have gained the acknowledgment of the Qilu Literature Prize committee, that was something we hadn't expected at all."

A female reporter raised an audio recorder and asked, "We would like to know what the creative process for a literary novel is like. How long did it take for Teacher Zhang to conceptualize it? How many years did he take to produce it? Did he ever reach a bottleneck where he couldn't continue writing?"

The creative process?

How many years?

Ha Qiqi said, "The process was very arduous."

The female reporter asked curiously, "How arduous?"

Ha Qiqi cleared her throat and said, "It was particularly arduous."

Another television station's reporter followed up with, "So just how particularly arduous?"

Ha Qiqi said calmly with a straight face, "The process is not something that outsiders would understand, but just know that it was particularly arduous."

The corner of Little Wang's mouth twitched!

Wu Yi pretended to drink water and nearly even choked!

The studio's staff were all madly laughing on the inside!

Particularly arduous?

Particularly, my ass!

Arduous, my ass!

How was it arduous at all? When was there ever a bottleneck that made him unable to continue writing? Director Zhang just locked himself in his office and casually finished writing it in less than two days. He didn't even check for typos and sent it straight over to the publishing firm. If this was called arduous, what would it be like when it was not arduous?