

Superstar 1221

Chapter 1221: Signing the new show!

That evening.

The people from Beijing Television rushed to the studio.

Two station heads and several staff members, including Hu Fei, had been sent over by Beijing Television to negotiate the contract after they received the news. They attached great importance to this matter. It was Zhang Ye's new variety show after all, so who in the industry wouldn't? Many of the television stations in the country would vie to get him!

One of the station heads shook hands with him. "Teacher Zhang."

Zhang Ye smiled. "Station Head Wang."

"Zhang'er, what kind of show are we talking about?" Hu Fei asked anxiously.

Zhang Ye smiled and said, "Don't be so anxious, Brother Hu. Let's sit down and talk."

Ha Qiqi had printed out several copies of the proposal they drew up and handed it out to the Beijing Television people. They eagerly started flipping through it the moment they got one from her.

Zhang Ye said, "Everyone, please take a look at the proposal."

I Am a Singer.

This was a very special show back in Zhang Ye's previous world. It was special in that it was different from many of the previous singing shows that came before it. For example, The Voice and King of Masked Singers were both used singing elements to sell the show. There was very little interaction between the contestants to display, the most being their intro clips or conversations with their mentors. But I Am a Singer was different. The show had elements of a reality show and did not require the contestants be masked. All of the contestants were famous singers the viewers would recognize, and the truest side of these singers could be seen on the show. There would be scenes of the singers planning and practicing their songs, the slapstick draws to decide the appearance order, the celebrities going on about their private lives, singers making mistakes in their hosting roles, and comic relief provided by host-managers who attempted to "sign" their favored singers, among other things. There were many more variety elements, and the competition was more intense. No one in this world had ever attempted a show of this type before.

Actually, the analysis by Zhang Ye's team was quite right. They knew that it wouldn't be the wisest choice to film a singing show at this time. Central TV Department 1's Sing! was bearing down menacingly on the industry, and anyone who knew they were coming would back away. No one wanted to encounter Sing! at this time, and even many of the better reality shows would probably choose to avoid it. They were all afraid their attention would get taken away by the appearance of the show, much less those other similar singing shows around.

This wasn't a good choice!

Or rather, this was the worst decision to make!

Zhang Ye also understood what kind of show would be the most suitable and safest to make at this time, but it was just not in him to do so. If he wanted to be safe, he wouldn't have taken Central TV Department 1 to court. If he was wise, he wouldn't have tangled with the SARFT! In front of a potential "face slapping," everything else was secondary!

Aren't you people looking to challenge me?

Aren't you people trying to show me who is better?

Fine! Then I'll go all out and take you all on!

When the people from Beijing Television finished reading the proposal, they were astounded.

Hu Fei was the closest with Zhang Ye, having worked together on many occasions. Lecture Room and King of Masked Singers were both handled by the two of them. As such, he spoke first, "Zhang'er, how confident are you of this show? What I mean is, are you sure that this show can outperform The Voice?"

Zhang Ye shook his head. "I'm not sure."

Deputy Station Head Wang blinked. "Even you're not confident?"

But Zhang Ye just laughed and said, "What I mean is, if it were against my original version of The Voice, it would be quite difficult to put a finger on whose viewership ratings would be higher. It might not be able to outperform the ratings for The Voice, but if it were against that copycat show called Sing!, which is headed by an entirely different program team, director, host, and guests..."

The people from Beijing Television looked at him. "How will it do?"

Zhang Ye thought for a moment before replying calmly, "I'd beat them by ten blocks!"

Hu Fei laughed. "You sound really confident."

Zhang Ye said, "I guess so."

Deputy Station Head Wang was chuckled a little as well.

Then the Beijing Television people had a short discussion among themselves.

Finally, Deputy Station Head Wang nodded and said, "Teacher Zhang, we'll take your show. We'll do it like before, so let us know the production budget you require. We'll start with a base of 100 million RMB with no upper limits, and you may allocate the staff as you wish in your role as the executive director while Old Hu takes the executive producer role. You'll head the entire show's production with Old Hu as your assistant."

Hu Fei smiled and said, "When I asked you to be the executive director for King of Masked Singers, you said no. This time, you better not reject me, alright? I'll be your assistant, hur hur."

Zhang Ye blinked. "It's settled just like that? Aren't you guys going to consider it for longer?"

Hu Fei said happily, "It's a show by you. There's no need to consider any further!"

These words were undoubtedly the greatest trust they could give Zhang Ye.

A staff member of Beijing Television suddenly asked, "Director Zhang, are you going to participate in the competition?"

Zhang Ye laughed and said, "If I'm going to be the executive director, I won't be participating."

Hu Fei said in surprise, "You won't be taking part? What a pity."

Zhang Ye spread up his hands. "If I participate in the competition as the executive director, how will the others see it? They'd definitely say that it's rigged and unfair. We have to handle this with the show's interest in mind and not screw it up with such controversies." He added with a laugh, "And besides, I'd definitely lose with so many elite singers taking part. That'd be too embarrassing for me."

Hu Fei said, "But what about your screen time? You've worked so hard to come up with a show like this. Surely we can't have you miss out on the benefits, right? It's not like you care about the money anyway."

Zhang Ye said, "Don't worry, Brother Hu. As the executive director, the screen time I'll get is much more than you can imagine."

Deputy Station Head Wang nodded to himself. In the field of show production, Zhang Ye was a very professional and responsible man. This was also what he admired most about Zhang Ye, who handled the situation in an unbiased manner. He was very clear about such things and wouldn't bend the rules just because he could benefit himself. Even though what he said might sound simple, the truth was that there weren't too many people in the entertainment industry who would do things this way anymore.

The contract discussion was settled very quickly.

Then everyone began talking about the subsequent production issues that lay ahead.

Hu Fei asked, "How should we design the stage?"

Zhang Ye replied, "Modify the King of Masked Singers' stage a little?"

"That's fine, but it'll be very difficult to invite the singers. That's going to be an issue."

"That's right. We won't be inviting anyone who isn't good enough. All we target must know how to sing well, and it doesn't matter if they are has-beens. We don't care about the popularity of the person, just their singing skills."

"But this is a competition and no one likes to lose. It's especially true for singers who have been famous for a long time. In King of Masked Singers, they could at least hide behind a mask. Even if they got eliminated there, they could choose to not reveal themselves and leave the stage. The audience would never find out who they were, so it wouldn't be embarrassing to lose. But it's different for I Am a Singer. This is a serious elimination competition, so will the famous be willing to come on the show? Even if we double the appearance money, they might not..."

"I'll take care of that."

"Alright, then I have no other issues. What about you guys? Do you have any requests?"

Deputy Station Head Wang looked at Zhang Ye.

Zhang Ye chuckled. "My request is simple."

Deputy Station Head Wang said, "Feel free to request whatever you need."

Zhang Ye said, "I only have one request. Whichever day Sing! broadcasts on, I want to broadcast on that day as well. Whichever time slot Sing! broadcasts on, I want the same time slot as well!"

The people from Beijing Television didn't know whether to laugh or cry.

Deputy Station Head Wang said, "Alright, let's sign the contract!"

Chapter 1222: The lineup of singers!

At night.

The people from Beijing Television left.

Ha Qiqi gave a wry smile. "Director Zhang, are we really going to do this?"

"We have to do it!" Zhang Ye insisted.

Wu Yi said loudly, "Damn, let's do it then!"

Little Wang cried out, "Yeah, who's afraid of whom!"

Zhang Zuo felt fired up. "Let's do it! We'll show Central TV Department 1 who the real big brother of the variety world is! Let's beat them once and for all!"

Tong Fu added, "At most, we'll get taken down along with them!"

Ha Qiqi glared at him. "That mouth of yours! Don't jinx it!"

Tong Fu quickly spat away his words and corrected, "What I meant was, we'll make a clean sweep!"

They had fought alongside Zhang Ye to the death, but their characters had become meeker ever since they joined Zhang Ye's Studio. This was because as staff of the studio, they had to behave in consideration of Zhang Ye. Their highest priority was to do things in his interest, so they had to be more cautious when handling any issues. However, their old passion was still burning as strongly as ever. When they got pushed into a corner like now, they would still follow Zhang Ye and hop around and swear back in anger!

Come on then!

Only one shall remain standing!

After work, the studio staff gradually left the office.

But Zhang Ye did not go and instead remained behind to make some calls. Sing! was currently approaching anyone they could, probably because the guest coaches' roles had still not been filled yet. There were a lot of singers in the music industry, but only a small group of them were truly great

singers, so there weren't really that many to choose from. If they could sign someone away, Zhang Ye would have one less person to choose from. The showdown between these two shows was not just a battle of the television station's capabilities, it was also a battle of funding and resources. He had to handle this pronto!

His first call went to Chen Guang.

The call connected.

"Zhang'er."

"Old Chen, did I wake you?"

"No, I was just arguing with my wife."

"Oh, come on, stop pretending already. How would a submissive husband like you dare to argue with her? Even if you had the courage of ten brave men, you still wouldn't do so. Old Fan is just going to join Sing!, that's all. Do you really take me to be so petty? Shouldn't you know me by now? So drop the act. If you really feel bad, how about giving your support to my new show? I just need you to say yes."

"Huh? A new show?"

"Yup."

"Why didn't I know about it?"

"It was finalized today. It's going to be called I Am a Singer."

"What? A singing show?"

"What do you think?"

"Whoa, this is quite a big deal. I'll have to give it some thought first."

"What do you still have to think about? This is a golden opportunity others don't even have a chance to take. Would I ever shortchange you? I've saved you a spot on a good show, so stop worrying and come."

"Hai, but I've never taken part in a competitive TV show before, so aren't you putting me in a difficult position?"

"Are you coming or not?"

"The competition on such shows is too much pressure!"

"Alright then, hand the phone to Old Fan. I'll speak to her regarding her joining Sing!"

"No, don't. I'll go, alright?!"

"That settles it then."

"Hai, I'm paying for my wife's mistakes!"

He had convinced one!

And it was even one of the biggest names in the music industry. Someone who was more famous than Fan Wenli, and a music legend whose singing prowess was top notch. Chen Guang's name was representative of an era, and more importantly, it was not a bygone era. This was his time, and having the support of someone like him was definitely a huge boost to I Am a Singer. Thinking about it, the issue of Old Fan joining Sing! no longer mattered. Securing Old Chen in exchange was definitely a much better deal.

Zhang Ye was on cloud nine. Then he made a call to another big name!

It was to Xiaodong, the leader of the famous Asian girl group, Spring Garden!

"Sister Dong, it's me."

"Zhang Ye."

"What are you doing? Why is it so noisy over there?"

"I'm preparing for our concert that'll be starting in several days."

"The nationwide tour? Then will you be free from the end of October until November?"

"Eh? Why?"

"My new show will be starting soon, so how about showing me some support? It's going to be a singing competition with all the big names joining. Please come on the show if you're confident in yourself."

"But I'm not confident in myself!"

Zhang Ye had no response.

"Heehee, can you summarize the show?"

Zhang Ye gave her a simple explanation, then said, "Li Xiaoxian has been on King of Masked Singers and proved that she's not only capable of singing idol pop, but has great singing skills. As a result of the show, she's gotten really popular all over China. As the leader of Spring Garden, how can you lose to her?"

"Teacher Zhang, are you trying to goad me? Xiaoxian might have gotten very popular, but didn't she still lose to you all the same?"

"I won't be taking part this time."

"You won't be taking part?"

"Yeah, it's because I know that you're very skilled at singing. Who in the industry doesn't know that? So what do you think? Are you interested in joining my new show? I'm sincerely inviting you. Just tell me the price."

"It's not a matter of money, I'm just not confident in myself. Who else will be joining?"

"That's confidential for now. But I can reveal this to you: None of them are your equal. Their popularity and singing aren't as good as yours. If you join, you'll definitely dominate the stage."

"Ah? Really?"

"Yep."

"Then I'll join! I'll join your show!"

"Great! Is Amy close by? I'd like to invite her as well."

After hanging up, another two people were just about in place!

Xiaodong indicated that she would be joining!

While Amy was seriously contemplating it!

Zhang Ye could lie through his teeth without blushing or his heart pounding. He had to trick whoever he could into joining the show!

After that, he called Grandma Zhang Xia. She was someone nobody would have expected him to approach. The moment the call connected, he started introducing the show to her.

Zhang Xia was very surprised on the other end of the line. "You're asking me to join?"

"That's right."

"Are you sure?"

"I'm very sure."

"But I sing bel canto. Who would want to listen?"

"There are many ways of singing bel canto. What's more, it's not like you only know how to sing bel canto and folk songs, right? I don't believe that you don't know how to sing pop songs. Sometimes, one needs to adapt and blend in a little for the audience to be convinced. The development of bel canto singing has reached a bottleneck, so I believe it's time for you to step up to a new challenge."

"The stage belongs to the younger generation. Would I even be suitable?"

"No one is more suitable than you."

"But I'm so old and don't have the strength for such things anymore."

"You're only required to sing one song per week, so it really won't tire you much."

"Then let me consider it for a bit."

"Grandma Zhang, my dearest grandma, do you still need to consider it when we have this good a relationship? Just rest assured and boldly step up. This is definitely going to be the right choice. Would it possibly do you any harm?"

"That's hard to say."

Zhang Ye was speechless.

"Alright, alright, I'll tentatively give you my you."

"Great, thank you for your support, Grandma Zhang. By the way, are there any other good singers you could recommend to me? It doesn't matter if they're no longer active. You're the veteran here and have a lot more contacts and friends around. Why don't you recommend me a few people so that I can go and pay them a visit? Oh, and the appearance fees will definitely be the highest in the industry."

"Let me see who there is."

He secured another one!

Zhang Ye was starting to feel the pressure on him lightening. He had secured more than half of the lineup of singers. His social network was mediocre at best, and he didn't have that many friends. But of those he had, they all had great relationships with him. Those who understood Zhang Ye's temper knew what kind of person he was, which was why they gave him a lot of respect most of the time. This was why Zhang Ye could invite some of the celebrities most television stations could not.

Chapter 1223: Central TV Department 1 turns green with anger!

On this day.

At Central TV Department 1.

The Sing! program team started work early in the morning.

Jiang Yuan, the Deputy Director of Department 1, had come to check on their work. This was the tenth time he had dropped by to Sing!'s production office in recent days. For any of the other shows, the higher-ups would usually just check how everything was going at the start of production before approving the show's executive director and staff to handle the rest of the work. It wasn't feasible for the executives to come over every day to check on how everything was progressing. But Sing! was obviously different. Central TV Department 1 had a great deal of expectations for the show. The executives were also paying a large amount of attention to it with a "can't lose" attitude and determination. This was because it would be Central TV Department 1's biggest variety show this year, and it would have to get the results expected of it by sweeping away the rest of the variety show industry. That was the command issued from the top, which Central TV Department 1 would have to execute!

"Boss!"

"Director Jiang."

"Good morning, Director Jiang."

Jiang Yuan walked in with his hands behind his back.

The program team staff immediately stood up to greet him.

"Good morning, how's everything going?"

"Everything is proceeding smoothly."

"Has Fan Wenli agreed to join us yet?"

"We've already signed the contract with her. She's been secured!"

"Good, very good."

"But Chen Guang and Zhang Xia won't be joining. As for Sister Zhang, we've just contacted her manager, Fang Weihong. She says that Sister Zhang doesn't have a free slot in her schedule."

"It's good enough that we have a guest coach from the first season of The Voice. How about the promo work? Are you guys going all out on it?"

"We've already gotten started."

"How's the public's response?"

"The people are really looking forward to it. There are a lot of discussions regarding the show, and the Weibo topicality has already reached 200,000. That's never happened before!"

"Hur hur, that's good. Great job, everyone. As long as we get to the top spot of the nationwide viewership ratings, I'll personally apply to management for everyone to get recognized for their contributions!"

"Thank you, Director Jiang."

"We guarantee that we'll do a good job!"

"In the current climate of the variety show industry, no one is a match for us!"

"Yeah, the latest variety shows that Shanghai TV and Hunan TV did are no competition for us. After all, The Voice is exceedingly well-known for a TV show. After a year's break, the previous viewers will surely be anticipating it even more. Once the show starts broadcasting again, we've reason to believe that the old viewers will return and that there will be an influx of new viewers as well. Based on past experience, Sing! should do even better than the first season of The Voice in terms of viewership!"

Everyone felt loose and relaxed as they talked and laughed without pressure.

Why?

Because they had no opponents!

Not a single one!

Within the industry, in the entire satellite television market and variety show industry, there weren't too many shows as hot and phenomenal as The Voice. With its reputation out there, even if they filmed the show with their eyes closed, even with a change to the show's name, there would be no lack of viewers. The people would sit down at their televisions and wait for the show to be broadcast. This was the charm of having reputation and also the result that accumulated popularity could bring about. In the whole of the country, there was no one who could stop them! Unless some other phenomenal variety show were to suddenly emerge at this time, they would not be stopped. But no matter how they saw it, it was impossible for that to happen. King of Masked Singers had just ended a few months ago, so the second season couldn't possibly happen so soon. With such circumstances and without any opponents, they were simply invincible.

In this situation, the program team staff were all humming a song inside their heads.

How lonely it is to be invincible!

How empty it feels to be invincible!

The executive director of Sing! was even more exultant and in high spirits.

However, when they remembered that "Invincible" was written by Zhang Ye, they felt like they shouldn't be singing it in fear of bringing bad luck upon themselves. Zhang Ye's name was basically taboo in Central TV Department 1, and no one would dare mention it in front of the higher-ups without good reason. His name represented the biggest enemy Central TV Department 1 had and was also a sore spot that could never be healed.

Everyone went back to discussing the follow-up production.

They talked about issues like the recruitment of the guest coaches, who were still missing two people.

Everything was progressing smoothly, and they could almost see Sing! sweeping across the entire country. However, it was at this moment that a staff member came running in panic!

"Something's happened! Something's happened!"

"What's wrong? Why're you in such a rush?"

"What's happened?"

"Aren't you the one who's responsible for inviting the guest coaches onto the show? Which celebrity has declined to join us this time?"

"If they don't wish to join us, so be it. What are you so alarmed about?"

Everyone looked at that employee, unsure of what had happened.

He didn't manage to invite someone as a guest coach?

Then just approach someone else. There were so many others in the music industry anyway. With their reputation and offering price, there shouldn't be too many people who would reject them. So was there any need to worry about having no big names for their guest coaches?

But for some reason, that employee was looking really flustered. Just as the program team members were looking at him impatiently and wondering what was going on, he brought them an earth-shattering piece of news!

Flustered, the employee said, "I just found out from a big shot of the music industry that other than us, another television station has approached him as well!"

Jiang Yuan was amused. "There's someone else who dares to produce a singing variety show at this time?"

The program team's executive director also smiled. "Who has the balls? They dare compete with us?"

The employee wiped away his sweat and said, "It's Beijing TV!"

An assistant director was taken aback. "Them?"

Another assistant director said, "So what? Must we make such a fuss?"

But the employee's next words gave everyone a fright!

Pulling a long face, he gulped and replied, "It's Zhang Ye's new show and Beijing TV has secured the rights to broadcast it! They intend to broadcast it at the same time as us!"

"What?"

"Say that again?"

"Zhang Ye is producing another singing show?"

"They're going to broadcast at the same time as us?"

Jiang Yuan blanched!

The executive director was dumbfounded!

A few of the assistant directors looked infuriated!

The entire program team of Sing! fell silent!

Then, this news galloped through the internal departments of Central TV!

...

Central TV Department 1.

"What?"

"Zhang Ye is coming back with a new show?"

"Holy shit! Damn!"

"Is he crazy? Why does he want to clash with Sing!?"

"Oh my god! That madman!"

"This is bad! This time, it's really bad!"

"No opponents? Looks like we've just gotten ourselves an opponent, fuck!"

"Is this for real? Isn't he busy receiving awards? Isn't he trying to get into the Chinese language textbooks? Isn't he off writing novels? Then why has this great demon king returned to the variety world?"

"He's doing this on purpose! He's definitely doing this on purpose!"

...

Central TV Sports Channel.

Yu Yingyi and her colleagues were also shocked at the news!

"Fuck, I have a bad feeling about this!"

"Me too, why do I have a feeling that Department 1 is going to flop hard!"

"Zhang Ye is back?"

"Pfft!"

"Teacher Yu, why are you laughing?"

"Did I laugh?"

"You did."

"Alright, I did. It's just that I am absolutely tickled by the way that my old classmate is behaving!"

...

Central TV Documentary Channel.

Zhang Ye's old colleagues here also didn't know whether to laugh or cry.

"Central TV Department 1 is gonna be in serious trouble this time!"

"They're too arrogant! It's good that this has happened!"

"Director Zhang has returned! Let's see how they'll deal with this!"

"I bumped into an assistant director of the program team from Central TV Department 1 yesterday. You should have seen that condescending look on his face thinking that they're unbeatable. I can't help but laugh at it now!"

"Me too, hahahahaha!"

"Good one, Director Zhang!"

"Beautifully played!"

"The faces of those people from Central TV Department 1 have probably all turned green!"

"What else! Bumping into Zhang Ye, who wouldn't turn green!"

Chapter 1224: The battle begins!

Meanwhile.

Beijing Television.

The program team for I Am a Singer was officially up and running.

Zhang Ye stood in the newly set up office with his arms wide open as he gave each of his old colleagues a hug.

Xiao Lu gave him a bear hug and exclaimed, "Teacher Zhang! I've missed you so much!"

Zhang Ye laughed and said, "It's only been two months, hasn't it?"

"But it still feels like ages ago!" Dafei also went up to hug him!

Hou Ge laughed heartily. "We can work with Teacher Zhang again!"

His twin brother, Hou Di, laughed and said, "I really like working together with Teacher Zhang. There's nothing else that I can say except that I feel really happy and great!"

Zhang Ye said hello to all of them one by one. "How was the previous show you guys made? I heard that it wasn't too well-received?"

Hu Fei stared at him. "Kid, must you bring up that touchy subject?"

Zhang Ye laughed, "Haha."

Han Qi was on the list of the program team staff as well. During King of Masked Singers, she was The Clown's liaison with the program team, or more appropriately, his manager. She was also a diehard fan of Zhang Ye's, so she was very excited to see him again. "Director Zhang, please don't bring that up. The show did abysmally and we suffered a great loss because of it. In the end, the final viewership ratings did not even cross 0.4%. We had to end broadcasting after only a month when the show was canceled by the station."

These days, it wasn't easy producing a reality show either.

Zhang Ye reassured everyone, "Don't worry, I'm back. So let's all work together and pull off another big one!"

Dong Shanshan arrived from outside at this moment. "Now that you're here, we don't have anything more to worry about. But what's this about me hearing that your new show doesn't require a host? What's that all about?"

Zhang Ye smiled and said, "That's how the show is set up. We'll have the singers take turns hosting the show. I didn't actually say that there wouldn't be a hosting position, Shanshan. You came at just the right time; I was going to look for you about something. Of course I'd have a good role lined up for you! Do you think that you can help lead the team of singers' managers for the show?"

Dong Shanshan gave him a look. "Of course! Did you even have to ask?"

Everyone laughed.

Dong Shanshan was the most popular host at Beijing Television. She was holding up two of the station's shows that were doing rather well in the viewership ratings. Based on her current status, it was actually quite a mismatch of qualifications to use her as one of the singers' managers in the show. But since she was Zhang Ye's old classmate, and based on their friendship, she agreed to it without a second thought. Zhang Ye also desperately needed someone as popular as Dong Shanshan to help him firm up the show. Other than her, no one could do it.

After a while, most of the program team staff arrived.

They sat together and delegated the roles according to the program proposal.

Then Zhang Ye started briefing them. "This show, it has the ability to advance Beijing TV within the industry. For example, there will be a regular cast of seven managers assigned to the singers during the show's run. This time, it won't be done like how we did it on King of Masked Singers, using the program team staff to liaise and wait on the singers' requests. I will need a dedicated team of real hosts to handle the job. Brother Hu, could you please take care of that for me and see which hosts are available and interested in taking the roles? Shanshan will be their team leader, which is definitely the best position there is. As for the remaining spots, I'll need to trouble you to give me some recommendations. I want the slightly more popular variety hosts that we have right now, but at the same time, they shouldn't be overly popular. I just need them to be someone the viewers are familiar with."

Hu Fei smiled and said, "I'll take care of that."

The show's segment where the host-managers played a part was a very important one. Although it might look like a sideshow, they would actually get a lot of screen time. It would help increase their popularity quite a bit and should be a good role to take. Just like in I Am a Singer back in Zhang Ye's previous world—there were quite a few hosts who became very popular overnight after getting paired with the singers as their managers. After I Am a Singer was broadcast here, it would definitely raise the standards of all of Beijing Television's hosting lineup, as well as bring about an increase in their influence. It was just that they couldn't see this effect since they were unsure of how it would work, although they would definitely understand what he meant after the premiere episode.

Zhang Ye continued assigning the roles for the program team.

"We can start prepping for recording."

"Right now?"

"Yes, right now."

"But it's still so early in production, and the stage hasn't been set up either."

"This new show is a little different from the other singing variety shows. Most of the time, we'll just be filming the singers' activities in front of the camera and behind the scenes. There's even a need to capture a portion of the ongoings in their private lives, like going around with the singer as they pack their belongings in preparation for the show. This is why we need to get everything planned out and ready beforehand as there are a lot of reality show elements."

"A reality show? Would that work?"

"Director Zhang, wouldn't that make it overly complicated?"

"Yeah, wouldn't that easily scatter the audience's attention? Isn't this supposed to be a singing show?"

"You guys will understand when the filming's done."

"Alright!"

"Understood!"

"Just assign us accordingly!"

Can it really work?

If Director Zhang says so, then it definitely will!

The advantage of working with his old team was that they could all trust him and had a tacit understanding of things. Whatever role Zhang Ye assigned the staff, they would all give 200% and wouldn't question why they had to do it that way.

After the roles were all delegated!

The rest of the tasks would be handled by Zhang Ye himself!

Grabbing people!

Racing against time!

Grabbing advertising sponsorships!

The battle with Central TV Department 1 was only just beginning!

...

On the very same day, the news leaked.

But of course, this couldn't really be kept secret. The media outlets and newspapers were all blown away by this news.

"Zhang Ye Returns!"

"Zhang Ye's New Show: I Am a Singer?"

"A showdown between giants in the singing variety show genre?"

"Archenemy of Sing! approaches!"

"Sing! likely to face enormous challenge!"

"I Am a Singer: A mantis trying to stop a carriage! 1 "

"Central TV Department 1 and Beijing TV battle for the title of variety big brother?"

"The battle between Central TV Department 1 and Zhang Ye restarts!"

"Experts predict Sing! to score a resounding victory!"

On Weibo.

The netizens were also screaming in excitement!

"Damn, this is beautiful!"

"Zhang Ye has returned again!"

"Heavens!"

"This is so exciting! The more chaotic it is, the merrier I am!"

"Hahahahaha, this is going to be really interesting!"

"It will be an epic battle for sure! It's gonna be the ultimate slaughter!"

"I Am a Singer vs. Sing!, who does everyone think will win? I think Sing! has the upper hand since they already have a reputation. They have a viewer base of over a hundred million people. Even with a name change, the TV station behind it remains the same. They'll still be doing the same thing, so a lot of people should be able to accept it, right? With this dominance, Zhang Ye's new show that appeared from nowhere should be at a disadvantage no matter how I look at it!"

"That might not be true. Sing! is still not exactly the second season of The Voice. They've changed the program team, director, host, and I think even the guest coaches are not the same. Whether everyone can accept it is still not guaranteed. We still can't be sure of whether the viewers are convinced by the reputation of The Voice or the reputation of Zhang Ye. I, for one, am convinced by Zhang Ye alone. The Voice was created by him and is a very strong representation of him. So I'll only look at who makes the show, not what the show is! In my opinion, The Voice will only be The Voice if Zhang Ye is in charge. Any other versions are imitations!"

"Why didn't Zhang Ye just go ahead and record the second season of The Voice? He holds the copyright to it, after all."

"There should be a limitation clause in the contract that Zhang Ye signed with Central TV Department 1. Although The Voice's copyright and naming rights are with him, as long as he isn't working with Central TV Department 1 to create the show, he isn't allowed to authorize it to any other TV network. This should've been written into the contract. That's why Central TV Department 1 has chosen not to use the name of The Voice, and that applies to Zhang Ye too."

"So what is I Am a Singer gonna be like?"

"I don't know!"

"Let's just wait and see. They have begun fighting!"

"Let's see which is better!"

"Yeah, it's time for a showdown!"

"The rising wind portends the coming storm!"

"I can already see a bloody clash happening!"

Chapter 1225: The fight for advertisers!

The next day.

In the morning.

At a restaurant serving stews.

It was relatively quiet at this time as everyone was at work. The restaurant had just opened for the day, and no customers had entered yet. Then a young man wearing sunglasses walked in from outside.

The restaurant owner had sharp eyes and recognized him. "Ah, Zhang Ye!"

Several of his employees' eyes lit up. "Zhang Ye?"

Zhang Ye laughed and said, "Are you open yet, boss?"

"Yes, yes, we're open!" The boss was ecstatic. "We warmly welcome you, Teacher Zhang. Why do you have so much free time today? Talk of you making a new show is all over the news!"

Zhang Ye chuckled and said, "Yeah, I came here to meet someone for business."

The boss said, "Why is a person of your status coming to our small restaurant? You've really graced us with your presence. Please, come in and have a seat."

Zhang Ye found a place to sit down. "I've eaten here before and found your stews quite authentic. But I wasn't famous at that time, so you didn't recognize back then."

The boss started trembling in excitement as though he was shot with adrenaline!

Zhang Ye's eaten here before?

He even likes the taste of our food?

If this got out, wouldn't their restaurant become super popular?

Soon after, the CEO of Brain Gold, Wu Mo, also arrived. "Yo, Brother Zhang, you're already here? Have you ordered yet?"

"Not yet. I was waiting for you, wasn't I?"

"I want a large bowl with extra tripe please."

"Sure, I'll have the small one without any vinegar, but please add extra garlic sauce."

The boss personally went into the kitchen as he said, "Alright, please look forward to it!"

He was pretty attentive to the situation too. After he whispered something to his employees, they went over and shut the doors. He closed the entire restaurant for Zhang Ye.

The stews were served.

The two of them talked as they ate.

Zhang Ye chewed on a pork lung. "Do you want to take the title sponsorship of I Am a Singer?"

"Your new show?"

"Yes."

"Is it good?"

"Of course it's good. Why else would I offer it to you?"

"To be honest, I'm really quite interested."

"Then let's talk."

"How much is the title sponsorship fee?"

"200 million RMB."

"Whoa, are you asking for my life?"

"That's already very low; it's a fair price."

"You call that low? Which variety show have you ever seen asking for 200 million RMB for the title sponsorship? 150 million was the highest, and that's even the record created by King of Masked Singers!"

"If you're not interested, I'll go to someone else?"

"Make it a little cheaper."

"You won't make a loss on 200 million yuan. Your company is the leader of the health supplements industry, so what's 200 million to you? You'd earn all that back within half a year. Become the title sponsor for I Am a Singer and I guarantee your sales figures will double. I only asked for a 100 million from you for the first season of The Voice, but look at how much you earned from that."

"Aiya, we can't compare things like this."

"Do you want it or not?"

"Alright, I give in!"

"I'll get someone to send you the contract later."

He finished eating his bowl of stew.

Zhang Ye got up and asked, "Boss, how much?"

"That'll be a total of 45 yuan," the boss shouted.

Zhang Ye took out his wallet and placed the money onto the table before turning to leave.

Wu Mo was speechless. "You're leaving just like that?"

Zhang Ye waved with his back facing him. "I'm really busy. There's still a pile of things waiting for me to do."

Wu Mo rolled his eyes and said annoyed, "Great, a deal worth 200 million RMB and all I get in return is a 25 yuan bowl of stew. And you're even leaving first? Real great." He lowered his head and continued eating by himself.

Zhang Ye no longer needed to be as polite with him. Brain Gold had become the leading health product in the market by leaps and bounds and was the top brand in the industry. It was earning more and more money now, and Zhang Ye could partly be credited with that. Whether it was him endorsing Wu Mo's company product in the commercial at the beginning, or Brain Gold becoming the title sponsor of The

Voice later on, all of it brought great benefits to the Brain Gold Company. It turned a small company on the brink of bankruptcy around and launched it into the leading health product brand in the entire country. This was also the reason for the good relationship between Wu Mo and Zhang Ye. Of course, the key reason was that Wu Mo was Wu Zeqing's nephew. When Zhang Ye and Wu Zeqing got married, Wu Mo would have to address him as his uncle-in-law based on their statuses. As such, Zhang Ye was not as polite with him as before.

It was just that Wu Mo did not know about all of this as of yet.

...

Elsewhere.

Central TV Department 1.

The Sing! program team staff had all been on guard since yesterday. Everyone was kept extremely busy in their panic, not because they were easily flustered, but because their opponent was too formidable. When faced with this person called Zhang Ye, none of the program team members dared to neglect their duties!

"We've tied up the advertisement sponsorship deal with Donghe!"

"Good! Well done!"

"Lele Mineral Water's advertisement sponsorship has been confirmed too!"

"Has the title sponsorship been settled yet?"

"We're waiting for their decision. The other party is still haggling over the fees!"

"If they don't want it, find someone else!"

"There's no one else. Those who can offer more than a 100 million in title sponsorship fees number no more than twenty corporations!"

"I heard that I Am a Singer is also fighting for advertisers!"

"How can a new program team like theirs possibly compete with us?"

"But many of the advertisers have already been snatched away by them. Like the one we locked up earlier. They've also been pried away by I Am a Singer!"

"How shameless!"

"How can they behave like this?"

"Isn't that against the industry's rules?"

Suddenly, an assistant director from the program team walked in and announced in excitement, "We've got it! The title sponsorship has been finalized! 160 million RMB!"

"Ah!"

"This is great!"

"160 million? What an astronomical figure!"

"That has broken the record!"

"We'll crush I Am a Singer this time!"

"Hahahaha, this title sponsorship fee is even higher than what King of Masked Singers got!"

"It's a totally unprecedented amount in the industry!"

"Release the news straight away!"

"Yes, Boss!"

The news got out!

The industry was shocked!

The public was amazed!

Sing!'s title sponsorship was sold for 160 million RMB?

The title sponsorship fee might look like it had nothing to do with the quality of a show or had no relation to the viewership ratings it would get. But in actual fact, it was a very important symbol and an indicator of things, as those with the ability to sponsor such an amount were very smart people. The title sponsorship fee would also reflect how optimistic the sponsors were about a show. Since they were willing to pay over a 100 million for it, that meant they expected it to reap a figure that would far exceed what they put in.

Sing! was highlighted in the news once again!

The program team of Sing! also became famous as a result!

Quite a few industry insiders and netizens were heatedly discussing this record-breaking astronomical title sponsorship fee!

But just as Central TV Department 1 was preparing to celebrate their first victory, Beijing Television's official Weibo released even more shocking news!

I Am a Singer's title sponsorship had been sold to Brain Gold!

The title sponsorship fee: 200 million RMB!

The industry insiders were flabbergasted!

The citizens were also stunned!

"Holy fuck!"

"Has the Brain Gold Company gone mad?"

"200 million yuan? Does their fucking money grow on trees?"

"Yeah, it's like this sum doesn't mean a thing to them!"

"Wasn't Brain Gold the title sponsor for the first season of The Voice? What's the meaning of this? They won't be continuing their relationship with Sing! They're giving their support to Beijing TV?"

"Can they really recoup an investment of 200 million yuan?"

"Who the hell knows? That sum is insane!"

"The record's been broken again?"

"Central TV Department 1's 160 million RMB title sponsorship fee had already given me such a shock. Then, in the blink of an eye, this news about the 200 million RMB title sponsorship fee was released? Oh my god! Do they not need to leave some money for rainy days?"

"Central TV Department 1 has been slapped in the face hard!"

"Pfft, looks like Zhang Ye has outdone them again!"

"Sing! still couldn't beat I Am a Singer in the end!"

"Did they really spend 200 million RMB on that, the fuck?"

"Unbelievable!"

The media was shocked!

Central TV Department 1 was also dumbfounded!

Many on the Sing! program team were left cursing and swearing!

"Based on what!"

"200 million?"

"Is Brain Gold crazy!"

"They're gonna go bankrupt!"

"For a new show with no indicators of past performance, they actually paid that much for the title sponsorship?"

Nobody could understand and all felt a sense of frustration. They felt like they had been played by Zhang Ye. They had rushed to announce their title sponsorship fee had broken the record. But just 30 minutes later, they were slapped by I Am a Singer's program team. This was clearly a huge blow, and many of them could not accept it!

Why?

Based on what?

They were all asking this in their heads.

A deputy director from Central TV Department 2 happened to pass by and bump into several program directors of the Sing! program team.

The executive director of Sing! sighed, "Director He."

Deputy Director He asked, "What the matter?"

The executive director said, "Nothing."

Deputy Director He was on rather good terms with him as he had brought this director up within the station. "If you say it's nothing, that means there's something."

The executive director hesitated for a moment before saying, "I just don't get how we're losing."

Deputy Director He could see that they were feeling really bad. He shook his head and couldn't help but say, "Don't forget who your opponent is: the best director of the television variety world who's also the record holder of the top viewership ratings and title sponsorship fee. He's the gold standard in the country's television variety circle. If I have to be blunt, just the name of 'Zhang Ye' alone is valued at 200 million. There's nothing to be ashamed of even if you all lose to him."

The executive director gave a bitter smile.

Zhang Ye?

What a legend indeed!

This sort of person was truly too difficult to deal with!

Chapter 1226: I Am a Singer's promotional video!

The fight for advertisers came to an end!

In the following days, the battle for publicity officially began!

Many industry insiders and onlookers were watching this unfold with their hearts in their mouths!

"Wow, take a look at People's Daily!"

"Damn, I Am a Singer has taken out an entire page in People's Daily!"

"How lavish was that? How much did that cost?"

"I wonder how many days they'll advertise in the Party's newspaper 1 ."

"Hey, everyone. Quickly take a look at Beijing Daily, Shanghai Daily, and Huadong Morning Post. The ad pages have all been bought out by Sing! What the fuck!"

"Tianhe Discussion Forums' ad spot on the main page is running an ad for I Am a Singer!"

"TT Messenger's pop-ups are all filled with Sing! ads!"

"These two program teams must have gone fucking insane!"

"I've never come across such hardcore promotions before!"

"How wealthy! They're way too fucking wealthy!"

"I take my hat off to them. They're taking the fight all across the country!"

"This has got to be the biggest publicity battle in the history of variety shows, right?"

"How much hatred do they have for each other? It seems like they're really trying to do each other in!"

"Let them fight it out. Sing! has already lost the fight for advertisers, so let's see who'll win in the battle for publicity!"

In the various major forums!

In the various major newspapers!

On the various major chat apps!

Without an exception, all of them had become battlefields between the two shows!

The publicity battle was so widespread that even those in the music and film industries were alarmed. As they were preparing to promote their new albums, concerts, and films, they discovered they couldn't get any good spots for publicity in the media. Almost all of the critical advertising spots had been bought up by Sing! and I Am a Singer! All along, the film industry had been acknowledged as the heaviest spending industry in the entertainment circle. Be it their actors' salaries, promotional budgets, or production investments, they were the highest among the related industries. But who could have thought that the film industry would be shocked and outdone by two variety shows!

Just how many advertisement spots had they bought?

How much money had they spent on buying all those spots?

10 million?

20 million?

Just these sums spent would have been enough for the film industry to produce a budget idol film. Could they really be that well-off? And this was just the beginning? Could it be that the variety shows' production fees would go over 200 million RMB? What was 200 million good for? It was enough for them to hire the best director in the country and the best A-listers to make a film for the Chinese New Year holidays! Thinking about that, the film industry's people were unable to keep calm!

This was too much!

This was too frightening!

...

Actually, even Beijing Television couldn't keep calm.

At I Am a Singer's program team office.

Hu Fei said nervously, "Zhang'er, we've already spent over a 100 million!"

"OK, it'll be fine." Zhang Ye replied calmly, "Let's keep buying ad spots!"

Hou Ge exclaimed, "We're still buying more? Don't we have enough?"

Zhang Ye shook his head. "We're still far from enough. Since Central TV Department 1 wants to fight us in this publicity battle, we must not let them to oppress us. We'll battle them. Isn't it just a matter of who can dump more money! Don't worry about it, everyone. The money we spend now will come back multiple times over. If we're going to do this, we must up our stakes!"

Dafei didn't know whether to laugh or cry. "But the stakes are getting too high!"

It was indeed a little too much!

But all of it would be worthwhile!

I Am a Singer's greatest weakness was that it did not have any accumulated popularity to fall back on. In Zhang Ye's previous world, during the first three seasons of I Am a Singer, the reputation of the show declined season after season. But because it had accumulated its popularity and became very well-known to a lot of people, the viewership ratings got better and better with every season. The total online views of the show even managed to double. But Zhang Ye did not have the luxury of time over here. That was why they had to carry out such intense promotions for the show. He was going to spend as much as required just to up the promotions. He wanted to give I Am a Singer the most explosive viewership ratings right from the start of the first season and make it an instant hit!

All that he had done were child's play compared to this. Whether it be The Voice, A Bite of China, or King of Masked Singers, their production budgets were all too limited. The promotional budget in those shows were all raised by scrimping and saving on other production costs. But Zhang Ye did not intend to have it this way for I Am a Singer. Beijing Television had placed their trust in him and given him an unlimited budget. After pulling in Brain Gold's 200 million title sponsorship fee and other advertiser sponsorships, it gave him the freedom to spend without consideration. Further, there was still the online video hosting site's exclusive broadcast rights fee that was yet to be sold!

So why not play a big one this time!

Zhang Ye couldn't wait any longer, and neither could the plan to reach the summit!

I Am a Singer was not only a show that Beijing Television had a lot of expectations for, nor was it just a show that Zhang Ye wanted to use to face-smack Central TV Department 1 with, it was also the fourth milestone in Zhang Ye's "Reach the Summit" plan. Zhang Ye wanted to use I Am a Singer to fulfill the potential popularity he could achieve from the variety world so that he could ascend onto the altar!

Zhang Ye said, "Oh yes, earmark 2 million RMB from the production budget."

Xiao Lu asked, "Alright, what will it be used for?"

Zhang Ye said, "To film a promo video."

Hou Ge was taken aback. "A promo video? How many minutes will it be?"

"Around one minute." Zhang Ye's answer was shocking.

Everyone in the program team gasped. "Just one minute? Two million RMB? Director Zhang, isn't that too much?"

Zhang Ye said, "I'll personally take charge of the production of the promo video. I want to have the best equipment, the best production staff, and the best special effects!"

"Uh..."

"Alright then!"

"Whatever you say."

...

Several days later.

The promotional video for Sing! was released!

Just watching it, it was clear that it was a big production and a lot of money had been spent on it. The style and colors used were basically a continuation of the approach used in The Voice. Although it wasn't really anything new, the video was still beautifully produced.

The netizens were all praising it!

"That's pretty good."

"Eagerly awaiting the broadcast!"

"The promo is really nice!"

...

A day later.

I Am a Singer's promotional video was officially released!

Many people paid special attention to it, because everyone knew what kind of a show Sing! was since they've watched The Voice before. But they had no idea what sort of a singing show I Am a Singer would be. Even many of the industry insiders did not know anything since Beijing Television had not revealed much information about it. Zhang Ye's program team also requested to work on the show under a veil of secrecy and did not even want to reveal the list of participating singers. It was as though they were trying to remain mysterious right until the very end. So in the absence of any information, everyone was curious and looking forward to seeing the promotional video!

At 8 PM.

The promotional video would get its first broadcast on Beijing Television.

Zhang Ye's parents turned on the television.

Chen Guang and Fan Wenli were both sitting in the living room in wait.

Xiaodong and Amy were watching eagerly.

Many people in the industry had tuned in to watch right on time.

The background music played soothingly as an image appeared on screen!

Then Zhang Ye's magnetic voice sounded.

"The sound of a person falling.

"Is much louder than a group of people living.

"A moment of despair in someone.

"Carries the significance of dying once.

"Does life gets renewed, or does it end?

"All of it decided by the choices of every moment and every second.

"Music is not the goal, but a state of living.

"Please doubt me!

"Mock me!

"Hurt me!

"I shall greet life facing backwards.

"Why do we sing? So that we stop being afraid.

"Music is fearless.

"I...Am...a...Singer!"

A short 52-second promotional video ended!

But those who caught this promotional video the moment it was broadcast were all left with shocked expressions for a very long time. The images, colors, special effects, and voice over were all superb!

I Am a Singer's promotional video shot up to trending on the search engines!

Praise and shocked reactions were all over Weibo!

"That was fantastic!"

"How is this a promo!"

"Right? It was too artistic! The visuals in it can all be used as my desktop wallpaper!"

"It's so exquisite, concise, and artistic all at once. It's awesome!"

"Zhang Ye's amazing at creating stuff like that!"

"You can immediately see how good it is!"

"That voice over paired with the visuals and music made my heart race!"

"It's much better than Sing!'s promo! They've been flung two streets away!"

"Pfft, it looks like Sing! has lost the publicity battle as well!"

"They can't complain about that! Zhang Ye is Zhang Ye, after all!"

"I'm looking forward to I Am a Singer even more now!"

"Based on just this promo alone, I'll catch the show when it broadcasts!"

There were heated discussions everywhere!

Many of the industry insiders could not help but give it a Like!

A famous advertisement director declared on Weibo: "A wonderfully produced promotional video!"

A program director from Shanghai Television: "I've watched it six times already. This is truly art."

A little-known film director: "By creating such an artistic promotional video with an attitude of seeking perfection, the show they come up with shouldn't be bad."

The promotional video was on fire!

No one expected how hot it was getting!

It was so hot that it didn't make any sense!

Comparatively, Sing!'s promotional video was looking more dismal by the second!

This was not to say that Sing!'s promotional video was bad. But things did not stand up well to comparison. Once they were compared, the shortcomings became glaring! To be exact, this wasn't a case of Sing! losing to I Am a Singer. It was just that the gulf between the director of the Sing! promotional video and Zhang Ye was too wide!

As well as the difference in the production budgets!

How much was spent on the former's promotional video?

Tens of thousands?

Hundreds of thousands?

And what about the latter?

A full two million RMB was put into it in order to create it!

...

At Beijing Television.

Inside I Am a Singer's program team office.

Xiao Lu laughed loudly. "We've won! We've won again!"

Hou Ge said, "This video is so wonderful!"

Dafei said, "Two million? Totally worth it!"

"We're trending at number three in the searches!" Han Qi said, pleasantly surprised!

Hu Fei gave Zhang Ye an acknowledging nod.

Zhang Ye smiled back. This promotional video 2 had been carefully chosen by him and came from the fourth season of I Am a Singer back in his previous world. Zhang Ye kept the video's artistic direction mostly intact but added in his own ideas and special effects for the images and music. This was to give the viewers a greater sense of visual impact with a more powerful feel. Every frame and detail was repeatedly hammered out. Otherwise, it couldn't possibly have cost two million yuan to produce!

Everything was now ready!

There was only the official recording left to film!

The highest title sponsorship fee in the industry, the highest production budget in the industry, the highest promotional budget in the industry. There were too many of "the highest in the industry" contained within this show called I Am a Singer. Zhang Ye had given his full effort so he wouldn't have any regrets later. He vowed to make I Am a Singer a classic, landmark variety show!

Chapter 1227: We have never lost before!

The venue was being prepared.

The promotions were ramped up.

The troll armies were flinging insults at each other.

Day by day, it was getting closer and closer to the broadcast of the two shows.

On the day that Central TV Department 1 suddenly announced their broadcast time for Sing!, Beijing Television swiftly followed with an announcement for I Am a Singer's broadcast time!

The same day!

At the same time!

Not a second earlier or later!

When this news was released, everyone in the industry was shocked!

Meanwhile, the netizens were feeling pumped up and delighted by the news!

Lately, these two shows were the most anticipated variety shows with no others coming close. In the history of the variety world, there hadn't been any shows that carried out such widespread publicity campaigns like it didn't cost a thing. Everyone knew that it would be the best choice for these two most anticipated shows to broadcast at different times so they could avoid directly competing with each other. But Zhang Ye did not do that as he chose to broadcast at the exact same time and on the same day as Sing! It was just like what had happened with A Bite of China. This was Zhang Ye and he had always done things in this way. He would either choose not to fight at all, or go all out if he did!

The countdown began!

The desperate struggle between the two shows was finally starting!

Who would lose?

And who would win?

No one could predict it!

...

Noon that same day.

At home.

Zhang Ye's parents were busy preparing lunch.

When the doorbell rang, his mother tossed off her apron and wiped her hands clean. Then she hurriedly went to open the door with a smile on her face. "Coming, coming."

Wu Zeqing was standing outside. "Auntie."

His mother smiled and said, "Ai, Little Wu, come in quickly."

"Little Wu, you're here?" His father also came out of the kitchen with a smile.

Wu Zeqing smiled. "Uncle, you're busy?"

His father said, "Lunch is almost ready. Go and call Little Ye over."

Wu Zeqing asked, "Where is he?"

"He's lying in his room. He's been tired out by work the past few days," his mother said happily.

"OK, I'll go and get him." Wu Zeqing went to his bedroom and pushed open the door. "Little Ye?"

Zhang Ye was lying on the bed and mumbled, "You're here?"

Wu Zeqing smiled. "Is the show going to be broadcast soon?"

Zhang Ye said, "I was actually planning it for a little later but had to match Sing! pushing forward their broadcast date. I had to put in some overtime at work as a result. The good thing is that just about everything is ready. We'll begin officially recording I Am a Singer's first episode tomorrow. Hai, I haven't really had much sleep the past few days. The executives at the station are the ones who chased me home so I could rest well today. How could I rest? I can't even sit still for long."

Old Wu said, "Alright, let's have lunch first."

They started eating.

The whole family was seated at the dining table eating lunch.

But Zhang Ye was preoccupied with his thoughts. He didn't even take two bites before putting down his chopsticks.

His mother stared at him. "Eat."

Zhang Ye whined, "I have no appetite."

Wu Zeqing could sense what he was thinking about. "Are you feeling nervous?"

"Not exactly." Zhang Ye sighed, "But I'm under a lot of pressure."

His father said, "You? Under pressure?"

Zhang Ye rolled his eyes. "Of course. Do you know how many people I'm supporting?"

Zhang Ye was the type of person who was very mentally strong. In normal circumstances, he would hardly feel any stress and was more carefree. But now that he had reached this position where his popularity was getting higher and higher, the people who depended on him for their livelihoods were also increasing. No matter how strong he was, he couldn't possibly feel no pressure. What if he lost this battle? What if he didn't manage to do well? How would he answer to Beijing Television? How could he recoup the 200 million in title sponsorship fees that Wu Mo had pumped in? What about his staff at the studio? The higher he climbed, the more he couldn't afford to lose. He was no longer a general without an army. It was just that he rarely displayed any of such worries and stress in front of others.

Zhang Ye had been in such situations in the past. Back then, it was always Wu Zeqing who pointed him the way forward. So he looked at her. "Old Wu, you oversee the entertainment circle and have come across many shows. You have read the content approval report for I Am a Singer, right? I'll tell you about the specifics of the show segments again. Let me know what you think of it after and whether it can win against that copycat version of The Voice. Listen, the show will have seven designated singers..."

Before he could finish.

Wu Zeqing cut him off. "I don't want to listen to that."

Zhang Ye was taken aback. "Why not?"

"Because I don't have to listen to it." Wu Zeqing smiled and grabbed some food for him. She said, "Who are you? You're Zhang Ye, the best program director in the industry. The shows you produce will definitely be number one in the country. This is something that you don't even have to have a doubt about—no one can beat you, none of the major satellite channels, not even Central TV Department 1. As long as you put your mind to it, as long as you do it seriously, no one in the industry is a match for you."

Zhang Ye cheered up. "Phew, about that, can you not worship me to such an extent?"

His mother rolled her eyes. "Rascal, stop being conceited."

"What you need now is rest and a good meal." Old Wu grabbed some more food for him and said, "The battle will officially start tomorrow, so eat up."

Zhang Ye smiled. "OK, I got it."

Old Wu was truly capable!

It only took her a few words to bring Zhang Ye's fighting spirit back up!

Everyone knew that Zhang Ye was one of the toughest people in the entertainment circle. But no one knew that behind this toughness, there were times he would hesitate and doubt himself. There were

also moments of weakness and confusion. Luckily for him, he had Wu Zeqing by his side. She always pulled him up in those critical times.

Zhang Ye didn't actually think that he was a very strong person. It was only when Old Wu was beside him that he could feel invincible and indomitable!

After lunch.

His cell phone rang. It was a video call.

As Zhang Ye had been forced to go on leave today, the I Am a Singer program team would only hold a video call with him to seek his instructions when something cropped up at work.

The video call connected.

Everyone started updating him on their work.

Zhang Ye acknowledged them one by one.

Finally, Xiao Lu said nervously to him: "Teacher Zhang, will we really be able to do it tomorrow?"

Many of the others in the video call kept quiet. Each and every one of them had the same expression as Zhang Ye had earlier. There was anticipation, tension.

Zhang Ye thought for a moment before giving them a long speech through the phone's video camera. "I know that we're really disadvantaged right now. On number of contacts, Central TV has a better network than us. On influence, Central TV's influence is much greater than ours. On the size of the audience base, Central TV has many more viewers than we do. On the show, Sing! has a greater accumulated following and popularity. That's why for our battle with Central TV Department 1, it would be bullshit if I said that I'm not feeling pressured."

Xiao Lu gave a wry smile.

Dafei had a frown on his face.

Hou Ge was breathing hard.

Han Qi kept rubbing her hands together to hide her unease.

Zhang Ye smiled. "But we have an advantage too."

Advantage?

What advantage could we have?

Everyone stared at Zhang Ye in the video call.

Zhang Ye emphasized each word he said. "Our advantage is: We! Have! Never! Lost! Before!"

Xiao Lu was inspired!

Han Qi raised her head!

Hou Ge and the others were jolted!

Those words were so domineering!

Only Zhang Ye would dare to speak like this!

In the entire industry, only Zhang Ye could say something like this!

Yes! They have never lost before!

To be precise, it was Zhang Ye who had never lost before!

Talk Show?

The Voice?

A Bite of China?

King of Masked Singers?

He had never lost!

And that was their greatest advantage!

Chapter 1228: Recording begins!

The next day.

It was a rainy morning.

At Central TV Department 1, in the recording studio for Sing!

"Camera 1."

"Ready."

"Lights."

"They're all working fine, Director."

"Is Teacher Fan Wenli here yet?"

"She's getting her makeup done."

"Good, get ready to roll the cameras!"

The audience had already entered the studio. In the huge venue, there were no empty seats. Many of the audience members could not calm themselves as they kept looking at the stage and exchanging whispers from time to time. It was still very much the same setup that Zhang Ye had created back during the first season of The Voice. However, the logo had been slightly modified and the colors of the stage were also a little different. The four guest coaches' chairs also no longer looked like the rotating type of seat. They were now blocked at the front with a screen so that whatever was happening on stage could not be seen by the guest coaches sitting in them. It also looked like the screen could be raised or lowered. As for the rest of the structures, they were virtually untouched.

"Are they recording yet?"

"Hurry up, I can't wait any longer!"

"I'm really looking forward to it. I hope there'll be more contestants similar to the common folks we saw in Season One, like Qian Pingfan, Luo Yu, and Old Master Zhou Danian. Those contestants on Zhang Ye's The Voice were all shockingly good!"

"Yeah, brilliant talent walks amongst the common folk!"

"I don't find the ordinary people who sing to be any worse than pro singers."

"Right, some of them can sing even better than pro singers."

"Ah, it's starting. Someone's coming out!"

"Is that the host?"

"Murong 1?"

"Murong is the host?"

"She's that really popular Spring Festival Gala host for Central TV!"

"But speaking fast isn't really her style, is it?"

"I don't think she can speak at Zhang Ye's speed."

"Hai, what a pity. Sing! can replicate everything except for the hosting role. They really couldn't find anyone to stand in for Zhang Ye. That fellow is simply too unique in the field of hosting. This is probably what I find most regrettable about Sing! After all, that image of him reading those advertising messages of a few hundred words in a single breath left a very deep impression on everyone. I don't think that most people can accept it now that that has changed."

"Yes, that's true. Hai."

"I find it weird that the guest coaches will no longer be turning around in their chairs too."

"Sing! isn't the same as The Voice after all."

The cameras started and the recording officially began.

As everyone discussed the show while recording happened, Zhang Ye's name kept coming up. It wasn't that they insisted on bringing him up, but that his name was just unavoidable whenever The Voice was mentioned. It was like an eternal monument.

...

Meanwhile.

At Beijing Television.

Recording for I Am a Singer also began. In fact, their filming for the show had started ten days earlier. As the show consisted of reality TV elements, they had to follow the singers around with cameras, as well

as document the behind-the-scenes activities at the television station and the program team's planning. For example, it was depicted in the program team's meeting how they invited the singers to the show and how the competition's rules were drawn up. Then there was also the assignment of tasks to Dong Shanshan and the others during a meeting between the seven host-managers. All of it was completed earlier and would be edited into the final broadcast cut to inform the audience about the rules so they would be fully familiar with how the show worked and understand the course of the competition.

And today was the official live studio recording of the show.

The staff members were standing by in their positions between 4 and 5 AM. Those who had worked with Zhang Ye before knew very well that he was usually very nice to others and an easy-going person who rolled with the punches. But when it came to work, Director Zhang was extremely demanding and paid very close attention to the details of a show. This was why no one dared to be careless with their roles.

The walkie-talkie beside Zhang Ye crackled.

"Director Zhang, Director Zhang, Singer #1 has arrived."

"OK. Follow them and document the arrival in video. Ensure that everyone sticks to the route."

"Director Zhang, Singer #3 is almost at the station."

"Get Singer #3's car go around again and wait for ten minutes."

"Understood, we won't let the singers bump into each other."

"How's the prep work going at the studio?"

"Everything is A-OK here!"

"Check again that the equipment is all set to go."

"Roger."

"In half an hour's time, let the audience into the studio."

"Copy that, Director Zhang."

The singers gradually arrived, albeit separately, in order to keep things confidential. This wasn't just a formality that they were preaching as the singers were really clueless about who the other participants were. Whether it was the contract talks, the rehearsals before the competition, or arriving at the station, all of it was carried out in isolation of the others. It was only when the singers got onstage that the other singers would know who they were through a television in their waiting rooms. This was done to increase the entertainment of the show.

Backstage.

This area had been redesigned into a very welcoming two story activity zone. On the second floor were seven rooms, with the logo of I Am a Singer and a room number pasted on the door. There was no indication of the singers' information, and only Zhang Ye knew which singer was going to be behind each door.

Room #1 was Xiaodong, the group leader of Spring Garden.

Zhang Ye pushed the door open and stepped in. "Hey, Sister Dong."

Xiaodong was just looking around the room when he came in. "Director Zhang, there are cameras everywhere in here?"

"That's right." Zhang Ye smiled and said, "Are you feeling OK?"

Xiaodong forced a smile. "I'm a little nervous."

Zhang Ye said, "But you're an Asian star. What big occasions have you not seen before?"

Xiaodong said, "I've never been in a competition with so many peers before! Tell me, who else joined? Hurry up and reveal a little to me. I walked around earlier, but why didn't I see anyone in the other rooms?"

Zhang Ye chuckled and said, "You're the first to arrive and also the first who'll find out who the other singers are. I Am a Singer will be using the competing singers as show hosts as per what we have discussed beforehand. So unless you get eliminated, you'll keep hosting until the finals begin, OK? But of course, with your ability and popularity, even if anyone gets eliminated, it won't be you. The other singers aren't as good at singing as you and less popular as well, so you can perform without any worries. Just let yourself go." He had said this before to Xiaodong. Otherwise, she couldn't have possibly agreed to join the show so easily.

Letting Xiaodong host the show was something Zhang Ye had given some thought. Whether it was her image, popularity, or eloquence, Xiaodong was the most suitable candidate for this role.

Xiaodong felt a little more at ease. "That's good then. I'm just afraid of losing. That'd be really embarrassing."

Zhang Ye handed her the hosting cue cards. "Here's the information about the singers. The host lines are also in there. Look through it and don't go outside the room anymore. The other singers will be arriving very soon."

"Don't worry." Xiaodong giggled as she took the cards from him.

After she did that, Zhang Ye turned around and closed the door. Then he quickly walked away.

But before he was even gone for five seconds, Xiaodong let out an angry roar from inside Room #1. "Zhang Ye! Get back in here! What's with this list of singers?"

In the activity zone, a few cameramen looked at Zhang Ye.

Xiao Lu blinked in confusion, not understanding what had happened to Xiaodong. She even gave Zhang Ye a look to indicate to him to get back in there to find out what was going on.

But no one expected Zhang Ye to not even turn around. When he heard that angry roar, this fellow even picked up his pace and walked away like he did not hear a thing!

In Room #1.

Xiaodong was so shocked she nearly fainted!

Seeing all of those names on the list of singers!

Chen Guang!

Amy!

Zhang Xia!

Xue Kaiqi!

He Huan!

Zhao Wuliu!

Xiaodong felt like she had just died!

What were all of these famous singers in the music scene doing here?!

Chapter 1229: How did I fall for your nonsense!

In the morning.

At the venue of I Am a Singer.

After the 1,000 audience members were admitted into the studio, they got so excited that they couldn't stay seated.

"What time does it start?"

"I heard that there won't be a professional host for this?"

"Zhang Ye's not hosting?"

"It seems like he won't participate in the competition nor host the show."

"Really? Then what'll he be doing?"

"I think he's just the executive director. Who knows what he's thinking?"

"This is his show, so he'll figure out a way to appear onscreen. Just wait and see. I know this guy too well. He'll definitely have given himself a good role."

"What about the judging panel?"

"It doesn't seem like there's one either."

"Huh? Are they going to base it off our voting?"

"That's right. I think it's because they didn't want a judging panel to sway the audience's decision, so they decided to do away with it."

"No host, no judging panel, no interactions, just seven singers competing onstage? The professionalism and authenticity of this show are clearly much greater. It'll also be a stern test of the singers' skills. However good they are, it'll be shown as is. Everything is going to be as real as it gets without any sensationalism mixed in!"

"That's what will make it exciting!"

"I'm just worried that there won't be any good singers participating."

"Yep, that's what I'm worried about too."

"At least they could wear a mask on King of Masked Singers. Even if they lost, they could still choose not to reveal their identities. But there's no such thing on I Am a Singer, so will the big names really join? If you win? That would be expected! But if you lose? Then that would be too embarrassing. They might even suffer a drop in their popularity as a result. The risks are huge, so who would willingly come and participate? Even the appearance fees shouldn't be able to move them too easily, right? But then again, if the singers who join the show are only newcomers or little-known singers, it would be too boring. In that case, I'd rather watch Sing!"

"Yeah."

"Let's see how it goes."

Who would show up?

Which singers would be participating?

The audience was completely clueless and couldn't help but whisper among themselves.

All of a sudden, the lights dimmed.

The audience was startled for a moment before breaking into a round of enthusiastic applause.

Counting down to the start of recording.

Three.

Two.

One.

The entire studio fell quiet.

Everyone stuck their necks out in the direction of the moon gate at the back of the stage.

Meanwhile, the other singers and the team of host-managers led by Dong Shanshan were also watching this via the televisions in their rooms.

A female host of Beijing Television asked, "Who'll be the first singer?"

A young male host said, "I don't know, who's come?"

Some of them looked at Dong Shanshan. "Shanshan?"

Dong Shanshan shrugged. "Don't look at me, I don't know a thing either."

They really didn't know anything. As the host-managers to the singers, they did not take part in the pre-production of the show. There were also cameras pointed at them inside the room as there would be a segment later where they would fight to "sign" the participants. They really had a big role to play in this show. This footage would be included later by Zhang Ye in the final broadcast cut.

In Room #3.

Zhang Xia was sucking on a throat lozenge.

The staff members were doing her makeup.

In Room #4.

Xue Kaiqi said to herself, "Who could they be? Why can't I see anyone yet?"

In Room #5.

Chen Guang was watching in curiosity with wide eyes.

In Room #7.

Zhao Wuliu sat down like an old hand and hummed with crossed legs. "The first person to make an appearance will have tons of stress. I wish them luck."

Every participating singer was extremely concerned with who their fellow competitors were.

Of course, the live studio audience felt this way as well. Some of them stood up impatiently, wishing they had binoculars to see what was happening onstage.

Suddenly, the lights shined!

A figure appeared in the moon gate.

"Someone's coming out!"

"Who is it? Who?"

"Dammit, I can't see anything!"

"The backlight's too strong!"

"It looks like a woman?"

"It's a female singer?"

"She seems a little petite!"

"She's stepping out!"

"She came out!"

One step.

Two steps.

Three steps.

When she walked out into the light, the crowd screamed!

"Ah!"

"My God!"

"It's Xiaodong!"

"It's Sister Dong!"

"Ahhh! My Sister Dong!"

Applause thundered!

The audience was exhilarated to see her and found it a little unbelievable that she was here at all. They thought there wouldn't be any big names participating in this show and that those who joined would all be newcomers. But who could have expected that the first singer to make an appearance onstage would turn out to be an Asian star? She was the leader of the Asian idol girl group, Spring Garden's Xiaodong!

Backstage.

Zhang Xia was taken aback. "Xiaodong?"

Amy already knew that Xiaodong was participating, but she didn't know that she would be appearing first!

Chen Guang was eagerly rubbing his hands. "This is going to be interesting."

Xue Kaiqi said in surprise, "Xiaodong is here too?"

He Huan said, "It's her?"

Zhao Wuliu's eyes narrowed.

The host-managers' room blew up!

A female host shrieked, "I'm a fan of Sister Dong!"

A male host said, "Oh, they've really upped the ante!"

"Xiaodong has actually joined the show! How can that be!" another female host said in disbelief.

"She's so successful, why would she come and join this competition?"

"I want to become Xiaodong's manager!"

"Get lost! Sister Dong is mine!"

"Hahaha, let's see who ends up being able to sign her!"

"The rules mentioned that if the singer gets eliminated, their managers will get eliminated along with them. Xiaodong is for sure a safe choice! Anyone else might get eliminated, but she'll surely be able to stay on!"

The host-managers were starting to get their own ideas.

Onstage, Xiaodong bowed slightly to the audience before turning to the music director, Bai Yuanfei, and giving him a nod to signal that she was ready. Then she took a deep breath.

The music played.

The more attentive audience members were surprised. They realized the audio setup of I Am a Singer seemed even better than the King of Masked Singers' setup. What was going on? Did they upgrade the equipment again?

Unbeknownst to them, Zhang Ye had to withstand a lot of pressure as he negotiated with the upper management of Beijing Television for a very long time before they finally approved of his extremely high budget equipment for the show. The audio setup and other related equipment used on King of Masked Singers were the highest-end equipment available to the industry at the time. But Zhang Ye had sought to get all of them upgraded again. Even when compared to other countries' music shows, the equipment used here was definitely the very best there was. In this area, Zhang Ye had spared no expense. The extra funds in the production budget they had compared to Sing! were all spent on this! It was obvious from this just how persistent and determined Zhang Ye was in his work. He would either not do it, or do it to the very best by producing the most professional show in the industry!

It was a familiar melody.

Eh?

This song?

It was "Woman Flower"!

The audience was very surprised to hear it. A lot of people had never heard Xiaodong perform solo before, much less cover a song!

All eyes in the studio fell on her. Then, Xiaodong closed her eyes, perhaps to steady her nerves or something. Thereafter, she kept her eyes closed for the entire time.

The melody played on.

Xiaodong raised her microphone.

"I have a flower.

"It grows within my heart.

"A bud waiting to bloom for the longest time.

"Every moment,

"waiting for a sincere person

"to come to me in my sleep."

Just a few lines were enough to enchant everyone in the studio!

Chen Guang praised, "That was great!"

He Huan sighed, "You'd know that she's a great singer the moment she opens her mouth."

Xue Kaiqi was getting even more nervous now. "She sang with such heart."

But the greatest reactions came from the live audience. The impression they had of Spring Garden was that they were an idol group. They felt that their success was only due to their pretty faces and the youthful songs they sang as a group! Singing skills? Talent? Nobody had ever paid that much attention to them until several months ago when one of their members, Li Xiaoxian, had donned the mask of Sunset Glow to take part in King of Masked Singers and shocked everyone with her singing. It was then that the audience first realized that the group wasn't only about looks. Even when performing alone, they could still sing great. Xiaodong's singing today had proven that once again. A lot of people were mesmerized as they listened. They had never seen Xiaodong perform like this before. With her singing skill, perhaps even Li Xiaoxian would sound average next to her?

It was no wonder that Xiaodong was the leader of their group!

"Woman Flower, swaying in the red dust.

"Woman Flower, wavering softly in the wind.

"Only hoping for a pair of gentle hands.

"To sooth the solitude in my heart."

Woman Flower.

That's right.

This song reminded them of something they did not wish to remember. Everyone always had a misconception whenever they saw how youthful Xiaodong looked. Xiaodong hadn't changed much all this time, and Spring Garden was still that youthful and energetic Spring Garden they had always known. But the fact was that Xiaodong had debuted many years ago. This woman who had been skipping and dancing around on stage for the past ten years had been through a lot. She was no longer that young. In terms of seniority, Xiaodong might even have entered the industry earlier than Fan Wenli and Chen Guang.

The music ended.

The audience stood up and clapped!

Sighs!

Laments!

Reminiscence!

Enjoyment!

All kinds of emotions were stirred!

"Xiaodong!"

"Xiaodong!"

"Xiaodong!"

Countless people were shouting her name!

Xiaodong finally opened her eyes and bowed once more to the audience. "Phew, thank you."

The applause went on for a very long time.

Chen Guang was clapping from backstage as well.

Zhang Xia and Zhao Wuliu couldn't help but applaud her too!

But to everyone's surprise, Xiaodong did not leave the stage after her song. She looked into the audience and said, "Hello, everyone. I am a singer—and my name is Xiaodong."

Applause rang out again!

There was even whistling!

Then Xiaodong flicked her hand and made a stack of cards appear out of nowhere. When she saw the confused looks on many of the audience members' faces, she smiled and said, "At the same time, I'm also the part-time host for the first season of I Am a Singer. For here on out in the competition, I'll be taking over as the host. Please treat me kindly."

"Wow!"

"Xiaodong will be hosting?"

"Hahahaha!"

"That's really new!"

"Beautifully played! I've had enough of watching Zhang Ye host!"

The audience responded enthusiastically!

He Huan said, "So that's how it is!"

Chen Guang laughed, "Haha."

Xiaodong's first cue card was already clenched in her hand. She looked down at it and read aloud, "First off, we'd like to thank the leading brand of health supplements, the Brain Gold Company, for being the title sponsors of our show. Thank you to Hubei Pharmaceuticals..."

A bunch of advertising messages were recited amateurishly. She even stuttered as she read her lines. But the audience was highly receptive as they laughed along endlessly. This was how tolerant the audience was of an amateur. If it were Zhang Ye standing onstage, if he even breathed while reciting the advertising messages, the audience would have scolded him for sure, let alone stuttering. This was

because Zhang Ye was a professional host while Xiaodong wasn't. She was only standing in for the role as a guest, so no one really thought much of her mistakes. In fact, they found this to be really fun.

"Phew, I've finally completed that task," Xiaodong said.

The audience laughed, "Hahahaha."

Xiaodong smiled and said, "You guys don't know how nervous I just was. I debuted so many years ago and have been singing for so long, but I've never felt the way I felt today. Because this isn't your usual show, nor is it a concert, and it's definitely not a karaoke box. This is the battleground we'll fight our peers. The singers will compete to get ranked over two weeks of competition, and the last place singer will be replaced by another singer. Frankly, that just means that they'll be eliminated from the show! As for who decides whether we stay or go, it'll be none other than you, the 1,000 lovely audience members we have in the studio. Each of your votes will decide whether the singers will stay on the show or leave. So please be very, very, very careful about who you vote for."

Elimination?

Yes, it was that cruel!

They were all singers, so who could afford to lose?

Xiaodong seemed to sense the audience's doubts, so she said, "Some of you might ask me, why did you come to take part in the show if that's what the rules are? Isn't this as good as digging a hole for yourself to fall into?"

Right!

Why did you come?

The audience was very curious.

Xiaodong nodded. "Then I'll reveal the reason to you guys right now. I agreed to come on the show because Zhang Ye called me one day." She imitated Zhang Ye's voice. "He said, 'Come quickly, I have a good show that I want you to take part in.' But I told him, 'I don't want to go, I'm not confident about taking part in such competitions.' Then he said to me, 'It'll be fine, the other singers are not your equal. Their popularity and singing skills are not as good as yours. If you join, you'll definitely dominate the stage.' When I heard that, I immediately agreed, 'I'll join! I'll join your show!'"

Everyone was laughing away.

Xiaodong waved the cards in her hands and went on, "Then, around half an hour ago, when I received the list of singers and looked through it, I wanted to say this to Director Zhang—" Xiaodong roared, "Director Zhang! Show yourself! How did I fall for your nonsense!"

Chen Guang chuckled, "Pfft!"

Zhang Xia belly laughed!

Zhang Ye, who was coordinating the recording in the wings, let out a hollow laugh just as the cameras swiveled to him.

The audience erupted with laughter!

"Hahahaha!"

"Xiaodong was scammed!"

"Aiyo, I'm dying of laughter!"

"Zhang Ye is such a trickster!"

"Sister Dong! How could you believe Zhang Ye's words in the first place?"

"Hahahahaha!"

But at the same time, everyone was insanely curious!

If Xiaodong was the first singer, who would appear after her? What kinds of people were the other six singers? Who could they be to cause Xiaodong to get so "flustered" and "scold" Director Zhang for it?

Chapter 1230: The seven starting singers are revealed!

Who else was there?

The audience would find out very soon!

When the second singer came out through the moon gate, the entire studio audience stared with eyes wide. They were so surprised that their jaws nearly dropped to the floor!

"Oh my God!"

"Holy shit!"

"Who did I just see?"

"Zhao Wuliu!"

"It's Zhao Wuliu!"

"He's such a godly singer!"

"Aiyo, it's really him!"

"What a surprise! This gave me such a shock!"

The music played and Zhao Wuliu started singing.

The moment he opened his mouth, many of the audience members felt like they had been transported back 20 years!

Zhao Wuliu: A singer from the earliest batch of pop music singers in the Chinese music industry. He could be considered to be from the same generation of singers as Grandma Zhang Xia. In the field of artistic singing, Zhang Xia was definitely one of the top few performing artists. But back then in the field of pop music, Zhao Wuliu was one of the leading figures who had been extremely popular all over the

country. He was a definitive A-lister of his era. Now that times had changed, with the entertainment industry's pace picking up, the number of A-list celebrities had grown much faster than 20-30 years ago when there were only a handful of them. At that time, Zhao Wuliu was at the forefront of the A-listers, and anyone who was slightly older would definitely know of him. He was one of the earliest pop music idols in China. But at some point in time, Zhao Wuliu stopped appearing on everyone's televisions. There were also no updates about him for a very long time. After all, he was already in his forties or fifties, and the times had changed. There were rumors that he had bid farewell to the music scene, and some media outlets even claimed that he had taken seriously ill.

It blew up backstage as well!

Zhang Xia said in surprise, "Whoa, it's an old friend!"

He Huan exclaimed, "This is a truly godly singer!"

Chen Guang stared wide-eyed. "Senior Zhao?"

Xue Kaiqi was also quite shocked. "Teacher Zhao is making a comeback?"

Amy yelled, "Can the program team be any more resourceful? They could even get Senior Zhao to step out from retirement! What's there still left to compete for? I grew up listening to Senior Zhao's songs!"

The host-managers' room exploded again!

"I'll choose Teacher Zhao!"

"Step aside, Teacher Zhao is mine!"

"I'm telling you, don't any of you try to steal him from me!"

"Little Yan, didn't you just say that you wanted to be Sister Dong's manager?"

"I've changed my mind, alright!"

"Let's not fight over this. Whoever can convince the singers to choose them will get them!"

"Let's listen to the performance first. He's singing so well!"

"He still sounds exactly the same as years ago!"

...

In the wings.

The third singer was preparing to come out!

The audience's expectations were raised to the highest point!

"Even Zhao Wuliu has joined. Who else will there be?"

"The next person is coming out!"

"I can't see who it is! Who is it?"

"Looks to be around 1.7 meters tall? A man?"

"Eh, that silhouette looks really familiar!"

Finally, that person walked out through the moon gate!

The audience let out another incredulous exclamation!

"Old Chen!"

"Chen Guang!"

The big brother of the music industry!"

"What the heck! What's with this level of awesomeness!"

"Even Chen Guang has come!"

"What kind of lineup are we going to see? I'm already dazed!"

"Did they have to go this far?"

Zhang Xia shook her head and gave a wry smile. "I did guess that Little Chen would come to support Zhang Ye's show. Little Chen is going to be difficult to handle. I've heard him sing live for so many years and he hasn't once made a mistake. When we're talking about singing skills and experience, as well as being able to perform well in a live setting, there aren't too many singers who can stand up to Little Chen."

Xue Kaiqi put her head in her hands. "This is over, it's another godly singer!"

Chen Guang started singing. The moment he opened his mouth, he sang a high note that made everyone's hair stand on end!

Chen Guang was not a relic of the past nor a retired singer. He was one of the hottest singers and a supporting pillar of the music industry. To say that he was the "Music Industry's Big Brother" might be a little controversial since everyone's evaluation and standards were different. But if it was said that Chen Guang was one of the top three male singers in the music industry, no one would raise any objections. Be it his popularity, singing skills, experience, or qualifications, Chen Guang would definitely be hailed as one of the most outstanding singers. Even his wife, Fan Wenli, was not comparable to him.

...

Then came the fourth singer's turn to take the stage.

"Amy!"

"Wow!"

"It's my Amy!"

"Two members from Spring Garden joined the show!"

"Pfft! Amy and Xiaodong must've both have been scammed by Zhang Ye to join his show! Looking at this lineup, I think Amy is done for! Will she get eliminated?"

"Get lost, Amy's singing is very good!"

"Listen, it's really quite good!"

"I've never seen Amy perform solo before. Her singing is really nice!"

Amy's performance style was more of the bubbly type. Her voice was less recognizable than Xiaodong's, and her singing was also lacking when compared to Li Xiaoxian's, but she was very good at bringing up the atmosphere. She especially knew how to use the music to interact with the audience by choosing a song that was more exciting. In just a short time, she was able to excite the audience. There was even a rap portion in the song she performed so well that Xiaodong and Li Xiaoxian probably couldn't outdo her. Her rapping was definitely her most powerful weapon of all!

...

The fifth singer came out.

"He Huan!"

"Aiyo, it's Old He!"

"It's the Prince of Love Songs!"

"The best love song singer-songwriter in the country!"

"Didn't he just release an album last month? I heard it sold like crazy!"

"The love songs he writes are all quite nice! And his singing is great too!"

"In the genre of love songs, He Huan will sweep away all competition! Even Chen Guang is no match for him, right?"

"Yeah, because Old Chen hardly ever sings love songs!"

"What are all these godly people doing here!"

"Who else has come?"

"My heart can't take this anymore!"

...

The sixth singer made her appearance!

"Xue Kaiqi?"

"Am I seeing this correctly?"

"It's her!"

"The Princess of Love Songs, Xue Kaiqi?"

"Princess Xue was so popular at one point! She was at the same level as Fan Wenli! After she got married and gave birth, she left the industry!"

"I'm not really familiar with her."

"You don't even know Xue Kaiqi? Five years ago, she could release an album and it would get at least 30 million plays on the Internet! It's just that her popularity has dropped since she hasn't been releasing any new songs."

Both the Prince and Princess of Love Songs are here?"

"How exciting!"

"Listen, does it sound like her voice isn't in the right condition?"

"She's probably just nervous."

"I think it's pretty good, it sounds pure to me!"

"'Time' was the song that shot her to fame. I won't get sick of it no matter how many times I listen to it!"

...

Only one was left!

Who could the seventh singer for the final performance be?

The answer was soon revealed!

Zhang Xia came out from behind the moon gate with a smile on her face. Everyone knew who she was. As a constant presence on the annual Spring Festival Gala on Central TV, she had also been appearing on television variety shows recently because of Zhang Ye. Based on her relationship with him, it shouldn't have been surprising for her to come onto I Am a Singer. But to the contrary, the audience was even more surprised to see her than the other singers when she appeared in front of them!

Grandma Zhang was taking part in the competition?

How could she possibly face off against the others?

She wasn't even a pop singer! Rather, she was a songstress who sang bel canto! She was someone who took the artistic route at a higher level of performing arts. She had also won so many art awards that it would fill an entire wall cabinet. Be it her songs or her singing, she was a singer who could easily perform at the Great Hall of the People 1 or any other world-class theater. If the competition was assessed through artistry, then there wouldn't be a need to compete. The other six singers on this stage couldn't beat Zhang Xia even with their combined strength. But since the judging criteria was going to be based on mainstream pop music, surely Zhang Xia couldn't match up to them, right?

But very quickly, they learned they were wrong to think that way!

The moment Zhang Xia raised her microphone, everyone was astonished and astounded!

"These days, seasons fly by,

"flowers bloom aplenty.

"Winds wander, clouds float by,

"nature shut behind the door.

"To be plucked uneasily,

"I slowly realize.

"Bloomed already, but no one coming is completely expected."

It was Zhang Ye's "Wild Rose"!

This version that Zhang Xia sang was not bel canto. Instead, she sang in mezzo-soprano 2 . And from the way that it was sung, it was definitely a technique used for pop singing!

It sounded so good!

So good that it shocked everyone!

Backstage.

The singers who had finished performing were all gathered inside a waiting room.

Amy's jaw dropped!

Zhao Wuliu was a little startled!

Chen Guang sighed in admiration!

Xue Kaiqi was gasping for air!

He Huan was even funnier as he bowed in respect of Zhang Xia's performance!

The audience was also very surprised. This was the most shocking performance that many of them had heard today. It was only when this famed songstress of thirty years dropped down a level to sing pop music that they realized how shockingly good she was at singing!

Screams!

Applause!

And there was even crying!

Compared to Zhang Ye's version of "Wild Rose," Zhang Xia's version was less angry. She sang more reserved, with a greater subtleness and more sadness.

At this point, all seven singers had finished performing!

"It's time to vote!"

"Who are you going to vote for?"

"It's too hard to choose!"

"Yeah, all of them sang really well. Fuck!"

"I'm utterly convinced today! I have no way to describe the shock that I'm feeling!"

"These are what you call pro singers!"

"What do you mean pro singers? These people are more fucking professional than the professionals! Just bringing any of them on would be enough to scare everyone!"

"I'll vote for Zhang Xia!"

"Me too, I'll vote for Zhang Xia as well. There's no two ways about it!"

"I still think Old Chen sang better!"

"I'll give my vote to Zhao Wuliu. Oh, those feels!"

"I think Sister Dong and Grandma Zhang Xia are the ones who surprised me the most!"

The audience was still immersed within the seven songs, unable to snap out of it for a very long time!

It was exhilarating!

It sounded really amazing!

It was way too extravagant!

So this was Zhang Ye's new show?

The biggest stage with the highest-end equipment, with the best variety show director, the big brother of the music industry of twenty years ago, the big brother of the current music industry, the top love song singer-songwriters, the country's leading girl group members, and one of the top three artistic singers in the country!

What kind of a lineup was this?

This was a lineup that could sweep the entire "world"!

Compared to King of Masked Singers, which became popular beyond imagination, even that show would not have come close to what they had seen here!

The audience did not know what the final tallies were as the votes would be counted by the program team separately. Just as everyone was leaving Beijing Television wishing that the show hadn't ended so quickly, they suddenly remembered Sing!, which was being recorded at the same time at Central TV Department 1. Since they couldn't attend that recording, they didn't know how Sing! was doing. But they could finally understand why Zhang Ye dared to pit I Am a Singer against Sing! by choosing to broadcast on the same day and time as them. They couldn't help but start questioning, what if Central TV Department 1 found out what sort of show I Am a Singer was. If they knew that I Am a Singer had invited this group of singers, would they still dare to broadcast Sing! at the same time as I Am a Singer?

The answer to this was unknown.

The outcome of that would only be revealed after the broadcast.