

Superstar 361

Chapter 361: Wu Zeqing's Birthday!

At night.

He reached home after 8.

Mom opened the door. "Why are you home so late?"

"Someone invited me to be a commercial spokesperson, so I was busy discussing." Zhang Ye said.

Dad lowered the television's volume. "Spokesperson? For what commercial?"

Zhang Ye chuckled and said, "It's a health supplement. It's called Brain Gold. You will know about it in two days when it goes on TV. It will definitely be broadcasted before Chinese New Year."

Mom immediately became high-spirited. "How much are they paying?"

Zhang Ye said, "Around a million. It's a year's worth of endorsement and advertising planning."

Mom said in an overjoyed manner, "That's not a small amount. They will give you a million a year if you just need to come up with an idea, shoot the commercial, and ignore everything from then on? This amount of money sure is easily earned. It's so much more than what you can earn working at the television station. You tire yourself endlessly for those television programs, but how much is your monthly salary and bonuses? It can't even compare with the income you receive doing a commercial in one day. What's the point? I think you might as well just focus on endorsements. By being a spokesperson for a few products, wouldn't the money just come rolling in? Hehe, that's so lucrative!"

Dad said in a speechless manner, "Why are you only concerned with money?"

Zhang Ye also laughed. "Mom, you don't understand. You may think the endorsement fee for a commercial is a lot, and seems relaxing, but why would others pay so much money to be their product's spokesperson? It is still the popularity I gained due to my novels, poems, television programs, etc. It's because of my fame that others would even offer me so much money. If I did not produce programs or work, without the support of my popularity, who would want me to be a spokesperson?" He then used a different manner to explain. "Just like the Spring Festival Gala in a few days, everyone knows not a single cent is earned from it, and you might even up spending money because of it. One needs to pay for board and lodging, delaying one's working schedule, canceling commercial performances, but even so, why do people try with all their might to appear on the Spring Festival Gala? It's all due to popularity. No matter how rich a celebrity is, without popularity, they cannot even be considered a celebrity. Popularity is of the essence."

Mom said in an enlightened manner. "That's true."

"Have you eaten, Son?" Dad asked.

Zhang Ye smiled and said, "I ate takeout, and I'm still quite full."

Mom said unhappily, "Why did you eat take out? I'll make something good for you!"

"There's no need, Mom. I'm already full. Let me take a warm bath. I'm a bit tired. By the way, someone gave me tea leaves. Try some of it with Dad. It should be pretty good tea." Zhang Ye returned to his room, taking off his coat and then wore his autumn wear to the bathroom. He then enjoyed a bath.

.....

In the bedroom.

He lay comfortably in bed.

As Zhang Ye scratched his wet hair, he began to fiddle with his cellphone. After flipping through a few webpages of entertainment news. This year's Spring Festival Gala's lineup was mostly out. They were undergoing rehearsals now, and in the lineup, Zhang Ye saw Zhang Yuanqi's name. The song's name was "Wishing We Last Forever", which had its lyrics adapted from Zhang Ye's "Shuidiao Getou". This song was not very appropriate for the Spring Festival Gala, but it was not too much a problem. As long as the words used were beautiful, everything would be alright. Furthermore, she was the Heavenly Queen Zhang Yuanqi. She was a regular on the Spring Festival Gala.

Spring Festival Gala.

Hai, when would he have the opportunity to be on it?

Let's take it slow. He still was not popular enough, and it had to be slowly accumulated. There was no way to rush it. Next year, Zhang Ye could attempt, but now, he was still lacking in popularity. Furthermore, he was lacking in productions that could possibly go on the Spring Festival Gala. Recite a poem at the Spring Festival Gala? Or give a talk show? Talk about 'Three Kingdoms', 'Dream of the Red Chamber', or some ghost story? It would not be a wonder if people cursed him to death. There was no such precedent. Hence, it looked like he needed to expand in several directions this year. Either he produced a work that could vie for a spot on the Spring Festival Gala next year, or he would have to take on the route of being a professional host, so as to become the Spring Festival Gala's host? The latter was a bit difficult.

Let's not think about it. We can talk about it in the future.

Since a song with his lyrics and melody was going the Spring Festival Gala, it was also an honor. His popularity and game Reputation would also increase a bit as a result of this.

Reputation?

Right, let's play the lottery!

The total Reputation points was already at 40 million!

A few days ago, Zhang Ye did not feel any need for it. He was also planning on leaving the Reputation points for his next step. Now, his Reputation was increasing by the day. Also, his inventory did not have many items, so it was time to substantiate it. Of course, he could not spend it all in one go. He still needed to leave it for future use. Well, let's use 10 million and try our luck first. If he was lucky, he could carry on playing the lottery. In the past, 10 million Reputation points was an astronomical value to Zhang Ye, but now, this fellow was extremely wealthy. He no longer thought too much about it. As his fame grew, the amount of Reputation points also increased rapidly. He was now on a different plane. He

could not be the same person from half a year ago, who felt distressed just spending 100,000 Reputation points for each draw at the lottery. That would be too much a loser!

This bro has all the Reputation in the world now!

As long as the items he drew were useful, he was not afraid of spending much!

Without any hesitation, Zhang Ye tapped open the lottery interface and bought a chance at the lottery. The needle began spinning. He was definitely going to buy Additional Stakes, but he wanted to observe the situation. He planned on buying Additional Stakes for Consumption Category items. After all, his inventory was nearly empty. He had used the Red String of Fate and Save, and the remaining items in his inventory was the two Difficulty Adjustment Dice. Zhang Ye did not dare to use these items. He had been horrified by the hijacking last time. So naturally, he needed to replenish his inventory, such as Lucky Bread? Or a Save? Or Cupid Sachets? Anything would do! With ten million Reputation points, he could buy 99 Additional Stakes. If he exchanged for a hundred of the same item, especially if he was lucky enough to obtain the Lucky Bread that was never enough, Zhang Ye was willing to spend all the 40 million Reputation points just for it, let alone 10 million. This was because the item was too amazing!

The needle started to slow down.

Slowly, it was about to stop!

With his keen eyes, Zhang Ye immediately tapped the Additional Stakes button. He made the wheel stop and then looked at the needle's momentum. It was already in the Consumption Category region, and had just entered it. According to the situation and the speed at which the needle slowed down, it was likely to stop in the Consumption Category. There was a very high chance.

He got whatever he wanted!

Was he able to get it all in one fell swoop?

Zhang Ye was pretty happy and planned on buying Additional Stakes!

How much should he add? A million or five million? Or should he add all the ten million? Thinking how he was like a nouveau riche now, he was not lacking in that part. If he really struck the Lucky Bread or something even better, wouldn't he receive a windfall? If he only bought a few Additional Stakes, that would be too regretful. With enough courage and increasing capital, he also began to gamble at a larger scale. Hence, Zhang Ye directly tapped 99, throwing ten million Reputation points into it!

The spin continued!

The needle slowed down!

A bit...A bit...Just a bit more...

However, maybe it was due to not having played the lottery for quite some time, Zhang Ye's sense of the wheel and needle's speed had deteriorated. He watched the needle move forward, and just as it was about to stop in the Consumption Category region, it suddenly moved forward a bit, entering the next region.

Holy sh*t!

It was a Skills Category region!

Zhang Ye nearly cried out. His luck was too bad, wasn't it? He did not get whatever he wanted!

However, the Skills Category prize had previously given Zhang Ye some pretty good skills. Even the Computer or the Lock-Picking Skillbooks he received had been put to good use. As such, he was also not that depressed. Treasure Chests appeared, flooding the ground. There were a total of hundred golden Treasure Chests (Small). As there was not enough space in the room, the Treasure Chests stacked over each other, making it quite a spectacular sight. Zhang Ye reached out and opened the lid of one of the Treasure Chests.

[Calligraphy Skill Experience Book] 100!

Seeing the Calligraphy Skillbooks-laden chests, Zhang Ye was at a loss whether to laugh or cry. He had obtained these Skillbooks in the past. Be it his brush or pen writing, they were already more beautiful than in the past. And it only had that bit of use, and did not seem of much practical significance.

Why did I get it again!?

If it was Taiji Fist, how great would that have been!? If he had bought it, the Taiji Fist Skillbooks would cost a million Reputation points per book, but if it was obtained from the lottery, every book cost only 100,000. It was ten times cheaper! Skillbooks such as Taiji Fist were extremely valuable to Zhang Ye. If not, he would not have spent the ten million Reputation points to buy the Taiji Fist after earning it from the hijacking. This was a defensive skill. There was never too much of such a skill!

Calligraphy!?

Why did it have to be Calligraphy!?

Zhang Ye felt it was not something very useful. However, he had already received it, and there was no way to return it. His Save had already been used up, so there was no way to regret it anymore. He could only flip through the Calligraphy Skill Experience Books, and "consume experience".

1 book.....

10 books...

100 books...

He had finished consuming them!

All the information in the Calligraphy Skill Experience Books entered Zhang Ye's brain!

Since he had a bad beginning, and made poor judgment, forget it. No more drawing today. We'll talk about it in a few days!

Zhang Ye turned thirsty and drank some of the tea made from the tea leaves Wu Zeqing gave him. He narrowed his eyes in enjoyment. It was indeed good tea. Although he was not an expert at tea, he could tell the difference between this tea and the cheap tea he had bought in the past. The difference was too great. Only then did he return to his room, preparing to sleep. Others might not be able to sleep after

drinking tea, but Zhang Ye was different. After drinking some hot tea, it might even help him sleep even more soundly.

Ring, ring, ring.

A phone call suddenly came in.

It was from Wu Mo. Zhang Ye did not know what it was about.

Zhang Ye picked it up. "Hello, CEO Wu?"

"Have you slept yet, Teacher Zhang?" Wu Mo asked.

"Not yet." Zhang Ye said.

Wu Mo said, "It's this. Tomorrow is my aunt's birthday, so I decided to call you. My aunt asked me to invite you. It will be a party for industry insiders. There will be food and chatter amongst scholars. It's at noon. I'll send you the exact address later."

Zhang Ye blinked. "You aren't going?"

"Why would I go? All of you are people in literature or calligraphy. I don't share a common language with you. I'll only suffer by being there. Furthermore, I need to monitor the advertisements." Wu Mo said.

Zhang Ye asked, "Then I'll bring some gift?"

Wu Mo gave it some thought before saying, "I don't think there's a need? My aunt isn't a particular person. Just showing up would do. If you really need to, writing some calligraphy would also do. My aunt really likes things like calligraphy. Oh, those people from the calligraphy world also seem to draw stuff on the spot. It won't be too late to think over it when you are there. Anyway, I don't know the details. I have never joined in such meals with scholars, so I'll leave it to you."

He was completely ignorant.

Zhang Ye could only say, "Alright, I'll definitely go."

Chapter 362: The Calligraphy Association Anniversary Gathering!

The next day.

It was almost noon. The weather looked good.

Zhang Ye had woken up late. After looking at his watch, he immediately got out of bed. He got dressed as he rubbed his eyes. He went to the bathroom outside to wash up as he called out, "Mom, do we have the Four Treasures of the Study at home?"

His father had already left for work.

His mother was scheduled for an afternoon shift today and was still around, "What do you think? You bought some before when you were in primary school, but we don't have them anymore. Maybe it's in a box somewhere? Even if you can find it, they won't be usable anymore. What do you need it for? Isn't the university on break? What are you hurrying around for? You still need to go to work?"

Zhang Ye said, "Not for work, but it's my leader's birthday."

His mother said, "Then why didn't you get up earlier? Hurry up and go!"

"I know. Can you help me get my bag, put my cellphone inside." Zhang Ye did not bother too much and quickly brushed his teeth. Then, he took the bag from his mother and rushed downstairs to his car.

What about the birthday present?

He did not even have a brush and ink and there was no time to get one now!

Zhang Ye was a carefree person, since Wu Mo said it wasn't necessary to get anything, he did not bother to. He decided to just go directly. If there was a need, he would buy a present later on and give it to his leader.

.....

The sun was very strong.

It added warmth to the winter weather.

He drove a little faster than usual and reached a restaurant north of the city a few minutes before noon. He stood in front of the entrance of a two-story restaurant that had an ancient vibe to it. It also had a large yard towards the rear of the building. The restaurant wasn't too small and was designed to have an ancient classical look to it. There were red lanterns hung at the entrance and it looked like the whole location had been reserved for the day. There were a lot of cars parked in front and more and more people were beginning to move inside. A lot of them were holding calligraphy scrolls or similar items in their hands as they walked in, leaving Zhang Ye a little confused. To him, Wu Zeqing looked like someone who wasn't too ostentatious. If she was having a birthday celebration, it wouldn't be possible that she invited so many people. Old Comrade Wu didn't have such a lavish personality.

After getting off, Zhang Ye straightened his clothes a little.

"Eh? Isn't that Teacher Zhang?" A woman called him out from behind.

Zhang Ye turned around in surprise, "Yo, Teacher Su, you came too?"

It was Zhang Ye's colleague from Peking University, Su Na. She was wearing an overcoat which was rather thick, "Why are you here too? Oh, President Wu invited you too?"

Zhang Ye vaguely acknowledged her. Actually, he was very clear that he would not have been invited to such an occasion if not for the fact that he was endorsing her, Wu Zeqing's, nephew's product. Since he was doing his part for her nephew, she was obliged to give him face.

Then so, why was Su Na here too?

Even Professor Zeng was not invited, right?

Zhang Ye wondered, "You are here because?"

Su Na said laughingly, "I'm not important enough to warrant an invitation from President Wu. I came with my father. He is already inside. He's with the Calligraphy Association."

Zhang Ye suddenly asked, "There are so many people here today?"

"Yes, it's about the same every year, but last year was even more vibrant than this year." Su Na said casually.

Zhang Ye was left even more confused, "They are all here to celebrate President Wu's birthday?"

"Birthday? You don't know?" Su Na said, "How would President Wu be so lavish? Today's the 31st anniversary of the Calligraphy Association. Every member would gather on this day to have an exchange of calligraphy and literature. This is the main event. As for birthdays, today is also coincidentally the birthdays of a senior of the calligraphy world and President Wu. So we celebrate them all together, but it's not the main focus. It's mainly still a gathering for those involved in calligraphy. Of course, if you want to give them presents, that's fine too."

Zhang Ye coughed, "Then, did you bring a present?"

"I did not." Su Na chuckled, "But my dad wrote two scrolls, that's good enough."

"All of you are well prepared. I woke up late today, so I did not bring anything." Zhang Ye said depressingly. When the others presented their gifts later and he came empty-handed, it would be embarrassing.

Su Na blinked and said, "If you didn't bring a present, it's alright. A lot of people are not gifting anything either. If you really want to give something, you can always write a poem and gift it during the calligraphy event, right? How's your calligraphy skill?"

Zhang Ye subconsciously replied, "My words can't be shown."

But he suddenly remembered that, hey, he had just gotten those calligraphy experience books last night and eaten them all. He had eaten a total of 100 books. Even if he had not tested it out, based on previous experiences, his writing shouldn't be shabby. A hundred books! He wouldn't know how it would turn out. Who knows if it might even be better than Wu Zeqing's calligraphy?

Right!

He could write it on the spot!

He definitely had to give a present to President Wu!

.....

In the restaurant.

At the back yard.

This place looked like an exhibition stand, exhibiting lots of famous people's calligraphy and paintings. Some of them were even the writings of members from the calligraphy association, who were also the current generation of calligraphy masters.

"This is a calligraphy piece of Sun Gu?"

"It's surely a copy, right? Hasn't it been lost long ago?"

"This is the real deal. I heard that it was in Master Zhou's possession. Master Zhou spent a lot of money to get this piece. To be able to see it today is really our honor!"

"This won't do, I definitely need to get a picture of this later!"

"Eh, isn't that Teacher Cheng's calligraphy? Seems like his cursive calligraphy has had a breakthrough in the past year!"

"Haha, President Wu is also showing her calligraphy today. Little Wu's words have always been so elegant. It's beautiful no matter how you look at it. It's very rare in the calligraphy world."

No one went to the second floor, since the banquet had not started yet. Everyone was just hanging around in the backyard discussing the exhibited works today. Although it was not an official exhibition, the works that were displayed were even more rare and precious than those in official exhibitions. In an insiders' exchange, no one hid anything from each other. The Calligraphy Association 31st anniversary gathering could also be seen as an exhibition of academic achievements.

Wu Zeqing had already arrived and was chatting with a few friends.

The other person who was celebrating a birthday today was Old Master Wei. He was around 80 years of age and was seated on a solid wood antique chair. A number of juniors went up to greet him.

"Master Wei, how are you doing?"

"I'm not as good anymore. Getting old. Hur Hur."

"I can't see that. The calligraphy that you put up on display shows that you are still going strong!"

The yard was scattered with people that numbered around 70 to 80. Those who were present today were the elites of the calligraphy and literature world and their families. All of them were important people and even the lowest of them were well established members of the calligraphy association. Of course, there weren't that many people who turned up. After all, it wasn't a decennial anniversary, so there were no guests from other fields present to congratulate them. It was just a normal gathering using the anniversary as an excuse.

At this moment, Su Na stepped in, "Dad!"

Father Su looked to be in his fifties. His hair hadn't grayed much, but his mustache had already turned white, "Why are you so late? Didn't you leave early this morning?"

Su Na chuckled, "I met a colleague at the front door and we chatted for a while."

Thereafter, Zhang Ye followed in behind and entered the backyard, but as he was wearing shades and did not have much in common with those from the calligraphy world, no one recognized him. In fact, some people did not even know him. At best, they would have heard of his name before!

Chapter 363: Calligraphy contest?

In the backyard, the smell of ink was in the air.

The sweet smell of Xuan paper also lingered in the air.

"Teacher Wang."

"Yo, Mr Liu."

"Master Chen is here too, where did you come from?"

"I came over from Shanghai. It's Old Master Wei's birthday, so I can't not come."

They were all people from the same circle, so they were familiar with each other. The old friends began chatting heartily, looking like they had not seen each other in a long time.

In the corner, only Zhang Ye was standing there alone. Many people saw him, but did not know who he was. Because he looked rather young and was strangely wearing shades, no one bothered about him. As Su Na was ushered by her father to greet his friends, Wu Zeqing was still chatting with her friends, Zhang Ye found a chair and sat down. Since he had not had his breakfast, he tried out some of the refreshments on the table. It was actually quite tasty, so he poured himself a cup of hot tea and crossed his legs back relaxingly. He started munching on some sunflower seeds, fully making himself feel at home.

"Who is this person?"

"Don't seem to know him."

"Whose family member is he? Is he that hungry?"

"I think I saw him come in with Teacher Su's daughter."

"Old Su's son-in-law? No way, I am old friends with Old Su, so how can I not have seen this kid? Little Na Na isn't married either. so it can't be."

A few people looked at Zhang Ye with askance.

Zhang Ye felt like he was too flamboyant, so with a cough, he stopped eating.

It was unknown when Wu Zeqing walked over. Today, she was dressed in a beige qipai. The red flowers that adorned her dress were very eye-catching. She had been wearing a qipao with a sweater of coat draped over her. Her high heels were beige in color to match her qipao, making her look extremely alluring.

"You were eating?" Wu Zeqing gave a faint smile.

Zhang Ye beamed and stood up. "I didn't eat this morning, so I was hungry."

Wu Zeqing lowered her hands, "Just carry on eating. It's alright."

Zhang Ye said, "If I knew today was the Calligraphy Association's anniversary, I wouldn't have come. I'm not someone from this circle. I don't really know much about calligraphy. If I knew this early, I would have given you a birthday present privately. Unfortunately, I didn't have time this morning, so I didn't bring anything."

Wu Zeqing gently smiled. "There's no need for presents. It's alright if you do not know calligraphy. Inviting you here was to let you enter this circle. You are a person of literature, so knowing more people won't hurt. Hur Hur. Alright, carry on eating. I'll go greet a few old friends."

"Sis Wu."

"Teacher Wu."

More people came from outside.

Wu Zeqing walked over with a smile.

After a short while, almost everyone had arrived.

"Everyone, may I have your attention please. Hur Hur." At this moment, a very famous calligrapher spoke. He gathered the people over and said, "Today is the 31st anniversary of the Calligraphy Association. I would like to thank everyone for their participation and well-wishes. I've been writing all my life, so I'm not good with words, so I'll keep it short. I think it's best we go by the old rules. Let's have a short competition to kick off auspiciously before having our meal. How about that?"

"Alright!"

"As you wish."

"Haha, another competition?"

"Master Zhou, what's the auspicious item about this year?"

Everyone had expected this and asked with smiles.

There was no lack of this segment in every year's Calligraphy Association gathering.

The old calligrapher, Master Zhou, curved his mouth and waved to his two disciples by his side. He got them to open up a piece of calligraphy. "I'll incur ridicule first. This is the calligraphy piece I wrote last year. Now it shall be used as an auspicious item. Same old rules, whoever wins gains this auspicious item!"

Master Zhou's work?

This year's item sure cost an arm and a leg!

Everyone knew the most ordinary piece of calligraphy produced by Master Zhou could be auctioned off for tens of thousands. If it was a good piece of calligraphy, such as this long calligraphy piece, it could be auctioned off for at least a hundred thousand. There was no upper limit, for if someone really liked it, they would be willing to pay hundreds of thousands for it!

"Nice work!"

"Elder Zhou sure is generous!"

"Then we won't stand on ceremony!"

Everyone were eager to try as they coveted it.

Su Na left her father's side and walked over to Zhang Ye.

"Teacher Su." Zhang Ye was also surprised to see that calligraphy piece. "Who is that?"

Su Na nearly fainted. "Ah? You don't even know Master Zhou? He is one of the few remaining master calligraphers still alive. You really don't care about anything outside of the entertainment industry, do you?"

Zhang Ye praised, "This piece of work is too artistic!"

Su Na said, "Of course. Just Master Zhou's name would cause calligraphy lovers to come in droves. Even a draft would be worth a considerable amount."

After eating a hundred Calligraphy Skillbooks, Zhang Ye's appreciation and understanding of calligraphy had been greatly upgraded. He knew the piece of work in front of his eyes was no ordinary piece of work. It was much better than the words written by President Wu back then. It could even be said to be on different realms. President Wu's standard may be high and was famous in the industry, but Wu Zeqing was, after all, not a professional in this. She just had calligraphy as her hobby, while her career for in the foreground. However, Master Zhou was different. He was a professional. He had spent all his life studying just calligraphy, so their standards were naturally different!

Su Na leered at him, "You also like this piece of work?"

"Yea." Zhang Ye only found the piece of work very good, but did not have other thoughts. His mind was not in the field of calligraphy. Without any exaggeration, this piece of art was inferior to Wu Zeqing's naked 'artistic pictures' to Zhang Ye. Those pictures were more real and empowering!

What a bunch of losers!

They really do not know art!

Seeing the ugly expressions of these people desperately wanting a crappy piece of art, this fellow, Zhang Ye looked down on them. You guys aren't even looking at Wu Zeqing's beautiful full legs and her ample breasts that nearly tear her qipao apart. What kind of art are you looking even looking at? It's no wonder people who made a living in art would die alone. Can you be a bit more promising? A mountain of gold is in front of you, yet you don't know?

Zhang Ye believed he was a person who truly knew art. Hence, he retracted his gaze from the calligraphy piece and moved it onto Wu Zeqing's legs. He peeked at her white legs through the slit in the qipao.

Su Na did not notice the direction in which Zhang Ye was looking, and said, "I really want this calligraphy piece."

Zhang Ye asked nonchalantly, "Are you participating in the competition too?"

"No way. My calligraphy is terrible. All I know is what I was forced to learn by my Dad when I was young. I stopped practicing since then. As for my Dad, he might have some hope." Su Na felt enthusiastic.

Zhang Ye thought to himself. Man, not another one who doesn't know true art...

Many people present had eyes filled with insatiable thirst.

Master Zhou immediately announced, "Alright, I shall be this year's judge. Everyone should be okay with that, right? Hur Hur, then let this year's competition exchange begin..."

Suddenly, the birthday boy, Old Master Wei, who was sitting on an armchair, spoke. As he stroked his beard, he smiled and said, "Old Zhou, hold on a moment."

Master Zhou smiled and said, "What's the matter, Old Wei?"

Master Wei joked, "You old fogey sure aren't particular. Half a year ago, I saw this calligraphy piece at your home. Back then, I wanted it, and was even willing to exchange something for it, but you adamantly refused to give it to me. What's the matter now? Now you are taking it out? You sure aren't giving your old friend face. We have been friends for decades." After a pause, he carried on. "No way. This calligraphy piece has to be mine. Today is my birthday, so I'll just take advantage of my seniority. I hope everyone will give this old man some face. Can this calligraphy piece be acceded to me?"

"Uh."

"This..."

"The birthday boy is biggest today."

"Old Master Wei, don't try robbing it from us juniors. Haha."

The crowd said all sorts of things, nor was there any harsh tones in their words. It was just a form of entertainment. Although it was a competition, it was not meant to hurt feelings.

Master Zhou was amused as he motioned his hand. "That won't do Old Wei. We may be friends, but I have already announced my intentions. I can't just rescind them, right? Since you want it, you can also participate in it. Furthermore, you are not the only one who is celebrating their birthday. Little Wu's birthday is today too. If I give it to you, what about Little Wu?" After some thought, he said, "Let's do it this way. I'll give a suggestion. With the two birthday stars in consideration, this competition should be split into two teams. Old Wei will lead one team, while Little Wu will lead another. Whichever team's combined calligraphy prowess defeats the other, the auspicious gift will be their's. It could be either Old Wei or Little Wu. I'll just treat it as a birthday gift. What does everyone think about it?"

Old Master Wei pointed at him, "You sure became craftier with age."

Master Zhou was an old friend of his, so he spoke casually with him. "It has to be fair. If it's just a individual competition, with you having written calligraphy all your life, you will definitely win. There will be no suspense, nor will there be any meaning behind it. A competition must have some suspense."

Everyone thought over it, but did not have any opinions

"I'm fine with anything."

"Haha, this will be interesting."

"Alright, we'll follow Master Zhou's arrangement!"

"Old Master Wei, let me be added to your team."

"Count me in too. Since Old Master Wei is insistent on winning, I must contribute a bit."

Everyone coveted Master Zhou's calligraphy piece, but they all knew themselves. Even quite a famous calligrapher like Su Na's father knew he was no match for Master Wei. Since the birthday boy wanted it that much, they would not be able to get it, nor was there any chances for them. Of course, they would not be able to fight it out. He was celebrating his birthday, and was an old senior in the industry. Although Master Wei's calligraphy skills were far inferior to Master Zhou, his seniority was an advantage that could suppress everyone else. So no one wanted to compete with Master Wei, or they would appear too aloof. Hence, Master Zhou's suggestion made everyone find it very interesting.

The two birthday stars would lead teams in a competition?

Wu Zeqing versus Master Wei? The winner gets the auspicious item?

Immediately, quite a number of people stood behind Master Wei. Soon, there were dozens.

Father Su also laughed out loudly. "Then let me join in." Saying that, he entered Master Wei's team.

Wu Zeqing had no one on her side. However, she was not angry, and was her usual gentle self. She gave a slight smile and said, "All of you are bullying my lack of qualifications."

Master Wei joked, "Little Wu, I think you should just give up. After I receive Old Zhou's piece, I'll lend it to you for two days before you return it to me."

Wu Zeqing smiled and said, "That wouldn't be good. Master Zhou's calligraphy is rarely seen, especially such a long piece of calligraphy. I also truly want it. It happens that I'm lacking such a piece of art at home."

Chapter 364: One person is Enough!

A commotion stirred in the backyard.

Master Wei was bent on having it, while Wu Zeqing did not back down. Although some people were beginning to feel hungry, no one said anything about eating, as they knew something interesting was about to happen. Master Wei was a respectful person of distinction in the world of calligraphy. Although most of his contribution came from the development and expansion of the Calligraphy Association, which meant he was on the administration side, his calligraphy skills were still exceptional, and not poor in any way. Everyone knew Wu Zeqing was an amateur calligrapher. She was one of the most outstanding ones, and was not inferior to professionals. However, the chances for Master Wei's victory was higher. However, it was not like Wu Zeqing did not have any chance. It depended on what experts were in her team.

"Then, has everyone agreed?" Master Zhou smiled and asked.

Master Wei said without any pressure, "I'm fine with it."

Wu Zeqing smiled gracefully, "I'm fine with it too." Then she said to Master Wei, "Old Master Wei, don't blame me if I bully you as a junior."

Master Wei did not remain perfunctory, "Of course not. As for me, I'm afraid you will blame me for stealing a beloved item of yours after I win the auspicious item."

Many people booed and hissed upon hearing this.

Actually, all the harshness was just lip service. Everyone was just joining in on the fun. What status did Master Wei have? What status did Wu Zeqing have? How could they bear grudges? That would be too petty, so whatever said was just to make the atmosphere be more lively. If there was no sense of competition, the atmosphere would remain cold.

A few family members went upstairs and did not enter the backyard. There were so many people in the backyard that there was no space, so the family members leaned against the windows to watch in interest.

"Come on!"

"They are going to begin!"

"This will be fun!"

Instantly, everyone's gazes gathered at the backyard.

The splitting of teams began. Everyone choose their own teams.

Master Wei was authoritative in the world of calligraphy and had numerous disciples. He had a wide social circle, so people who had enjoyed his grace naturally chose Master Wei's team. The other older calligraphers were also Master Wei's friends, so there was no other need to mention them. Since Master Wei wanted a gift for his birthday, they would naturally help, so more and more people gathered on Master Wei's side. In contrast, Wu Zeqing's side was quite neglected. She ended up standing there alone without anyone behind her. No one had expected this situation to occur, but it was not a surprise after some careful thinking. Although it was a competition where friendship came first, everyone could tell Master Zhou truly wanted Master Zhou's calligraphy piece. He was elderly and of high stature. He was also the birthday boy, so who wouldn't give him face? Although Wu Zeqing held a high position, it was in the world of education. Wu Zeqing was not in the forefront in the field of calligraphy, so everyone knew who mattered the most. It was reasonable for them to stand on Master Wei's side. This was the mischief caused by the People's Republic's traditional beliefs. They were in calligraphy and the arts, so what they researched was classical culture, so such beliefs were entrenched.

Wu Zeqing did not have any other expression on her face except a faint smile.

A few female family members could not stand idly watching this.

"Hey, what's going on?"

"Why is everyone helping Master Wei?"

"Not even one went to President Wu's team?"

"What's the matter? Isn't this bullying a woman!?"

"President Wu's calligraphy skills are weaker to begin with. Now, with her alone, what's the point of competing. You might as well just gift the auspicious gift to Master Wei."

"If I knew calligraphy, I would definitely help President Wu!"

"Man, this really isn't appropriate. At least someone should help Big Sis Wu, right? If not, it wouldn't look good. It's just not right!"

People below and above began to murmur.

No one expected Wu Zeqing to definitely win. After all, there was a gap in ability between President Wu and Master Wei, but even if she lost, she shouldn't lose too badly. It had not even begun, and everyone already subconsciously went to Master Wei's team? How could Wu Zeqing compete alone?

Su Na was also fuming. What's the matter. She immediately stared at her father, "Dad!" She was a member of Peking University, so she naturally sided with Wu Zeqing.

Father Su pretended not to see it and carried on chatting with a friend.

Su Na turned anxious. Heh, with her bad temper, she immediately wanted to stand by President Wu side to show her stance. At least having a bit more strength would not make it look bad. However, after some thought, Su Na stamped her feet angrily and did not go over. There was no other reason. Her attainment in calligraphy was not deep enough. Besides, calligraphy was not just competing in one's writing. Calligraphy was closely intertwined with ancient classic culture. They would definitely be drawing lots to get a question like they had in past years. They had to produce a piece of calligraphy according to the topic. This tested their ancient literary knowledge. If one lacked literary knowledge or calligraphy skills, it would just be a loss of face going up. Thinking of how she would not even be able to write anything when facing the question, she would end up screwing things up for Wu Zeqing, so she might as well stay off to the side!

Master Zhou, who had suggested this competition, wanted to have some novelty in the competition and not like what it was in the past. However, he also never expected to see the current situation. He was momentarily speechless. He gave Wu Zeqing an apologetic glance and helped speak for her, "I say, everyone here is famous in the calligraphy world. Do you think such a competition would be interesting? Are you not going to show your faces even if you win?"

The dozens of calligraphers behind Master Zhou also turned red with embarrassment. Indeed as Master Zhou said, they really did not dare show their faces. Dozens of teachers from the world of calligraphy were going to bully a lone woman, Wu Zeqing? It did not sound good if this was made known. Even if President Wu was not deeply involved in the calligraphy world, she was at least someone famous from the world of education. According to a systematic rank and position of society, Master Zhou and Master Wei were inferior to Wu Zeqing.

However, Master Wei ended up chuckling as he said, "Little Wu's talent in calligraphy is one of the best I have ever seen. If a bunch of people joined her team, I might not even win. Now this is good. Little Wu, shall I accept the auspicious item? I think let's not compete. Let's go eat."

Master Zhou rolled his eyes. "Old Wei, aren't you embarrassed?"

"Haha, since it's a competition, what's there to be embarrassed about?" Master Zhou did not mind and carried on laughing while stroking his beard. As he looked at Master Zhou's piece of work, his eyes seemed to treat it as his very own. As an elder, his skin was thicker, so he did not feel embarrassed at all.

What are you guys doing?

Zhang Ye, who was eating melon seeds on the side, could not sit idle any longer. He had heard all that had been previously said. However, he did not say a word. He had previously not planned on joining as he was not someone from this circle. He was also not interested in such stuff. You guys can turn rowdy having fun or competing for the auspicious item, but what has that got to do with me? When he saw the competition line up, Zhang Ye could not continue spectating. F**k, you bunch of calligraphers! Are bullying my Old Wu? How can you feel justified and assured? Do you even want any face!?

President Wu doesn't have anyone?

Go f**k yourself! There's this bro!

Zhang Ye immediately stood up and walked leisurely to stand behind Wu Zeqing. While doing so, he held the melon seeds in his left hand, while he munched on them with his right hand. He then sat on the chair behind her and continued to munch on his melon seeds. He did not say a word, but his attitude was very clear.

Wu Zeqing smiled as she looked at him, "Can you?"

Zhang Ye said confidently, "Please take away the 'you'."

"Hur Hur." Wu Zeqing smiled faintly and said, "Alright!" Saying that, she also sat down and drank a cup of tea.

Su Na was flabbergasted. Teacher Zhang was up? Didn't he not know calligraphy? She had an impression of Zhang Ye's calligraphy. In the Beijing Couplet Competition video, the calligraphy Zhang Ye wrote to match the couplets did not look ugly, but that was all to it. It could not be said to be artistic. It was not even considered calligraphy. Only average people would think his words were up to standard, so what could he do?

Wu Zeqing finally had a teammate.

Everyone looked curiously at this sunglasses-wearing young man.

"Who is he?"

"What's he doing there?"

"Why is he joining in the bustle? Does he even know calligraphy?"

"I've never seen him. The Calligraphy Association doesn't have such a member, right?"

"Definitely not. I've met all the members before. I know even those calligraphers who have a bit of fame. Not only that, there's no calligrapher this young!"

"But at least there's someone."

"That's true. At least it wouldn't cause anyone to lose face."

Master Zhou looked at everyone and frowned. "No one else?"

There were many calligraphers in the backyard that had just joined the trade. They may be called calligraphers, but that was just an official title. They were actually just apprentices. They were disciples

or nephews of these famous masters. Compared to normal people, their calligraphy was an epitome that made people envious, but compared to true masters, it was not nothing. Hence, they themselves knew and did not plan on joining the competition. They stood on the sidelines to watch the bustle. Many of them were youths below the age of thirty. They were here hoping to learn through spectating.

Master Zhou smacked his lips and felt sorry for Wu Zeqing. Hence, he asked, "If this goes on, there's no way to hold a competition as it is not fair at all."

The dozens of people in Master Wei's team looked at each other.

Someone stepped forward, "Why don't I go over?"

A man also said, "Hur Hur, then I'll help Sis Wu."

Master Zhou then give a satisfied nod. This was the bearing of people who dabbled in arts should have.

However, no one expected Wu Zeqing to say with a gently smile, "Thank you for your kind thoughts, but since the teams have already been chosen, let's begin."

Ah?

Wu Zeqing did not want the assistance of any others?

Everyone was baffled. They did not know what Wu Zeqing meant.

The birthday boy, Master Wei, also narrowed his eyes. "Little Wu, you only have one person on your team? We can't have a competition like that. It will be a lot less exciting."

Wu Zeqing tugged at the qipao on her leg, straightening a bit before saying calmly, "It's alright, Master Wei." Saying that, Wu Zeqing sipped her tea and then placed the teacup down gently. "Just one person is enough!"

Chapter 365: First question, a poem beginning with the word Ceng/Zeng*!

Ah?

Just one person was enough? That sounds too boastful!

Why was President Wu so confident today?

The crowd was amused. Many of the spectators became excited too!

Master Wei glanced at Wu Zeqing with a fleeting smile. "Looks like Little Wu's calligraphy skills have improved recently? Then we really can't underestimate you?"

Wu Zeqing smiled without saying a word.

Master Zhou, who had been rendered speechless for a long while, said, "Little Wu, are you sure you don't need any others?"

Wu Zeqing nodded her head slightly. "Hur Hur, there's no need."

Since it was put that way, Master Zhou could not do anything about it. He had been trying to help Wu Zeqing, so it would, at least, appear fair. This way, the competition would also be more exciting.

However, Wu Zeqing's attitude made many extremely curious. Most people nearby did not understand either. Everyone understood Wu Zeqing's skill, and knew she was not much weaker than most calligraphers present. As long as Wu Zeqing did not slack, in a decade or two, she would join the others as one of the top masters in calligrapher in the country. However, now wasn't the time yet. Now, Wu Zeqing was facing dozens of calligraphers and a calligraphy master. Why did she think she could beat so many people alone? She was so confident?

Just one person was enough?

What do you mean enough!? Even adding another few dozen would not be enough! To think she said one person?

Everyone thought when Wu Zeqing said "just one person is enough", she meant herself.

Only Su Na understood that the "one person" mentioned by President Wu was not referring to herself, but referring to the only teammate behind her!

Could Teacher Zhang be up to their standard?

Although he previously said he could...

But does he really know calligraphy? He said he could, and President Wu really believed him?

Su Na clenched her fist and pumped it in the air. It was a stance to cheer on President Wu and Teacher Zhang. At this moment, she was not beside her father. They were bullying President Wu with numbers, and also women. Su Na's position was firm. She shot her father a despising stare.

Father Su coughed.

The other calligraphers looked somewhat disconcerted.

"It's not like they will miss me. I'll just stand off to the side to watch the bustle."

"Me too. Old Yu, let's drink some tea."

"They won't miss me with so many people already. Haha, I also do not want to bully Little Wu. It's not nice bullying her with seniority already, but to bully her with numbers as well just isn't right."

"It's just all for fun."

"Come over, let's take a rest."

Immediately, a few people also decided to quit, knowing the situation. Even though President Wu did not need any teammates, they decided to stand aside to watch and not choose sides.

However, the difference in numbers was still rather large.

After ruminating for a moment, Master Zhou said, "I actually wanted both sides to compete in twenty rounds, but since the numbers are a bit disparate, let's decide the victor in three rounds?"

Wu Zeqing said, "Elder Zhou, do it however it should be. I won't change the usual rules."

Just three rounds were too few, and not much to see. After all, today was the Calligraphy Association's anniversary party. If it wasn't interesting, it would be quite disappointing. Master Zhou then said, "Since Little Wu said so, then alright. Let me decide it. Let's divide it by two, and have ten rounds instead. The team with the most number of wins will be the victor, how about that?"

Wu Zeqing said, "I'll leave it up to Master Zhou."

"Alright, then let's begin. Hur Hur." Master Wei also said.

Master Zhou cleared his throat and said loudly, "Maybe some people here are new, so let me reiterate on the rules. The topics will be drawn through a lottery process. Both teams will draw one each. After the topic is confirmed, the competition will begin. Each round will have one question, and an answer has to be provided within ten minutes. It also has to fulfill the requirement of meeting the topic. If it is a long poem or essay, the amount of time needed to answer can be extended accordingly. Every question, in principle, should not exceed twenty minutes. As for the judgment, I will reserve the right. My reputation is still quite passable. Hur Hur. I believe everyone can rest assured about the fairness."

"Elder Zhou, you must be joking."

"That's right, we are, of course, not worried!"

"If you aren't fair, then no one is fair!"

Everyone joked a bit. Firstly, Master Zhou's character and experience was known by all. Secondly, the auspicious item was provided by Master Zhou, so it was very natural for him to be the judge.

"Then I'll thank everyone for your love and trust." Master Zhou said with a smile. Then, he instructed his disciples to bring over two wooden boxes that had previously been prepared. Inside were many folded slips of paper. There was no way to see the words written on them from the outside. The scope of the question was probably written on them.

Wu Zeqing and Zhang Ye sat next to each other.

She tilted her head and said with a smile, "Ten rounds, we each take half?"

Zhang Ye shrugged his shoulders. "I'm fine with anything."

"Alright." Wu Zeqing gave a faint chuckle. "I really like that calligraphy piece by Master Zhou."

Zhang Ye spat the melon seed's shell out. "Anyway, I'm fighting alongside you today, so I will definitely win that calligraphy piece back for you. I happened to not have prepared a birthday gift for you, so I hope this will make do."

Wu Zeqing looked at him. "It's quite difficult."

"I'll give it a try." Zhang Ye was actually not very confident, but he did not lose to others in terms of his stance.

Oh, so Master Wei's birthday is a birthday, but my President Wu's birthday isn't? Bullsh*t, this bro refuses to have his beliefs shaken today!

You can bully me!

I won't care if you bully others too!

But you bunch of respectful calligraphers are bullying Old Wu? No way!

In fact, the other party was not intending on bullying Wu Zeqing. What sort of leader was Wu Zeqing? They wouldn't dare either. They were just giving Master Wei face. An old man's birthday and a young person's birthday was quite different in terms of importance. However, with Zhang Ye's temperament, he was like a gunpowder keg. Just a spark would blow him up. He didn't care for that. He had to win face for President Wu this time. According to their relationship, Zhang Ye felt obligated to help Old Wu.

The lottery began.

Master Zhou was sitting in the middle and shook a box in each hand. "Let's do it?"

Master Wei was sitting by his side and stretched his hand in to grab a slip. After flipping it open, there was a word "曾 (Ceng/Zeng)" written on it.

Wu Zeqing also gently got up and gracefully walked over. She then grabbed a paper slip from the second box. She then opened it for Master Zhou to see. On it was written two words, "first word".

Master Zhou announced, "The first round's topic is out. You have to use either the word 'Zeng' or 'Ceng' as the first word to write a piece of poetry."

Their calligraphy competition might be a competition in calligraphy, but it was not as simple as it was. If it something stupid like "Ceng, the teacher is a good man", it wouldn't be right. So needless to say, their competition's topic was all about writing poems or melody poems. Even if it were not written according to a certain story or ancient poems, it had to follow the tonal patterns of ancient poetry. Modern words or epigrams were prohibited. These were unspoken rules, or else, what was the point with those topical restrictions? It was all to add difficulty!

"Ceng/Zeng?"

"And it has to be the first word?"

"The first question isn't that difficult."

"But it's not easy either. Let's see how each side answers it."

The spectators began thinking and had an answer on their minds.

Wu Zeqing came over and said to Zhang Ye. "There are quite a few poems that have Ceng/Zeng as their first word, but they aren't famous. It's just some trivial poems or phrases. This question isn't easily answered. Calligraphy isn't all about the strokes that make up a word. It also has feelings behind it. If the text isn't well chosen, it would be useless no matter how well-written it is. Give me a moment to think about it."

On Master Wei's side, people were also thinking.

Wu Zeqing was also repeatedly ruminating over an answer.

Zhang Ye did not have any reactions. He carried on chewing his melon seeds comfortably. He did not have the bearing of an artist. In fact, he looked like a person here to scrounge for food.

The onlooking crowd was at a loss of whether to laugh or cry as they glanced at President Wu's only teammate. What sort of f**king teammate are you? Are you purely there to make up the numbers? You haven't stopped munching on your seeds since you sat down. Have you never eaten in your entire life? At this exciting moment in the competition, it was alright to forget that you were not helping Wu Zeqing come up with ideas. Your team was about to go up soon, could you at least have some competitive spirit? Why do you only have melon seeds in your eyes!?

Su Na was also breaking out in a sweat. Teacher Zhang was too relaxed.

Master Zhou smiled and said, "Countdown of five minutes begins."

The platform, together with the ink and paper had already been prepared. It was placed in the middle of the two teams.

On the other side, a middle-aged suddenly stood forward. He said with quite a bit of confidence, "Old Wei, why don't I answer this question?"

Master Wei looked at him, "Little Wang, you want to go up? Alright, I wish you success!"

Teacher Wang loosened his wrist. "There's just a matter of course. Let me take down the first round."

There were not many famous poems that met the requirements. The choice of the poem became a difficult problem. You had to at least know that you could recite the poem from memory. This was also a tough part of the competition. They were not permitted to search online. If that were the case, the competition would lose its meaning. Hence, most of the time, what was being used to compete was not an individual's skill in calligraphy, but many other things. Hence, having more people on the team became a natural advantage. This was because no one was adept at having such good memory at knowing all the famous and unknown poems. They had to draw on collective wisdom. Hence, Teacher Wang from Master Wei's team came forward to answer. He happened to know an ancient poem that met the requirements. It did not have a title, but was a poem recorded in an ancient text. It did not have much mood to it, but it was not bad.

He began writing:

Ever once our soldiers secured our borders, the appointment of civil officials with poor foundations.

If Wen Chang** knew of this, a disappointment it would be to him.

As he put the brush down, Teacher Wang smiled and looked over at Wu Zeqing. "Teacher Wu, it's your turn?"

"Nicely written!"

"The poem isn't bad too."

"Sis Wu is in trouble."

"This poem is probably one of the most famous poems that meet the requirements. It is also relatively one of the most well known ones too. With Teacher Wang already writing it, what is there for Teacher Wu to write?"

Everyone discussed in whispers, trying to avoid affecting the competition with their voices.

Master Zhou looked at his watch. "There's only three minutes left."

Wu Zeqing was having an exchange with Zhang Ye. "I know a poem, but it's lacking in meaning. It is inferior to Teacher Wang's. There's also no background to support it, so we might not win if we use it."

Zhang Ye asked, "Then let me do it?"

Wu Zeqing glanced at him. "You remember a better poem that begins with Ceng? I have never seen your calligraphy skills. Why don't you tell me, and I'll write it."

Zhang Ye said, "I don't remember. I don't read ancient poetry too much. Since you said there's no better poem beginning with Ceng, then there definitely isn't anything better." Zhang Ye trusted Wu Zeqing's judgment.

Wu Zeqing said calmly, "Since there isn't any, how are you to write?"

Zhang Ye said in a matter-of-fact manner, "Of course I can write one myself."

"Write one yourself?" Wu Zeqing chuckled. "Alright, then it's all on you."

*The word 曾 (Ceng) usually has the meaning of once upon a time, in the past. It can also be a surname, Zeng.

**Wen Chang is known as the God of Culture and Literature Chinese mythology. Thank you to Loki for helping translate this poem.

Chapter 366: "Missing You" — Part four of five!

It was decided.

Zhang Ye would compete in the first round.

This fellow, Zhang Ye, finally stopped munching on his melon seeds. After he brushed off the seed husks that had fallen on his legs, he got up and walked over, standing before the platform. Zhang Ye had not seen many of this world's poetry. He was pretty much totally void of any knowledge. However, he knew a ton of poetry from his world! Ceng/Zeng? There were not many poems that began with that, but there were a few that were more well-known. For example, there was something like — I have had my best love before but I didn't treasure her...*

Alright then.

It was a joke.

On the other side, Teacher Wang basically felt that he had the first round in the bag. Master Wei's teammates were also waiting for Wu Zeqing to come forward. They wanted to see how much Wu Zeqing's calligraphy skills had improved, but what they ended up waiting was for Wu Zeqing's only teammate, that youth in shades whom they did not know!

What did this mean?

Wu Zeqing was not coming forward.

The first question was left to the youth?

Many people were stunned momentarily. They thought the youth in sunglasses was just there to make up the numbers, so as to allow Wu Zeqing to have someone on her team. At least it would not look so bad on her part. With them having the preconception that he was not planning on participating in the competition, this scene made them fail to react in time. He was really coming forward?

Who are you?

A nobody wanted to compete with Teacher Wang in calligraphy?

Teacher Wang found it amusing and a bit infuriating. He was thinking how this Little Wu looked down on him. She got someone perfunctory to play with me? Teacher Wang felt like he wouldn't be able to bask in any glory even if he won against this youth, so he was not elated at all. He cast a glance at Zhang Ye, not even interested in asking his name.

Go ahead and write!

I want to see what you can write!

A poem starting with Ceng? It would be pretty good if you could even recite one!

Master Zhou reminded them. "There's another 90 seconds left. Please hurry."

Master Zhou's seemed to lose a bit of interest. As for those people on Master Wei's side, they also could not get excited. No one present thought anything of the youth in shades. They believed Wu Zeqing had given up on this question and was afraid to lose too badly, hence getting this youth to come forward. Since he was unknown, it wouldn't be too shameful. Hence, this first round lost meaning to everyone!

Zhang Ye held the brush and began to dip it in ink.

Just this posture of him dipping his brush into the ink made many people find it extremely humorous. It was too unsightly. When they trained in calligraphy, the first thing they learned was the basic skill of grinding ink. There was an art to it, and the brush had to be held nicely so as to have the bearing of a person in the arts. However, Zhang Ye's posture was clearly a layman among laymen. Even a rookie was better than him. Was this even called dipping ink? Why did he look like he was holding a toilet plunger?

"Hur Hur Hur."

"This person is really funny."

"He really dared to come forward?"

"What sort of competition is this? He really has the nerve."

"Teacher Wang is an old member of the Calligraphy Association. His skills are far from average. He was also the first to write the most famous poem that begins with "Ceng". What can he even write?"

Voices sounded out one after another.

However, Wu Zeqing stared over unblinkingly.

The moment Zhang Ye landed his brush, many people stopped talking. Some were startled, while some exclaimed, there were even more who were stunned!

The first word was written!

It was semi-cursive script!

No, it wasn't standard semi-cursive script!

This was running-standard script? And it was different from the usual kind. This youth in shades seemed to have a special style. It varied very differently from others!

Father Su's eyes lit up. These words were far from average!

When Master Zhou saw this, he could not help but let out a cry of "nicely written" in his heart!

Even the family members of these calligraphers present, who were laymen, were stunned by this. No one expected him to write so nicely!

The words were naturally special. Was the stance Zhang Ye used when dabbing the ink ugly? That was because he had just bought a "Memory Search Capsule" to eat. His mind wasn't in reality, but immersed in the calligraphy classes he had in primary school. There were calligraphy books, standard ones and ones by famous calligraphers. After eating a hundred Calligraphy Skillbooks, Zhang Ye felt he could write anything. However, he could not make it a complete hodge-podge. He had to use a certain script or style. Zhang Ye's calligraphy skills basically came from nothing except what he had gained from those Experience Books. He had no practice, so he had no thoughts of his own. Hence, he could only emulate the calligraphy styles of others.

Whose should he use?

A name seemed to appear in Zhang Ye's brain like a reflex. He believed that as long as calligraphy from his world was mentioned, everyone would think of that name!

Wang Xizhi!

Semi-cursive script, regular script, cursive script. He was an expert in all of them!

He was a calligraphy sage! He was the greatest calligraphy master in all of history! He had no equal!

If Zhang Ye wanted to emulate, he had to emulate someone more awesome. Wang Xizhi was at the pinnacle of calligraphy, so it was natural to choose his style. Cursive script was too difficult to emulate, so it was rejected. Regular script was too slow and was behind the times. Hence, the answer was apparent. Zhang Ye used Wang Xizhi's unique version of semi-cursive script, known as running-standard script. Perhaps he had not eaten enough Calligraphy Skill Experience Books, so although he had Wang Xizhi's style from his world in his head, the moment he started writing, he realized that he could not create a perfect emulation of it. Especially, in the artistic concept within, he could only imitate 10-20% of it. It was way too difficult. However, just this tiny bit would do. That was a calligraphy sage. It was absolutely no problem stunning the people from this world. This world did not have someone on par with Wang Xizhi!

Teacher Wang's expression turned solemn.

Su Na was also excitedly jumping to catch a glimpse. She never expected Teacher Zhang's calligraphy to be so good. Was he just pretending back at the Beijing Couplet Competition!? He did not turn serious at all!

It was too much of a surprise!

Everyone was startled by Zhang Ye's writing!

Master Wei also stopped underestimating him and became serious!

The first word was already determined, but the second word also came out.

Teacher Wang was trying to weigh it on his mind, but he came to an unbelievable conclusion. This youth's calligraphy skills were even better than his own. How was this possible?! But the truth was right in front of his eyes. He was rendered speechless. He thought a soft persimmon had come for him to easily crush, but who knew it was a hard one! And it was too hard! If he could write such calligraphy at such a young age, how good would he become in the future? And who was he? For a person with such calligraphy skill, he could not be some nobody. If he wanted to be famous, he could have become famous long ago, but why does nobody know him?

Zhang Ye wrote it very quickly and had finished writing the fourth word, "vast".

However, when the crowd ended their amazement over the youth's calligraphy, their minds began to be filled with questions. Having? Crossed the? Vast? What sort of opening was this? Why had noone heard of it before?

"Master Zhou?" A person could not help but ask.

Another one whispered, "Elder Zhou, what poem is this?"

Master Zhou was also curious. "I don't know either. Maybe it's a poem from some unknown poetry collection? Maybe it is unknown? Or maybe we have forgotten it? Let's wait until he finishes writing it. Someone is bound to recognize it."

Father Su looked at Master Wei, "Old Master Wei?"

Master Wei shook his head. "I do not have any impressions of this poem either."

After everyone conversed with each other, everyone agreed that no one had seen this poem before.

Teacher Wang felt assured. Although it was a competition in calligraphy, the poem itself was extremely important. Calligraphy could never be appreciated in isolation. It had to express the meaning in the text. He had used the relatively famous, "Untitled" poem and was likely invincible. Although he felt sorry for the young lad, he was bound to win this round.

The other people had similar thoughts as they watched Zhang Ye writing silently.

One word...

Three words...

Five words...

Words began to appear on the Xuan paper!

Wu Zeqing had already stood up and walked to stand behind Zhang Ye.

As people watched his every stroke, slowly, more and more of their expressions changed. Some gasped while others were stunned with widened eyes!

"What!?"

"This poem..."

"Silence. Don't disturb him!"

The poem was very short and there were not many words.

When Zhang Ye finished writing the last word in a smooth manner, he released his pent up breath. He looked at his work with satisfaction and smiled. He then put the brush down and nodded at Master Zhou. "I'm done."

Master Zhou was already staring at Zhang Ye's face!

The way Master Wei was looking at Zhang Ye was full of alarm and doubt!

After Teacher Wang finished reading the poem, his face first turned pale before he gave a wry smile.

Many people could not see as they were quite far away. Some people hurriedly came over to take a glance, then they began looking at each other in pairs, seeing the shock in each other's eyes!

On the Xuan paper, this was written:

Having crossed the vast oceans, I can no longer take a river seriously. If it's not on Mount Wushan, it's not a cloud.

I don't care to look back on my leisurely walks among the flowers and shrubs, half due to religious devotion, and half due to you.

Su Na could not help but exclaim, "Nice poem! Nicely written!"

With her spearheading it, the surrounding crowd also began to give their kudos. They all began to express their amazement!

"These words sure have a profound meaning!"

"That's right. He is so skilled at such a young age?"

"The calligraphy is good, but the poem is even better. Why have I never heard of such a poem with such poetic flair?"

"I have never heard of it either. It looks like we are ill-informed."

At this moment, Master Zhou spoke up and said to everyone, "It's not that everyone is ill-informed or ignorant. This poem should have been composed on the spot by this young lad, right?"

A young calligrapher in his thirties exclaimed, "Composed on the spot?"

Everyone was a bit dumbfounded. With the young lad remaining silent, it clearly meant tacit agreement. Everyone was completely baffled as to how he had produced it on the spot!

In just a few minutes?

And there was a topic restriction, yet he could write poetry of this level?

Numerous gazes focused on Zhang Ye's face. Where did this aficionado jump out from!? In calligraphy competitions, many of the questions had limitations to them to increase the difficulty, preventing you from having simple stories or poems to write about, but good going! You sure were good! You decided not to use any of the poems and songs of the ancients, and created one yourself? And yet you could write a poem so elegant?

Interesting!

Today's competition was too interesting!

*This is a line from comedian king, Stephen Chow's movie, A Chinese Odyssey 2

Translators' Note: Just click it. 'Nuff said.

Chapter 367: Two rounds down!

In the back yard.

The atmosphere was lit up!

The shades-wearing youth's poem had amazed everyone!

Zhang Ye went back to sit down and had another sip of tea. Only he knew that this work was not any ordinary poem. This was the fourth of the "Missing You" five-part series. It was Yuan Zhen's work. The first line of the poem was known by everyone in his world. Many artistic and video productions had used it before. The value and influence of this poem was obvious. It was one of the most precious poems in his world's history.

How could this not win?

If it didn't win, then Zhang Ye might as well kill himself!

Master Zhou coughed aloud to motion for silence. Then he said, "The first match is over, yes, I will announce the winner now....."

Teacher Wang said with a wry smile, "Elder Zhou, you don't have to speak further. He beat me fair and square."

Master Zhou smiled as he nodded. "Little Wang, your calligraphy is also very good. It has more depth than last year. Let's discuss more when you have the time."

Teacher Wang cheered up, "I happen to have a lot of questions that I need your guidance on."

He went back to the side of Master Wei's team to the teasing of many of his team mates.

"Old Wang, are you OK?"

"Hur Hur, lost to a junior."

The good natured ridiculing was because they were all rather good friends.

Teacher Wang said helplessly, "I had no hope, the youngsters these days are really too good. The new generation has surpassed the older ones. Everyone should be a little more careful from here on."

The first match ended.

The next match was beginning.

Zhang Ye and Teacher Wang's calligraphy had been taken away for drying and the table had new Xuan paper scrolls laid on it.

Wu Zeqing was smiling and sat beside Zhang Ye, "Little Zhang, you've given me yet another surprise. Didn't you say your calligraphy skill was lacking? Then who wrote those words just now?"

Zhang Ye said nervously, "I just blindly wrote it."

Wu Zeqing asked, "The competition from now on won't be easy."

Zhang Ye answered, "It'll be fine. I got lucky and won the first round. Let's see how the rest goes. I still have you to back me up anyway." He even took the chance to curry favor with Wu Zeqing.

Look buddy, this bro's getting more street smart by the day!

Seeing President Wu and the youth chatting happily, Master Wei's team of dozens of calligraphers turned serious. They no longer took their opponents lightly and prepared to take him on instead. Actually, with their literary standards, at least 70-80% of them could spontaneously compose ancient poems that met the requirements of a random draw. They would not be limited to works of the ancients, but creating something new had its risks. Firstly, it had to be relevant, secondly, if they lacked the inspiration, it was difficult to produce something good. They had all witnessed the youth's talents already. That poem was definitely a one-off inspirational piece and could not be repeated again. So they did not fear much as they had more people on their side! So many of them could not compete against just two people? Wouldn't that be a joke!?

Master Zhou smiled, "Let the second round begin. Draw your topics."

This time, it was Wu Zeqing who picked a random topic. It was an empty slip, without any words on it. This probably meant there was no topic restriction for this round.

Master Wei also chose one — Courtyard Flowers*.

Zhang Ye took a look, wondering why there would be such an erotic kind of topic?

Master Zhou said, "The second round's topic is limited to 'Courtyard Flowers'. You can begin."

"Let me go up this round." Wu Zeqing smiled and went forward to pick up a brush to begin writing.

The people on Master Wei's side was slower by a tiny bit, but a man in his fifties quickly stood forward. "Leave this round to me."

"Mr. Feng?"

"You want to go up?"

"You will absolutely not have a problem."

"Mr. Feng will definitely clinch victory!"

It was unknown why Mr. Feng was in such a rush. He hurriedly walked forward to write. He only hastily dabbed his brush into the ink. So although he stepped forward after Wu Zeqing, he had written it faster. It was cursive script!

Su Na knew this person. "Eh? Isn't Uncle Feng adept at regular script?"

A person in the know beside her said, "Yes, but you will know why if you carry on watching."

Wu Zeqing was using running-standard script, so she was slower!

Only then did Zhang Ye realize that the two of them were writing the same thing!

"Courtyard Flowers" or "A Song of Courtyard Flowers" was about an author's disappointment at the rulers and his deep worries about the impending danger to the state. The poem was describing the process within the palace during the downfall of a dynasty. Zhang Ye's world also had "A Song of Courtyard Flowers", but it did not receive rave reviews. It appeared like this world also had similar works. With a scan, Zhang Ye realized it was not very similar to his world's "A Song of Courtyard Flowers". The phrases used were different, but the meaning was about the same. It was all about debauchery and extravagance!

Suddenly, Mr Feng smiled and put down his brush. "Sorry about that Little Wu, I finished writing it first."

Master Zhou glanced at Mr Feng and then said, "According to the rules, our calligraphy competition does not allow the use of similar works. Since Old Feng finished writing first, Little Wu, your calligraphy cannot be used."

Heh!

He was playing dirty!

Why didn't you say that Old Wu was the one who first began writing!

Zhang Ye laughed as a result of his rage. There were such rules? No wonder Mr Feng was in such a rush. He even used cursive script which was recognized as the fastest calligraphy script? He was planning on pushing Wu Zeqing into a ditch. The poems they wrote weren't too short, and had spent three minutes writing it. If Wu Zeqing had to write another poem, she might not even make it in time. Heh, go f**k your sister!

Wu Zeqing looked at Mr Feng and said with a smile, "Teacher Feng, you aren't being very particular."

Mr Feng chuckled. "I have no other way. In history, there is only that "Courtyard Flowers". If you were to write it, I wouldn't have anything to write. It's not me pushing you into a ditch, Little Wu. Haha, it's a problem with the topic. This topic is too stringent, it clearly wanted to see who could finish writing first. If you wrote it faster than me, I would also have to admit defeat. Your running-standard script has a style of an expert. My cursive script might not be your match. I'll probably need regular script to be able

to compete with you." With a laugh, Mr Feng shook his work and said, "Shall I recite it once? Actually it's possible to sing it, but there's no string accompaniment, so it wouldn't sound good." This poem was also a melody and was very famous.

You even wanted to sing?

Why are you so smug!?

Zhang Ye placed his teacup down heavily!

The judge, Master Zhou said, "There's another 90 seconds. Little Wu, are you going to carry on writing?"

Su Na was so vexed that she nearly spat a mouthful of blood. What the heck Uncle Feng!? She planned on pretending not to know who he was in the future. It was a disgrace to artists! Look at how well mannered President Wu was. She wasn't even annoyed at this!

Wu Zeqing placed her brush down. "I won't be able to write one out in time. For this round, I can only..."

Just as she was about to admit defeat, Zhang Ye pounced forward. Without a word, he picked up the brush and began writing on the Xuan paper with the brush!

After a momentary start, Wu Zeqing smiled and moved aside.

"There can be a last minute substitution?" Mr. Feng asked.

Master Zhou answered, "It's a team competition, so that's alright." He was a bit speechless towards Old Feng's unbecoming bearing as an elder. It was just a competition, was there a need to do that?

Mr Feng quipped, "Alright, I also want to see what this young lad can write about Courtyard Flowers. Maybe I'll also broaden my horizons. Hur Hur Hur."

Everyone did not know what Zhang Ye could write, furthermore, there was not much time left!

However, Mr Feng's yellow incisor teeth could no longer reveal a smile the next moment!

Zhang Ye used half a minute to finish the poem. He knew running-standard script would not make it in time, so he used cursive script!

Of course it was not any ordinary cursive script!

He once again used Wang Xizhi's cursive script!

It was written simply, and the emulation was not perfect. Cursive script was, after all, too difficult for Zhang Ye, but even a barely satisfactory version of Wang Xizhi's cursive script was already full of flair!

The font was so illegible that it made people look in askance!

Not many people could recognize such calligraphy. Only those who were adept at cursive script would be able to read it.

Zhang Ye was also very understanding. Noticing how many people could not understand all the words, he began reciting after he finished writing. "Mist veils the cold stream, and moonlight the sand. As I moor in the shadow of a river-tavern. Where girls, with no thoughts of a perished kingdom..." Upon

reciting to this point, Zhang Ye looked at Mr. Feng and smiled, "Gaily echo 'A Song of Courtyard Flowers'."

Su Na nearly burst out in laughter!

Mr Feng's face turned green. Heh! Why are you scolding me!?

Numerous people around were startled upon hearing this. Was there such a poem? There was none in history! Holy sh*t, did you just create it on the spot again? In that remaining minute, not only did you finish the work, you even included 'Courtyard Flowers' into the poem, and took the opportunity to scold!? Mr Feng had just finished writing "Courtyard Flowers" and was excitedly about to engage in a song and dance, yet you attacked back in an instant? What did the girls represent? They were courtesans who sold their bodies! Courtesans, who sold their bodies, had no thoughts of a perished kingdom, and across the river, they sang 'A Song of Courtyard Flowers'!?

His mouth was really toxic!

Using calligraphy to curse? What sort of skill was that!?

Master Zhou and Wu Zeqing were also amused. This poem was too interesting. From a literary point of view, this poem was one of the best amongst the top graded poems. It had a profound meaning behind it! The sarcasm was very intense!

Master Wei: "..."

Master Wei turned around. "Does anyone know this young lad?"

Everyone shook their heads. "No, I've never seen him."

A calligrapher said in amazement, "Where did this person come from? Even Old Wang and Old Feng are not his match? That's not right. The winner has not been decided yet. We'll see what Master Zhou has to say."

Everyone was waiting for Master Zhou's judgment.

Master Zhou smiled and said, "Why is everyone looking at me?"

A youth said, "We are waiting for your judgment."

Master Zhou said without any hesitation, "Is there a need? Both of their skills in cursive script are comparable. There are tiny problems. Old Feng and this young lad are probably not particularly good in cursive script. So I'll not talk about it. Hur Hur. However, for the content, this young lad on Little Wu's side is clearly superior. No, not only is it superior, it is of a completely different realm, so the victor is clear."

In his heart, Mr. Feng was not unconvinced. Instead, he admired this youth in sunglasses. He gave a thumbs up. "A young person's abilities must be respected!"

Zhang Ye pretended to be polite, "Thank you."

Having won this round, Wu Zeqing's side had already clinched two victories!

In the beginning, everyone thought Wu Zeqing's side having two people would result in utter defeat, but who knew the outcome would be so surprising. Out came this devil incarnate. This unknown youth in sunglasses had repeatedly defeated two calligraphers, Teacher Wang and Mr. Feng. There was no chance for Wu Zeqing to even participate!

Chapter 368: Consecutively Winning Three Rounds!

"A Mooring on the Qinhuai River".

The author was Du Mu.

This poem was the poet of his world, Du Mu's recollections in 'A Mooring on the Qinhuai River'. The first half described the night view of the Qinhuai River. The second half expressed his regret, deriding those rulers who did not learn their lessons but indulged in debauchery. It expressed the author's concern and deep affections for his country's fate. If one wanted to count, this was also a very famous seven word poem in Zhang Ye's world. Using it to win the second round of a calligraphy competition was quite overkill.

As long as they won.

Anyway, those poems were just left there in the dust.

Zhang Ye returned to his seat to take a break. He drank a mouthful of water and found it quite boring. After writing twice, he felt like drinking some wine. His gaze then looked towards at a few bottles of white wine on the tea table. In ancient times, there was the notion of composing poems while drinking wine. At the Calligraphy Association's anniversary, there naturally could not be a lack of these. Many calligraphers were chronic alcoholics. They couldn't survive without alcohol. Zhang Ye did not stand on ceremony. He grabbed a bottle and poured a cup of wine for himself.

"Drinking?" Wu Zeqing asked.

Zhang Ye said, "Yea, drinking a bit."

Wu Zeqing smiled, "I was lucky that you happened to have such a quick response just now."

Zhang Ye whispered, "Blame it on them being so unparticular." As he said, he brought the cup of wine to his mouth. The burning flavor entered his throat as it went from his throat to his stomach.

Good wine!

It was refreshing!

He had a face of enjoyment.

Everyone had their idiosyncrasies when producing calligraphy. For example, some would like to take a nap before writing. Some were accustomed to taking a bath and changing clothes before writing. Some liked to write deep into the night. They had their own idiosyncrasies and habits, there was not only one. Naturally, there were people who liked to write after drinking. These external items of habits before writing was mostly used to help the calligrapher enter their optimal state.

Wu Zeqing drank her tea. "Drink less. Hur Hur. I'll still be counting on you in a while."

"Sure." Zhang Ye carried on drinking his wine. "I know my tolerance level, so don't worry. I won't drink too much."

After two rounds, Master Zhou took into account that Wu Zeqing's team only had two people, so he decided to let them have a moment of rest. He was in no hurry to begin the second round.

"Teacher." Master Zhou's disciple looked at Zhang Ye with a look of wonder. He could not help but ask, "Which master's relative or disciple is he?"

Master Zhou shook his head, "A master's disciple? Just his ability in composing poems on the spot and his proficient knowledge in calligraphy is enough to call him a master already."

The disciple said in a stunned manner, "You think so highly of him?"

Master Zhou laughed, losing some of his composure. "It's not me thinking highly of him. It's just that you lack the ability to evaluate him. It is a pity these two poems were produced in modern times. If they were produced in ancient times, and in the environment of those periods, with the support of some allusions and historical background, and written by some historical figure, I believe these two poems would definitely be immortalized. Such a pity. In present day's literature, there is not much space for ancient poems, if not... Hur Hur."

On the other team.

Master Wei did not speak and rested with his eyes closed.

The others began to come up with a strategy.

"They won two rounds already. It's not good, not good at all."

"It's Elder Wei's birthday. The Old Master wants the calligraphy piece, so we have to win it for him."

"The other side has an unfathomable figure. Does anyone have any strategies against him?"

"Hur Hur. Is there a need for a strategy? The young lad just got lucky. How can so many of us lose to a young kid like him?"

"Old Li, don't be careless. Even Old Feng and Old Wang lost. It's best not to underestimate him."

"I wonder what the next topic would be. It seems this youth's attainment in ancient poetry is very high. Only a person like Master Wei can compete evenly with him. However, he might not be good at writing melody poems. No matter how high his attainment is, he can't be good at everything. He has to be lacking in something."

Everyone discussed for a long while. If it was just a competition purely based on calligraphy, many of the calligraphers present were not afraid of the youth in shades. The youth's words were very good, but it did not reach the peak of perfection. Compared to many calligraphers, he was still lacking. They had been writing all their lives, so they naturally would not lose in this aspect. However, the problem was his ancient poetry was written in such a superb manner and to the point. It also had the mood, so even though his calligraphy skills were not perfect, he had the advantage of the ancient poetry's mood. They were vexed over this!

A while later.

Master Zhou spoke, "Alright, let's begin the third round."

Master Wei picked — Lychee.

Wu Zeqing picked — Seven-word quatrain.

Everyone stared over. Another ancient poem? Seven words?

Master Zhou announced, "The third round's topic requires a seven-word quatrain. The poem must have the word 'lychee' in it. Everyone can begin choosing their representative to give an answer. The time to prepare for and complete this round begins now!"

The moment the voice dissipated, someone volunteered from Master Wei's team. "Old Master Wei, let me do it this round. I'm beginning to itch after watching all day."

"Alright." Master Wei chuckled.

This was Chief Yang, who was in his forties. He was one of the administrators of the Calligraphy Association.

Chief Yang immediately began writing the moment he arrived. It seemed like he was trying to seize the opportunity.

A few calligraphers began to laugh. This match was finally in the bag. Chief Yang's calligraphy skills might be not much different from the youth in shades. It was quite comparable, but this time the ancient poem was different. Lychee? Seven words? In the last dynasty, there was a very famous poem about lychee. It did not go into textbooks, but was something many people who studied literature knew! The opposing youth was adept at ancient poems, but no matter how good he was, he couldn't match such a famous poem, right? As the previous topics were too broad, the two calligraphers failed to showcase their normal standards. They could not write a poem with the mood that they had wanted. Now, with a good topic, it was time for them to express themselves freely. Of course, they were filled with confidence!

Wu Zeqing had already guessed what Chief Yang would write. "Who shall do it?"

"...Let me do it." Zhang Ye had just drunk some wine, so he felt like he was floating. He felt perfectly fine.

"Alright." Wu Zeqing cautioned, "Remember not to write 'Praise'. He is definitely writing that. Even if you go forward, you won't be able to write it faster than Chief Yang."

Zhang Ye blinked. "What's 'Praise'?"

Wu Zeqing, "...Alright then, pretend I said nothing."

When the surrounding people heard this, they nearly fainted. You have never heard of such a famous seven-word poem? To think you dabble in calligraphy? Those two poems from before must have been blindly written, right!?

Some felt that the youth in shades was faking it. It was impossible that he did not know this poem. There were not many ancient poems that wrote about lychee throughout history. This was nothing like plums or orchids that people wrote all the time. Lychee was something quite unpopular. The poem, "Praise" was also not devoted to lychees. It was about something else, and even wrote about love.

However, they did not know that this fellow, Zhang Ye really did not know anything about "Praise". The world had changed, and he had not undergone the education environment of this world. So naturally, he was unfamiliar with this famous poem.

Chief Yang was done writing.

Master Zhou looked over and nodded his head gently. It was written very well. Old Yang had done well today. Every stroke was just right. He had expressed the poem pretty well. Hur Hur, Old Wei's side had finally been able to grab a round?

Then, Zhang Ye began writing!

Master Zhou looked over with great interest.

However, the moment he began to write, the entire scene turned silent all of a sudden!

"Eh?"

"These words..."

Zhang Ye had switched back to Wang Xizhi's running-standard script. Previously, it was his first time writing, so he was a bit unfamiliar and unpracticed. The way he wrote was a bit lacking, but this time, he could fully express the hundred Calligraphy Skillbook's prowess. His calligraphy skills increased once again!

From Changan the palace embroidered the scene, on the mountain top palace gates opened one by one.

One horse rider kicking up red dust, the concubine laughs, no one knew it was the lychee express arriving.

It was Du Mu again!

"Passing By Huaqing Palace"!

As the judge, Master Zhou should not speak. However, after seeing Zhang Ye's poem, he could not help it. "What a good 'one horse rider kicking up red dust, the concubine laughs, no one knew it was the lychee express arriving'!"

The others were also stunned!

"What poem is this?"

"Holy sh*t! Why have I not heard of it before?"

"Another impromptu work? What the f**k is with his literary skill!?"

"Who has won? And Is it just me, or has this youth's words improved? Could it be that the running-standard script in his first poem was him not giving his all? He was just writing it in a perfunctory manner? Only now is he going all out?"

"It definitely is!:"

"We were all wrong!"

"He only became serious now?"

Everyone was concerned about this round's outcome.

Master Zhou laughed and did not even look at Chief Yang's words. Instead, he looked fondly at Zhang Ye's "Passing by Huaqing Palace" without being able to help himself. Eventually he said loudly, "In terms of calligraphy skill, Old Yang lost by a tiny bit. And in the mood of the ancient poem with the calligraphy's mood, Old Yang...still lost by a bit. I might lack the authority, and this might just be my personal opinion. I personally think 'Passing by Huaqing Palace' is cut higher than 'Praise'! One horse rider kicking up red dust, the concubine laughs, no one knew it was the lychee express arriving. That line alone is worthy of praise!"

He had won again!

He had won three consecutive rounds!

Following that, a disciples of Chief Yang said in an unconvinced manner. "'Praise' is a famous work, as for 'Passing by Huaqing Palace'? It's just a casual creation."

Master Zhou cut him off. "Maybe in a few decades or in a few centuries, 'Passing by Huaqing Palace' might also become a famous piece of work. We cannot reject its literary value because of its lack of age. What do you think?"

"Elder Zhou is right."

"That's right, the last line is really the crowning touch!"

"No one knew it was the lychee express arriving? It's indeed good!"

The few people on Master Wei's team who had tried to come up with ideas turned speechless. They thought that the topic being broader would cause the opposing youth to stumble, thinking that even if he would come up with a impromptu piece of work, he would not be better than the ancient wisdoms passed down over hundreds and thousands of years. Who knew he really f**king came up with a seven-word ancient poem that could match the wisdom of the ancients on the spot! And he had even exceeded them!

Many of the family members on the second floor of the restaurant were excited by the commotion downstairs. One by one, they came downstairs to join in the bustle.

More and more people were dying of curiosity!

Who was this youth that came from nowhere!?

Su Na was sincerely happy for Zhang Ye. She was also overjoyed. She cared not for the chaos in the world and cheered for Zhang Ye. Teacher Zhang was indeed Teacher Zhang! An amateur against dozens of calligraphers? He actually still had the upper hand! This result was something that flabbergasted many!

Chapter 369: Zhang Ye's Great Capacity for Drinking and Poetry!

A total of ten rounds.

Winning six rounds meant overall victory.

Quite a number of people on the team behind Master Wei could no longer sit still. This was no longer a competition where friendship came first, and competition came second. If the other party was a master, it was still alright. They would not say anything about it as they wouldn't feel ashamed of losing. However, with their opponent being some nobody, this made these calligraphers feel that they had lost face. It was too shameful.

"Heh, I don't believe it!

"If it were ancient melody poems, I'll go up myself!"

"If it's five word poems, leave it to me!"

"Just a kid, yet he doesn't give any face to us seniors!"

"Haha, Old Yu and Old Lu, the both of you want to go up? Sure, then count me in too. No matter what, we need to get serious, or there's no where to put our faces."

"I really don't believe he is so all-powerful."

"At such a young age, how deep can his knowledge be!?"

These calligraphers began to sharpen their weapons, ready for a fight.

When Zhang Ye saw this, he sought Wu Zeqing's view. "President Wu, should we lose a few rounds? Of course we will definitely have to win the rest, but in this process..." According to Zhang Ye's intent, he didn't mind. This was after all Wu Zeqing's birthday and it was her circle. Zhang Ye was afraid President Wu found it inappropriate, so he sought her opinion to see what her attitude was.

Wu Zeqing retorted, "Why should we lose?"

Zhang Ye said, "The other side are all seniors of the calligraphy world. I'm afraid you would..."

Wu Zeqing gave a faint smile and said, "In art, there is no modesty. If you are really lacking in ability, which results in your loss, then that's just too bad, but if you can win, why don't you win?"

Zhang Ye blinked his eyes as he said, "It's fine even if we win?"

"What problems would there be?" Wu Zeqing sipped her tea.

Zhang Ye got an idea of her attitude. "Alright, I was just waiting for those words of yours!"

Offend people? Since when was Zhang Ye afraid of that? This fellow had never concerned himself with this. He was afraid Wu Zeqing would eventually be put in a tough spot, however, President Wu's words wiped all his concerns away. He finally understood why he liked Old Wu so much. Just like back when she invited him to teach, any typical President of an esteemed school of higher learning would never dare to take such risks. Furthermore, he had such a shocking theory about 'Dream of the Red Chamber', yet Wu Zeqing did not even ask him about it before supporting him. She never doubted the person she chose. From a certain point of view, Wu Zeqing was even more bold than Zhang Ye. She was indeed very different from a typical woman!

Win?

That was of course not a problem!

If you want to win, I'll win it for you!

"I'll do the draw." Zhang Ye took the initiative and went over.

The fourth round's topic came out. An ancient melody poem, and the last word had to have the word 'liu' (flow).

This sort of topic was a little more difficult. If it was just the first word, it would have been easy. Just giving it some thought would allow people to recall one. After all, everyone read a poem from beginning to end. However, if it was the last word, even if it were a poem one knew inside out, not everyone would be able to remember it. They would have to go from the first word all the way down to the last word. This increased the difficulty due to the time constraints.

"Finally the number of words are limited. I'll do it!" Teacher Yu came forward.

However, Zhang Ye had already picked up a brush and began writing.

"Lady Yu, the Royal Beauty"

Spring flowers and autumn moon, O when will all these end?

How much of my past I comprehend?

Last night, to my loft once more, the vernal east wind came;

In moonlight, I could not bear to look back towards my homeland rid of my name.

Jade steps and carved railings may still as ever be there,

Though changed are the faces fair.

O how great, how grave, I ask, can my woe and sorrow be?

Just like the River's swelling spring-tide waters rolling east to the sea.

Zhang Ye put down his brush, having finished writing it. Then he looked at his opponent.

Teacher Yu came over with a smile while brimming in confidence. He was in no hurry, and took a cursory glance at the melody poem that Zhang Ye had written. Then, his smile transformed into another

expression. His face alternated between red and green. In the end, it changed into an action as he smacked himself in the forehead!

F**k!

You can even write melody poems?

And this is another impromptu creation!?

Teacher Yu wished he had not spoken just now. I'll do it? Doing nothing but fart! After a few seconds of silence, he turned around at a loss of whether to laugh or cry before running back dejectedly towards Master Wei's side.

Master Zhou was amused. "Old Yu?"

Teacher Yu waved his hand. "I'm not writing."

"Then you have abstained?" Master Zhou asked.

Teacher Yu felt that was nonsense. "It will be pointless to continue writing it, so forget it, I give up." This melody poem's literary value was too shocking. His calligraphy was also written very beautifully. Teacher Yu believed that even though his calligraphy attainment was higher than his opponent's, it was not much higher. However, no matter what he wrote, it would definitely not be better than his opponent's "Lady Yu, the Royal Beauty". It would only incur ridicule on himself.

The surrounding crowd was dumbfounded. Even Teacher Yu admitted defeat? He was a famous calligrapher who won first place at this year's calligraphy competition!

Master Zhou said, "Then let's begin the fifth round."

The fifth rounds topic was reminiscing and remembrance.

The topic was very broad, but the broader it was, the harder it became to come up with something appropriate.

No one from the other side came forward, as if they were waiting to see what Zhang Ye had to write.

Zhang Ye drank a mouthful of wine and without any further ado, he grabbed the brush and dipped it in ink without any thought.

"The Lavishly Decorated Zither"

The lavishly decorated zither, for no reason, has fifty strings; each string, each bridge, reminiscing a magnificent year.

Master Zhuang lost himself in the morning dream of being a butterfly; Emperor Wang's amorous spring heart was entrusted to the cuckoo.

Deep under the vast azure sea, reflected the bright moonlight, pearls cry tears; In Indigo Mountain, bathed under the warm sunlight, jade releases smoke.

This feeling might have become something to be remembered later on; Merely, at that time I was already perplexed and lost.

When he finally put down the brush, there were already people giving their kudos!

Su Na exclaimed out and clapped forcefully. "Nice! Nicely written!"

This poem was liked by many of the women present. Their thoughts also seemed to float away a bit. "This feeling might be something to remember later on; Merely, at that time I was... already perplexed and lost?"

Many people were engrossed just by listening to it!

No one from Master Wei's side spoke a word!

What is this guy doing? One poem after another, how are you f**king throwing out all these excellent poems worthy of being classics out like they cost nothing? Can you at least write some poem that we are familiar with!?

Who's going forward?

Who can take down this round?

We can't have no one taking up the challenge, or not only would we lose, we would lose our stance!

They nudged one another and eventually, as there was really no one, someone from the team bit the bullet and came forward. He wrote a relevant poem, which was quite long. He took a long time to write the exaggerated tale filled with high-flown phraseology. A long poem allowed a time extension, so this person was probably trying to use his calligraphy skills to win this round.

However, when he finished writing, Master Zhou still announced that Wu Zeqing's team won. There was no other reason. No matter how high a calligraphy standard one had, it needed to be expressed through text. The poem the youth in shades wrote was enough to blanket out anything else. It even increased his calligraphy by an entire realm!

Another round was won again!

Wu Zeqing decided not to even stand up. She just sat there, drinking her tea and watching the bustle.

The surrounding people began to discuss in murmurs. Some women began pointing at Zhang Ye.

"He's so amazing!"

"This young lad is godly!"

"Why is he wearing sunglasses? I can't see his face!"

"I sure didn't come to this anniversary for nothing. I managed to experience such fun!"

Master Zhou announced, "The sixth round begins." After both sides drew their lots, he said, "The topic this round is Mourning Day, and it has to be used at least twice."

Oh?

Mourning Day?

The topic was random. There really was no poem that began with Mourning Day.

However, the people on Master Wei's side were no ordinary people. Immediately, a young talent stepped forward. He stood in front of the table and with the brush in hand, began to compose something on the spot. Do you think you are the only one who can compose?

Zhang Ye was also writing.

"Mourning Day"

A drizzling rain falls like tears on the Mourning Day;

The mourner's heart is breaking on his way.

Where can a wine house be found to drown his sadness?

A cowherd points to Almond Flower Village in the distance.

Before he was done, he ended a paragraph, and added his name out of habit.

When the youth from Master Wei's team had written half of his poem, he curiously gave Zhang Ye's side a glance. The moment he saw it, his eyes nearly popped out. With a few coughs, he lowered his head to look at the poem he composed. With a sigh, he placed the brush down, no longer wishing to carry on.

"I admit defeat." The youth was convinced.

Master Zhou asked, "Aren't you going to finish it?"

The youth said with a wry smile, "Forget it, I don't want to incur ridicule on myself."

Six rounds!

Zhang Ye had won all of them!

Master Zhou said with a laugh, "There are still four rounds remaining, yet the victor has already been decided, so should we carry on?"

Wu Zeqing said, "I'm fine with anything."

Master Wei did not speak, but quite a few people behind him said,

"Yes!"

"Why shouldn't we?"

"There are still four rounds."

Although they had already lost, the result was no longer important at this moment. So what if Master Zhou's calligraphy piece went to Wu Zeqing, what they needed to do was recover what was left of their face. At least, at the very least, they should win one round, right? We cannot let him wipe us out completely! If it spread out, it would become a joke!

Master Zhou smiled and said, "Alright, then let's carry on."

A young calligrapher said, "Master Zhou, I think this competition isn't fair. It's a calligraphy competition, but why has it become a poetry competition? We all know calligraphy cannot be void of expression and

cannot do without text or poetry, but poetry is not everything in calligraphy. We have already witnessed the prowess of this friend's ability in creating poetry. He is indeed better than us, but that doesn't mean his calligraphy skills are better than ours, right?"

Master Zhou opened up his arms. "But, those are the competition's rules. Every anniversary has always had these rules."

Was it fair?

It was indeed unfair!

Master Zhou knew it, Master Wei knew it, and Wu Zeqing also knew it.

In previous calligraphy competitions, everyone's literary standards were about the same. They were neither too bad nor good. After all, calligraphers were not literary experts. Hence, this sort of competition was usually quite fair. Everyone was pretty much on the same level, but a godly person had appeared in this year's competition. Not only were his calligraphy skills excellent, his literary foundation was universe startling. This made the competition lose all suspense. Everyone knew that this youth in shades did not win due to his calligraphy but rather by his literary skills!

Calligraphy skills? He could only be said to have a chance against some of the calligraphers present. There were many here who were better than him.

But literary foundations? He alone was enough to steamroll dozens of calligraphers! Yes, steamroll. Steamrolling without any suspense!

One person was enough?

Now many people recalled through hindsight the meaning behind Wu Zeqing's words in the beginning! President Wu was not saying that she alone was enough. She was saying the youth alone was enough! President Wu clearly knew this youth from before, and knew his ability. Hence, when she saw the youth join her team, she declined on having other teammates. She had rejected the request of those who wanted to join her team out of pity! This was because Wu Zeqing knew this youth alone was enough! And that was indeed what had happened! This youth had really won over dozens of calligraphy seniors!

Chapter 370: The last match! Couplets duel!

"Then what next?"

"Isn't it the same even if they continue competing?"

"Yea, there's no meaning to it if they continue to compete based on poetry."

"Why not tweak the rules a little and compete based on some other standard?"

"Master Zhou, let's not keep doing poetry. The opponent's advantage is too unfair. We are in the calligraphy field, so how could we possibly defeat someone in literature studies through poetry?"

"Right, we should change the format."

"As long as it isn't poetry, anything else is fine."

"Right, anything except poetry. He definitely won't be able to do well in other topics."

Everyone was convinced of the literary skills of the youth in shades. Since this was a calligraphy competition, they were unconvinced. Many of the calligraphers were embarrassed by this and were disputing the issue.

Master Zhou smiled, "If you want to continue competing, then please draw a lot from the box. There are still other topics in there besides poetry."

"Alright."

"Come on then."

The tension against the youth was increasing.

Master Zhou announced, "First, let's take a two minutes break before we continue."

Everyone had no objections and some went to get a drink while the others who were a little hungry went to grab some refreshments.

Zhang Ye went to the toilet which was inside the restaurant premises. Inside the male toilet, another person followed him in. This person appeared to be Master Wei's disciple and was also part of Master Wei's team.

"Wait a moment." Chen Mo called out to him.

Zhang Ye turned around, "What's the matter, my friend?"

Chen Mo looked at him and said, "Aren't you going a little too far today?"

Zhang Ye smiled, "What do you mean by that? How did I go too far?"

"It's Master Wei's birthday today. Why are you being such a wet blanket? What's the meaning of this? You are also someone from this circle, so don't tell me you don't intend to show some respect to the seniors?" Chen Mo did not hold back on his words and tone.

Zhang Ye was stirred. "Sorry, but I'm not from the your circle. I respect my seniors, but my senior is not Master Wei. It is President Wu. My path is also not that of calligraphy, so don't try that on me."

You are even trying to accuse me now?

Hur, who do you think you are!

Chen Mo lectured him, "Never push things too far so that we can meet amiably in the future."

Zhang Ye replied, "You are the ones who are bullying a woman like President Wu. Why didn't you not push things too far earlier? And I'm not allowed to help her?"

Chen Mo spoke in a well-grounded manner. "President Wu does not truly belong in the calligraphy world. Most of those present today are also on better terms with Master Wei. Since it's his birthday, of course we'd naturally choose to stand by his side. How can you say that's bullying? It's only a friendly competition to make the gathering more lively. No one would be concerned by that. I believe President Wu is not so petty too, but you, you have caused the event to become awkward!"

Zhang Ye was tickled by his logic, so he said, "You are really amusing. A bunch of people bullying President Wu so as to win the auspicious item. You mentioned that this was just a competition, which is not meant to be taken too seriously. Yet, you don't mention how your team has so many more people, saying it's for fun only. Yet now when you have lost, you are claiming that we should have left some face for your respected teacher, saying that we disrespected him. Why does it feel like you are right no matter what? As if your team deserves to win just because of the occasion and that's logical? So whatever we do is unacceptable? Other than losing to you, we would be in the wrong regardless of what we do?"

Chen Mo glared with his eyes cold. "You are distorting my words!"

"But that's what you were driving at!" Zhang Ye said, "I'm sorry, but using seniority as a reason does not work on me! I was invited by President Wu and I'm here to wish her a happy birthday. However the others want to think of me, they can think what they want. It does not concern me. I know how to handle myself, so you can save your effort in telling me what I should or shouldn't do." After saying that, he went to use the toilet and did not bother about him anymore.

Chen Mo was angered! This person does not appreciate his advice! He turned around and left.

Actually, winning or losing this competition did not matter to Zhang Ye. He only cared about Wu Zeqing's treatment. If they wanted to bully Old Wu and leave her embarrassed, then Zhang Ye would not sit back and do nothing. It was that simple. Since he had already helped President Wu by winning up to this point, Zhang Ye was already happy enough. Even if he were to lose the last match, he was fine with it. His thoughts were not in the calligraphy world, so winning or losing did not affect him in any way, but now, someone had actually tried to come up to him to sort him out. He even tried to lecture and threaten him? Then did Zhang Ye still need to hold back?

He was infamous for being a hooligan!

F**k! If you didn't say anything, everything would have been fine. I didn't necessarily have to win every round!

Let me tell you, don't even think of winning a single match now! Do you think I'm afraid of threats?

.....

In the backyard.

The next match was about to begin.

When it was time to pick topics, Chen Mo stepped forward, "Teacher, let me do it."

Master Wei smiled and nodded. He kindly said, "Sure, Little Mo. I'll leave it to you."

Master Wei did not step forward this entire time. It was possible that he had never planned on taking part in the competition himself. As a master of the calligraphy world, even if he won, it would not look good since it would be similar to bullying. If he lost, it would look even worse.

Zhang Ye asked, "Who is that?"

Wu Zeqing looked at the man in his thirties who was drawing the topic, "Master Wei's disciple I guess. I don't know him or his name. What's the matter? Why are you so interested in him?"

Zhang Ye shrugged and said, "Just now in the bathroom, he came to me and tried to give me a piece of his mind, telling me to respect his teacher and stuff like that. What he meant was that I was going too far."

Wu Zeqing asked gently, "Are you going to concede this match then?"

"Of course not!" Zhang Ye said, "I'm not a charity organization! The more he tries to accuse me, the more I want to win! Since we are winning, we should win to the end!"

Chen Mo had picked his topic.

He picked a topic that caused a minor uproar!

Master Zhou was also a little stunned as he announced, "There's no need to pick the 2nd part. The next topic is — couplets. According to the rules, both parties will come to a decision on who gets to give the couplet and who gets to match the couplet. If the couplet can be matched, the matcher will win. If the couplet can't be matched, the giver will be the winner. Of course this is not an absolute, even if it could be matched, we will still be looking at the calligraphy writing. As to how the judging will be done, I will be the one deciding. As couplet matching is a little special, the time given will be 10 minutes. Alright then, will the 2 competitors decide on the sequence now?"

Couplets?

It actually turned out to be couplets?

Couplets and calligraphy were inextricably linked, but this kind of a topic was still a rarity. In past gatherings, there weren't many people who had drawn this topic.

"Haha, we got a good show to watch now!"

"At last we got an interesting topic!"

"As long as it is not poetry, that youth doesn't stand a chance!"

"Little Mo's luck is quite good. This match is definitely ours!"

"Teacher Su, this is your field. No one is more suitable than you to represent us for this topic. Your accomplishments in couplets can be considered to be in the top 10 of the country. Not many people would be able to match you."

"Teacher Su, it's yours."

"We can't keep letting Little Wu win, otherwise us old folks would have no face left! Ha!"

Chen Mo also smiled a little. He glanced at Zhang Ye and thought to himself that this guy still wanted to act tough with him? This time it's not about poetry anymore, let's see how badly you lose!

Su Na's father stepped up, "OK, let me do it!"

Master Zhou also shook his head, he knew there would be no surprises. When Old Su showed his hand, not many people in the couplet field would be able to best him, except for those few monsters.

But what left everyone feeling a little strange was how the youth standing opposite him hardly had any reaction at all. He was seated there in a calm manner, occasionally taking a sip of wine.

Master Wei laughed, "Little Wu, will you be taking this round instead?"

Wu Zeqing looked at the topic and laughed, "I don't think I'm needed here."

Zhang Ye had stood up by now, "Uncle Su, who will give the couplet?"

Father Su was very magnanimous. With a wave of his hand, he said, "Young man, you can set the question. Hur Hur."

"Sure, then I won't hold back." Zhang Ye walked up to the front.

The person who had the most animated expression was Su Na. When she saw that the drawn topic was about couplets, she nearly fainted. Seeing how Master Wei's team looked as if they already had it in the bag made Su Na at a loss whether to laugh or cry. Do you think you would win for sure? You guys don't know fart!

This was Zhang Ye we're talking about!

Poetry, song writing, couplets, essays, novels, and speeches, all of that was nothing to him!

Especially regarding achievements in couplets, Teacher Zhang Ye was one of those monsters!

Su Na could not help but remember the scene at the Beijing Couplet Competition. Every competition would have a champion, but a champion and a CHAMPION were not the same. The level of measurement was different. Those other champions would usually fight head to head with other competitors until one was finally victorious, but what about Zhang Ye? Su Na had watched the Couplet Competition online back then. She had witness Zhang Ye stand up to more than fifty others and came out winning comfortably, not even letting his opponents gain a single point. They had all been utterly defeated by Zhang Ye!

What was the reason for that?

The reason boiled down to their levels being too far apart!

Su Na knew her father's specialty was in couplets and was even considered a top couplet master, but even though she knew that her father might come out tops against 10,000 others, he would not be able to outmatch Zhang Ye!

"Dad!" Su Na quickly called him out.

Father Su looked towards her, "Yes?"

Su Na waved her hands quickly and winked her eyes, meaning to tell him not to take part.

But Father Su did not understand and instead smiled and nodded his head. He thought his daughter was cheering him on.

Chen Mo and those calligraphers were all looking on in a relaxed mood. They were laughing and smiling as they looked over at Zhang Ye while waiting for him to give the couplet. They believed that no matter what verse he came up with, Teacher Su would be able to match it perfectly.

Immediately, Zhang Ye began writing the couplet's verse.

There wasn't a lot of characters and he wrote it very casually, as if he did not even think before he started writing. He gave off a feeling as though as he had already conceded defeated, yet it also felt like he did not take it too seriously.

— 寂寞寒窗空守寡 (jì mò hán chuāng kōng shǒu guǎ, in this lonely and tiny unit as a widow).

Zhang Ye raised his head smiling, "I've finished writing."

"OK, I will match it!" Father Su proclaimed confidently while walking over as the crowd cheered him on. He took a look at the first half of the verse.

Then.

Then Father Su plopped down and almost vomited blood!

Damn you to your ninth great-grandmother! What the f**k was this verse?! Do you want to win so badly!?

Zhang Ye was really being inconsiderate. This couplet verse was also a Millennial Impossibility in his previous world. The verse, which he used at the previous Beijing Couplet Competition, '烟锁池塘柳 (yān suǒ chí táng liǔ, willow pond locked in smoke)' had some matches which could be considered close matches, even if they did not satisfy all the conditions to be considered perfect, but this '寂寞寒窗空守寡 (jì mò hán chuāng kōng shǒu guǎ, in this lonely and tiny unit as a widow)' had existed for hundreds of years without a second half even coming close, it could be said that Father Su did not even stand a chance!

A Millennial Impossibility!

This verse could not possibly be matched by anyone!

Even if future generations would come up with something, it would still be a few hundred or several thousand years later!