

Superstar 471

Chapter 471: Let's go, off to sign up!

Middle of the night.

Yao Jiancai stared in amazement, "Bro, that's awesome!"

Zhang Ye laughed, "Hur hur, I'm just so-so."

"How on earth do you do it?" Yao Jiancai was still looking at his cellphone screen as he asked, "Did they somehow get the rankings wrong? Why did the 28 of us drop in ranking, but only you rose up?"

Zhang Ye explained, "There was a crosstalk actor called Tang Dazhang who seemed to keep finding fault with me and pissed me off, and so I began posting some poems, one a day and somehow my rankings rose up little by little."

Yao Jiancai was stunned. He said, "Tang Dazhang? I knew him from my days as a crosstalk actor. We've even met a few times before. How did the two of you come to clash?"

Zhang Ye said innocently, "You should ask him. I didn't step on his tail first."

"Then after that you posted a few poems?" Yao Jiancai asked.

"Yea." Zhang Ye replied.

Yao Jiancai said, "What kind of black magic is that!? Let me take a look!"

Zhang Ye laughed, "Hur hur, look them up then."

Yao Jiancai was still in disbelief as he went onto Weibo to verify Zhang Ye's story. When he browsed through the posts and came to understand what had happened these past few days, only then was he thoroughly convinced. He gave a thumbs up to Zhang Ye and laughed out, "You sure are great. My bro is still the best! Come, let's drink to that!"

"Here." Zhang Ye picked up his beer and gave him a cheers.

Yao Jiancai said in admiration, "Only you can pull off something like this. The others in the entertainment circle do not have any such heaven-defying talents like you."

Zhang Ye waved his hands. "I can only resort to such temporary measures for now, but it won't last me for long, and I can't possibly be writing a poem everyday and keep posting them. Even if I did, the people would not want to see it. This kind of stuff needs to be done at the right time, place, and to the right people. At this juncture, those three poems had only brought me a little increase in fame. Once this passes, even if I were to write 10 poems a day, it would not mean a thing anymore. The netizens would have become tired of it. Every method can only last you for a few days at most, and so when that day comes, my popularity ranking would definitely drop. It's just that I managed to last a little longer than all of you."

Others could only see the glorious side of Zhang Ye bucking the trend with his scolding and face slapping during this time of being banned, but only Zhang Ye clearly understood that all of this was temporary. In

a day or two, the situation would still would definitely normalize and he would still be unable to buck the trend any further.

Yao Jiancai slurped a few mouthfuls of noodles and said, "Yea, this ban is really pushing us to the edge of a cliff."

"So let us think of a way together." Zhang Ye did not finish his noodles, as he was not in the mood to. He just gulped down his beer before saying, "We can't just wait for our deaths this way."

Yao Jiancai shook his head, "Movies, dramas, variety shows, and even novel writing are no longer options we can choose from. What other ideas can we get? Even if we were to invest in ourselves to film an independent show, it wouldn't be allowed to be broadcast on TV. That also applied to anything that would be broadcast on the internet!"

Zhang Ye fell silent.

"Let's drink."

"Come."

"We won't call it a day until we're drunk!"

"OK. I am up for it!"

1 can.

5 cans.

10 cans.

The cans of beer were emptied into their stomachs!

After having so much, they naturally became more outspoken. Zhang Ye and Yao Jiancai suddenly started to scold the television stations, scolding the heavens as they released all the pent up anger that had built up these past few days.

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The next day.

8AM in the morning.

The house was a mess. The noodle bowls were still scattered across the table with the chopsticks lying discarded on it, while the floor was littered with beer cans as well. Zhang Ye was lying on his bed snoring loudly and Yao Jiancai was leaning on the small sofa snoring as well, as if he were competing with Zhang Ye in terms of decibel levels. The two of them had had too much to drink last night.

The television had been left on.

The promotional footage for this year's highly anticipated National Crosstalk and Skit Competition was showing at the moment.

Zhang Ye was woken up by the sound from the TV as he opened his eyes while rubbing his sore neck and yawning, "Old Yao, are you awake?"

Yao Jiancai made a sound, but his eyes stayed closed.

Zhang Ye got up and looked over at the TV.

"This year's competition follows the same format as last year's. It will be divided into two parts, namely the crosstalk division and the skit division. The crosstalk division registration deadline will end at 11AM today. Thereafter, the preliminary round will begin from tomorrow onwards, followed by the knockout stages, and then the finals. The preliminaries will consist of the contestants performing their crosstalks live to an audience, which could also be streamed live on the internet. Teams will advance to the knockout stages via the judges' decision, coupled with the live audience's voting. In the knockout stages -- Central TV 11 will be fully broadcasting the event live. The contestants will face off....."

Oh?

Zhang Ye looked at the TV screen and suddenly blinked. He shouted towards the direction of the sofa, "Old Yao!"

Yao Jiancai was still in dreamland.

"Old Yao, don't sleep anymore!" Zhang Ye shouted at him.

Yao Jiancai turned around in annoyance and said, "What?"

Zhang Ye got off his bed saying, "Hurry up and get up. Look what's on TV!"

"TV?" Yao Jiancai sat up rubbing his forehead. He casually looked at the TV and said, "Hai, I thought it was something important. Isn't that just this year's National Crosstalk and Skit Competition? What's the big deal about it? It's been promoted for so long already and it happens every year!"

Zhang Ye quickly asked, "How was the viewership rating for this program last year?"

Yao Jiancai said, "Are you asking about the internet broadcast or television broadcast?"

"Tell me about both." Zhang Ye suddenly sounded very excited.

Yao Jiancai glanced at him and rubbed his eyes saying, "How can it be that you don't know about this competition? Don't you usually watch TV? The annual Crosstalk and Skit Competition is Central TV's signature program. It will be broadcasted on Channel 11, which is like Channels 1 and 2, both of which are countrywide broadcast channels. As for the viewership ratings, with the exception of 2 years ago, when it was placed 2nd, they were the number 1 program for both 3 years and a year ago. The internet broadcast stats have even hit hundreds of millions before!"

Zhang Ye drew a deep breath, "It's so great?"

Yao Jiancai said in surprise, "What? And you call yourself someone from the entertainment industry? What kind of TV host are you? This competition is Central TV's signature program, so how can it not be great?"

Zhang Ye quickly asked again, "Why are the ratings so high? Can normal crosstalk and skits even attract so many viewers? Are there that many good programs?"

He was still rather unfamiliar with this world after having tried to understand more about it, but there were still things that he did not understand too well. A long time ago, Zhang Ye had already heard of this world's Crosstalk and Skit Competition and that it was different from the one that was held in his previous world, but since he had not seen it first hand, Zhang Ye did not have much of a concept of it. Now that he found out that this program was, in recent times, the top rated show in the country, he could not help but be stunned.

Yao Jiancai said, "Of course there are good shows on it. There will definitely be quite a number of good works emerging from it yearly. There are even some of them which are much more well-received than those crosstalk or skits that are aired on the Spring Festival Gala. They are very well-received, and the reason why the viewership ratings are so high is because of other reasons. For example, the competition does not have any limitations of the participants. Regardless of you being a professional crosstalk actor or a vegetable farmer, as long as you register, you can go on it. Naturally there will be some wonders and humorous ones that appear. There can also be some people, especially bad ones, and people who stammer, that also register for crosstalk. And strangely, many members of the audience like that. I remember for one live internet broadcast last year during the preliminaries, quite a number of people were extremely popular. This program is great at creating stars. Oh, of course, those who do humor can't go very far. To really become famous on stage, they have to be guys with true talent."

Zhang Ye confirmed with him, "Even the preliminaries are broadcasted live?"

"That's right." Yao Jiancai knew a lot about this as he watched it every year. He said, "The preliminaries are aired live over the internet. It is split into a few groups, such as A division, B division, C division. It feels almost the same as a soccer tournament. Every division would then have a dedicated page on the Central TV video website. There, the participants' names and work for the competition. The audience can click on them to watch it. Of course, it's not a true live broadcast. It's just some video that's uploaded after recording. As there are no limits on the registration, it can't be avoided for some people to register in order to mess things up. Every year, things like this will happen, and so those who end up messing things up or do too badly, their works will not be uploaded. Well, these kind of things happen, but not often. Oh right, also if the contestants do particularly well, with their works especially outstanding, the respective division's judges will promote the participants and their works according to the situation. As there are so many people participating, without Central TV's promotion, it's difficult to stand out. Those who truly want to succeed would value the preliminaries greatly."

"About how many people take part each year?" Zhang Ye asked.

Yao Jiancai said, "I'm not sure about the skit division, but for the crosstalk division, I think there were around 4000-5000 people last year."

Zhang Ye had a shock, "What? 4000-5000 people? So many? That must have been an inflated figure given by Central TV, right?"

Yao Jiancai said, "It really isn't an inflated figure. There were indeed that many. Everyone knows this program is popular, so the number of people registering is naturally quite a huge number. Also there is no limitation on registration. Anyone can participate. There are some joining it with the mentality of just

giving it a shot, and there are many rookies who have just entered the crosstalk or skit industry. There are also those disciples of other crosstalk masters and skit artists. All of them will participate in order to test out their abilities. Although this competition is for entertainment, the professionalism is also extremely important. If you see the youth team that appeared on this year's Spring Festival Gala, they were the runner-ups of the crosstalk competition four years ago from that stage. So, this competition is the most professional ranking stage for crosstalk and skits domestically. If I had to say, if one gets a high ranking, the judges or relevant companies will sign a contract with them. For example, Tang Dazhang's Crosstalk Society that he runs. With him being a judge this year, he will definitely vie for some of the good seedlings from this competition."

After asking for a long time and getting an explanation for an even longer time.

Zhang Ye finally understood the nature of this competition.

Finally, Yao Jiancai was feeling sleepy again, "You can find out more on the internet yourself. I want to go back to sleep now. Did you even have to wake me up for something like that?" Then he attempted to go back to sleep.

But Zhang Ye pulled him up and said, "Don't sleep anymore."

Yao Jiancai said in a speechless manner, "What can I do other than sleep?!"

Zhang Ye pointed to the TV where the promotional footage for the Crosstalk and Skit Competition was playing again, "F**k! Let both of us, bros, sign up for that!"

Chapter 472: Time for a counteroffensive!

In the room.

They stared at each other.

Yao Jiancai said in a stunned manner, "Sign up for what?"

Zhang Ye said with fervent energy, "The crosstalk competition!"

"Are you really awake? Let's go back to sleep. I'll sleep a bit more too." Yao Jiancai rolled over to go back to sleep. "Both of us are banned anyways, so what's there to sign up for!"

However, Zhang Ye sat beside him and countered, "I'm asking you Old Yao. This kind of talent show, this kind of professional competition... is there any regulation that prevents people with criminal records from participating? Even if they committed crime in the past, once their sentence has been served, are they not allowed to participate in the talent show activities and artistic competitions?"

Yao Jiancai was momentarily dumbfounded. "Definitely not. After finishing one's sentence, they are equivalent to ordinary citizens once they are released. They cannot be deprived of the most basic citizen rights."

Zhang Ye said, "If a person with a criminal record can participate, why can't either of us?"

Yao Jiancai was truly put in a daze by Zhang Ye's question. "Uh."

The more Zhang Ye thought about it, the clearer his mind became. He also felt high-spirited. He immediately switched on his computer and loaded the document that detailed decree #43. "Old Yao, take a look."

Yao Jiancai immediately leaned over.

Zhang Ye pointed to a line on the screen and said, "Look at this statement in the document. It prohibits all television stations and news agencies from airing the videos or anything else the banned artists' have participated in. That is the range of their jurisdiction. As for other things, they have no right to interfere with it. Look here. This line. The document states in black and white that the television station is not to air any broadcasts that the banned celebrity has participated in. For example, the television drama you acted in cannot be aired, but it does not mean you cannot act. Acting is your personal freedom and right. Decree #43 can't prevent you from doing so. It just means that after you are done filming, it cannot be aired. As such, producers and drama crews definitely will not invite you to act. That results in the ban taking effect, right?"

Yao Jiancai nodded. "That's right."

Zhang Ye slapped his thigh. "Then that's right. There is no problems with us joining the talent competition at all!"

"But then the Central TV website will not air us!" Yao Jiancai asked.

Zhang Ye gave a smile like he was not afraid of the world sinking into chaos, saying, "The preliminaries are aired on the internet. Alright, even if they need to follow the requirements of decree #43, and ban our participating work, what about the elimination rounds?" He saw a flicker in Yao Jiancai's eyes as they changed. Zhang Ye smiled and said, "The elimination round is broadcasted live! It is broadcasted live throughout the entire country! If the two of us reach the elimination rounds, and even reach the finals, or even become the champions, I really f**king won't believe it! The Central TV's crosstalk and skit competition's organizers will stop the competition because they don't want to let us appear on television?! If they really can stop it, then I think they are awesome!"

Yao Jiancai inhaled a deep breath.

Zhang Ye looked at him. "The last time, you mentioned to me in passing that before you began acting, you were a professional crosstalk actor, and that you were the fall-guy?"

Yao Jiancai said, "Although I said I was a professional, it was actually me learning from my master for a few years. My standards aren't at that level yet, and in the industry, I'm just a dabbler at best."

Zhang Ye smiled and said, "That's enough!"

Yao Jiancai leered at him, "What about you? Are you up to it?"

Zhang Ye said, "I do talk shows, and although talk shows and crosstalk are two different things, there is a lot in common between the two. It's just a repackaging and a change of design, and it would do."

Yao Jiancai said uncertainly, "Are you really up to it?"

"I graduated as a professional broadcaster." Zhang Ye said confidently, "I've narrated ghost stories, children's fairy tales, history programs, and talk shows, so why can't I do crosstalk? It's just the leading role! Leave that to me! Leave the crosstalk jokes to me too! How about it?"

Yao Jiancai stared at Zhang Ye for a long while. Old Yao had witnessed Zhang Ye's eloquence. It was much better than him back when he was still in crosstalk. Although he had never heard Zhang Ye do crosstalk, it was something worth anticipating. As for crosstalk jokes, he had heard how all the jokes and words said in "Zhang Ye's Talk Show" had not been produced by any team, but were all created by Zhang Ye, the host, alone. Zhang Ye's literary talent and wisdom was something Old Yao always admired. Hence, he, too, felt that his jokes would be worth looking forward to.

Zhang Ye said, "It's pointless to think too much about it. Let us register first before we talk any further. The registration for the crosstalk competition ends at 11. Anyway, if we unluckily get eliminated, then there's no loss on our side either way. On the other hand, if we are to register, the ones suffering would be them!"

Yao Jiancai suddenly slammed his hands down on the table, "Then what the f**k are we waiting for!?"

"Let's go old bro!"

"Let's go little bro!"

Yao Jiancai began throwing his clothes on while Zhang Ye went to wash his face.

After checking themselves in the mirror, the two of them went downstairs and rushed straight to a Central TV registration booth!

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After 9.

At a small plaza, this was the third registration booth for the National Crosstalk and Skit Competition.

There was a huge tent set up in the plaza, as there were banners regarding the contest, as well as pictures of more than ten judges and celebrities hung up. However, there weren't many people at the venue. It was mostly staff busying themselves with work. As the crosstalk competition's registration was about to close, and the registration for the skit competition was about to begin in a few days, it was still early. Hence, most of the people who wanted to register for the crosstalk competition had already finished registering. Hence, the empty registration booth only had a handful of people lining up to fill in the forms.

"This year's competition will be interesting."

"That's right, I heard there will be a mysterious celebrity appearing this year."

"Not only that, some famous crosstalk actors are said to be participating. Hai, isn't this just not leaving any room for us? I don't expect myself to reach the second round."

"Let's register first. All eyes will be on this for this year's competition anyways. If we can show our faces, it would already be good. Don't expect too much."

A few of the applicants were chatting.

Passers-by also began discussing when they saw the registration banners. All eyes were indeed on this year's crosstalk and skit competition. Many television dramas and variety shows usually did not like to air during this period of the year, as encountering the National Crosstalk and Skit Competition would cause their ratings to drop. From this, one can see how the annual competition was extremely popular!

On the roadside.

A BMW stopped.

About seven staff were handling the last few applications. As they looked at their watches, they were prepared to pack up.

"Hold on!" Zhang Ye ran forward while wearing sunglasses.

A female staff looked up. "Are you registering?"

Zhang Ye said, "Yes, give me a form."

Yao Jiancai also hurried behind. "Give me a form too!"

The female staff acknowledged it and passed them a form each. "Are the both of you registering as a team? Hurry up. We will be stopping registration shortly, so be quick."

Zhang Ye began to fill in the form and as he wrote quickly, he was done in a minute. "I'm done."

The female staff took it from him and gave it a look.

Name, Zhang Ye?

Job...None?

Former jobs...radio broadcaster? Host? Musician? Teacher?

Only then did the female staff shout out, "Ah!"

A colleague beside her heard this and walked over. "What's the matter Xiaowang?"

"Take a look!" The female staff handed the form to them.

A few people gathered over with curiosity. Each and everyone of them had a rich expression on their faces as their eyes landed in wonder on the youth's face. "You...you are Teacher Zhang Ye?"

Yao Jiancai was also done filling out the form.

After looking at it, the staff was also dumbfounded. "You are Teacher Yao?"

Holy sh*t!

Holy sh*t!

Holy sh*t!

The few staff members cursed in their hearts three times!

Weren't these two celebrities the ones that had just appeared on the ban list!? The higher-ups have already announced that all their programs were to be banned from airing! Why did these two gods of plague come to them for?

Zhang Ye hurried them, "Hurry up and give us our preliminary cards."

A person-in-charge wiped his sweat as he said. "About this, hold on. Hold on." He could not make the decision and hurriedly found a spot with no one around before giving his leader a call, hoping to receive advice from his superior.

When the Central TV leader in charge of this received the phone call, he too was dumbfounded. "What? Zhang Ye and Yao Jiancai want to participate in the crosstalk competition? Are you sure you didn't make a mistake? One of them is a host, while the other is an actor. Why are they participating in the national crosstalk competition!? Isn't that a complete mismatch!?"

The person said, "But they have already filled out the form. Should we just reject their registration?"

His leader said, "What reason can we use to reject their application?"

The person said at a loss. "I don't know."

His leader said, "Give me a moment. I need to ask my superiors too!"

At this moment, the internal Central TV team in charge of the crosstalk and skit competition received this stunning news. Then all of them had one feeling. Zhang Ye and Yao Jiancai weren't here to join the f**king competition, they were clearly here to give their Central TV Department 11 trouble!

Accept?

But how could they air their programs!?

Reject?

What reason could they use to reject them? They weren't criminals or fugitives! The applications of others were accepted, so what reason could they use to not accept theirs?

Their heads ached!

Their balls ached!

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At the registration location.

Zhang Ye said angrily, "Hey, what are you guys doing?"

Yao Jiancai also stared and said, "Is this discrimination? Complete the registration for us!"

"Why are you hemming and hawing so much over a registration? What sort of work attitude and aptitude do you have?" Zhang Ye and Yao Jiancai said one sentence after another.

The staff members were nearly in tears.

Not a while later, a phone call from their superior came.

The person-in-charge said with relief, "Sorry for making both Teachers wait. As there was a fault with the computer a while ago. We will immediately hand you the preliminary certification."

The resignation paperwork was done.

Zhang Ye and Yao Jiancai drove off in satisfaction.

In the car, Yao Jiancai said, "Tomorrow will be the preliminaries. There's not much time for us to prepare."

However, Zhang Ye was humming away with a little tune. "It's fine. This bit of time is enough. When we get back, we'll try matching out lines and practice a bit to harmonize ourselves."

"Great, haha. Both of us can be considered quite big shots after all. I never expected there will be a day where I would participate in a talent competition. You don't say, but I'm feeling quite excited!" Yao Jiancai was eager to give it a shot.

Zhang Ye smiled and said, "After suppressing it for the past few days, it's time the two of us launched a counteroffensive!"

Chapter 473: Zhang Ye's Big Move!

Department 11 at Central TV.

Internal meeting at the competition's program team.

There were about nine people seated at the meeting table.

The head said, "There are no problems with the recording hall, right?"

"It's all ready." A woman said.

"What about the competition's divisions?" The first person asked again.

A middle-aged man, third one from the left, said, "We have already contacted people from the notary office. They will be here tomorrow to randomly assign the divisions."

Suddenly, a youth paused and said, "Director, now there is one problem. Two banned celebrities listed on decree #43 have registered for the competition. We had no way to deal with it temporarily, so had to do it through the normal processes."

The head said, "Oh, I heard about that. It's alright. Since this competition doesn't limit the participants, then things can go according to procedure. However, during the editing, you must monitor it. No matter how well they perform, Zhang Ye and Yao Jiancai's crosstalk program is not to be aired, nor should it be uploaded. The higher-ups have already issued the decree. Those banned celebrities' programs can't even be aired on the internet, so make sure to pay careful attention to it."

"Understood."

"Got it."

Towards Zhang Ye and Yao Jiancai's participation, Central TV's Department 11 were extremely speechless about it. They knew the two of them were here to mess things up, but after a long

discussion, they could not deprive them of their right to participate. As they had no reason to do so, they could only prevent the banned duo from appearing in broadcasts, but could not interfere with their personal freedom. Besides, this was not an ordinary entertainment program, but the National Crosstalk and Skit Competition. It was an authoritative competition jointly organized by the Crosstalk Association and six other departments. If they wanted to refuse Zhang Ye and Yao Jiancai the right to participate, it wasn't like they could not do it. However, if they were to do so, the competition would lose a lot of its impartiality and open style. They might even lose their reputation. They could prevent anyone they did not want to participate from participating? A champion was decided internally? Silencing the dissidents? If this kind of rumors spread amongst the people, it wouldn't be nice. It would be a bad influence on their program, so after a discussion between the program team and the organizing committee, they finally decided to let Zhang Ye and Yao Jiancai participate. It was not worth harming their reputation just for two people who were likely not to be promoted to the elimination rounds.

As for promoting?

That was a joke!

Without any broadcast, their participating work wouldn't be shown with them, so how could they be promoted? Besides, if the two of them were to produce a program or act in a show, they could still believe it, but crosstalk? What crosstalk can they do!? Crosstalk was a language art form. Without decades of foundational skills, there was no way they could pass!

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On the same day.

News broke out on the internet.

Once the news came out, it immediately attracted the attention of numerous people, stunning them!

"Ah? Zhang Ye and Yao Jiancai are going to compete in the crosstalk competition?"

"What the f**k! Did I see wrongly?"

"It's just a rumor, right? News from the grapevine cannot be believed. It's impossible!"

"It should be true. I think it was leaked from Central TV's Department 11."

"Aren't they banned?"

"That's right, how can they participate?"

"I don't know either. What's going on?"

"Banning refers to limiting the avenues for broadcasting and not limiting their personal freedom or civil rights. It's like a taking an exam to be a civil servant, you might previously have committed crimes, and even if you passed the exam, they would not hire you, but that does not mean that you are barred from registering for the exam. You can still take the exam. Haha, I'm sure this idea was from Teacher Zhang Ye. He found a loophole and plans to mess up the crosstalk and skit competition, causing them some trouble, but to truly hope that Teacher Zhang Ye can get any good placing, then that will be hoping for too much. How can Zhang Ye know anything about crosstalk?"

"Then wouldn't it be meaningless to join? Would they be aired?"

"Definitely not."

"How Teacher Zhang does things is always so surprising! Hahaha!"

"Screwing things up for others would be good, after all, Teacher Zhang Ye has nothing better to do at home. He came out to 'have a ride'! Pfft! A comical feeling just hit me!"

"I also feel like laughing. Zhang Ye is planning on teaming up with Yao Jiancai to do crosstalk? I can't imagine that scene! Somehow I am looking forward to it!"

"I really want to go and see it in person. I want to see how badly Teacher Zhang does!"

"I guess Zhang Ye didn't even make any preparations for his crosstalk program. He's there just to mess things up. Just being there would achieve his goals. So whatever he says doesn't matter!"

"Supporting Zhang Ye!"

"Supporting Old Yao!"

"Haha! These two brothers in trouble sure are great at stirring up sh*t!"

"They have already received a complete ban, yet they still dare to participate in a television competition?"

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Zhang Ye's home.

The moment he returned home in the afternoon, his phone kept ringing.

It was first skit actress, Ci Xiufang. The first thing she said, "You are participating in the crosstalk competition? You sure are fantastic. Is there any meaning to it?"

Zhang Ye held his cellphone while laughing and said, "I'm just showing my presence."

Ci Xiufang said, "Do you really know or do you really not know? Do you think just because they allowed you to register, it means you can participate in the competition? That means you can be aired? That means you can be promoted? You are making it out to be too simple. I guarantee you that once you finish the preliminaries, you won't be able to stir up a tiny wave. It will be a waste of effort."

"I know."

"Yet you are still going to do it??"

"Aiyah, Auntie Ci, I naturally have my own considerations."

After hanging up on Teacher Ci, a few friends gave him a call.

Tian Bin: "What's up with you?"

Zhang Ye said, "Hur Hur, just that."

"Are you really participating?" Tian Bin asked in a speechless manner.

Zhang Ye responded, "Of course."

Tian Bin said, "Alright then. I won't say anything more."

Beside him, Yao Jiancai was also picking up phone call after phone call. It was all from his friends, asking him about the news of him registering for the competition.

Yao Jiancai kept picking up phone calls.

Zhang Ye suggested, "We still have quite a few things to do. Why don't we switch off our phones?"

Yao Jiancai nodded and switched off his cellphone. Then he blinked at Zhang Ye. "Little Zhang, the few phone calls from before have jolted me awake. Before registering, this old bro was confused by you, I nearly lost my bearings. Now that I think about it, it's not right. You said that even if we can't be aired during the preliminaries, but the elimination rounds and finals are television live broadcasts, so Central TV's Department 11 has no way of preventing us from going on a live broadcast, but that's not right. If our works can't be f**king seen during the preliminaries, with them all banned, how the hell are we to enter the elimination rounds?"

Zhang Ye vaguely said, "We'll talk about that when the time comes."

Yao Jiancai nearly fainted. "When the time comes?"

Zhang Ye said, "It's not like we have anything else we can do. Let's do the crosstalk well. As for the rest, let's leave it to fate. Alright Old Yao, let's match our lines."

Yao Jiancai said, "I just realized I got scammed onto your pirate ship and can't jump ship. Alright then, I'm going for broke this time, and I'll do it to the very end! Let's do it!"

Actually, everything others said to him was understood by Zhang Ye. However, there were certain things he could not explain to everyone. He naturally knew that his work with Old Yao would not be aired. This competition was also filled with arduous paths with no way out, but Zhang Ye had his own ideas. It was just that he could not tell anyone else. What he wanted to do now was to participate in the preliminaries with Old Yao, and do the crosstalk to its best for the preliminaries!

The rest shall be left to fate!

Whether this could actually be accomplished or not actually needed just a bit of luck!

Chapter 474: Lowering Difficulty by Five Times!

On the day of the competition.

Afternoon, at Central TV's Department 11's recording venue.

At the ground floor of the high-rise building, there was a filming spot. Cameras were hooked up, and there was even a camera drone buzzing midair. Underneath a large billboard screaming "National Crosstalk and Skit Competition", regions were divided with thousands of people lining up to enter the venue.

"Don't push."

"One by one!"

"Everyone line up with your preliminary competition admission pass!"

"Please produce your identification cards as well. Thank you for cooperating!"

This was a much anticipated day. Today was the day where the crosstalk competition unveiled its curtains before the skit competition. Numerous members of the media from the television stations, newspapers, and internet news portals were scrambling to report on the competition.

Members of Central TV's Department 11 had long forgotten about breakfast. The moment they arrived, they were busying themselves with all sorts of jobs. Every year, the crosstalk and skit competition would draw upon all their manpower. After all, this was the hottest program with the best ratings in the country. Not only domestically, even quite a number of overseas Chinese citizens looked forward to the beginning of the competition. The powers had already issued the order that the competition was only to succeed and there was to be no failures. Hence, everyone from Central TV's Department 11 paid a great deal of attention to this. When it came to a program that everyone knew about, it was very difficult to make it better than the last. However, they had to ensure that it was not worse than the previous year's. This was a matter they worked very hard on every year!

Outside.

A host from Central TV's Department 11 was interviewing contestants for the crosstalk competition. A few cameramen were also following closely behind.

"Nice to meet you Teacher Peng, long time no see." the female host said with a smile.

The man, who was in his forties, looked over. "Hello, it's you this time?"

The female host said, "The off-site hosting is still me. It was quite a pity last year. You had to quit last year during the finals due to medical reason. With you coming again this year, you must have a different feeling, right?"

Teacher Peng said with a sigh, "That's right. There are more and more contestants, so the pressure is quite great. Don't you see, my partner is so scared that he has gone to the bathroom."

"Hur Hur, you sure are humorous." The female host said.

Then, they continued to interview several people. They were the popular contestants for this year's crosstalk competition. There were professional crosstalk actors who were already somewhat famous in the industry, as well as contestants from last year who had pretty good results the previous year. There were also people from the general public and some popular "non-mainstream" crosstalk actors on the internet.

It was a gathering of elites!

This year's competition was bound to be an intense battle!

In the chaotic admission line, Zhang Ye and Yao Jiancai had arrived on scene.

Yao Jiancai was still on the phone. "Dear, don't be so angry...I swear to the Heavens that I didn't do anything. Really.. If you don't believe, ask Little Zhang. He can testify for me...Aiyah, we are already at the competition's venue. I won't be able to use the phone once I enter... At least tell me something. I can't stay at Little Zhang's place forever. It's inappropriate...Can I come home today?"

Once the duo came over, the Central TV staff all stared at them. However, after a few glances, everyone returned to whatever they were busying themselves with. The female host hesitated for a few moments and did not interview them. In fact, she truly wished she could interview a legendary figure like Zhang Ye. Besides, Zhang Ye was partnering with the drama actor, Yao Jiancai for their "song and dance". This team combination was too strange and made many people curious. However, they knew very well about the governmental policies. Zhang Ye and Yao Jiancai were banned, so even if they had seen them, they had to pretend as if they had never seen them.

"Eh?"

"That's Zhang Ye?"

"Isn't that Yao Jiancai?"

"The two of them really came?"

"Man, I thought those were just rumors on the internet!"

"Just mind yourselves. They have nothing to do with us. Even if they participate, their program will not be aired. Even if it's aired, do you think their crosstalk will be any good?"

"Uh, that's true. We began learning crosstalk at a young age. You can't even get good at it without ten years of practice."

Zhang Ye and Yao Jiancai's arrival attracted the attention of many contestants. After all, in terms of fame, Zhang Ye and Yao Jiancai were much more famous than these crosstalk actors. However, it was useless. Fame here wasn't useful. Besides they were banned, and this was a crosstalk competition. If this were a calligraphy competition, hosting competition, or poem competition, they would admit defeat without a second word if Zhang Ye came. However, a crosstalk competition did not depend on one's literary talent or hosting abilities. With decree #43 looming in the background, the contestants did not think much of this duo as rivals!

This pair were gods of plague?

Let's avoid them as much as possible!

People from Central TV, as well as the contestants, turned a blind eye towards Zhang Ye and Yao Jiancai. The two of them were currently on the cusp of a wave, so no one dared to incur trouble for themselves!

"Old Yao, hurry." Zhang Ye rushed him.

Yao Jiancai hung up the phone call with his wife. He rushed over to line up. "Old bro, you need to put in a good word for me when I go home tonight. My wife is still mad."

Zhang Ye threw up his hands. "Will I make a difference?"

Yao Jiancai said, "At least my wife will let me in the door. If you don't go, she wouldn't even open the door for me. Heh, it's not like you don't know my wife's temper."

People entered one by one, and soon, it was their turn. Everyone else had tensed looks, while others were practicing their lines, as they prepared for the preliminaries. However, Zhang Ye and Yao Jiancai were rather special. Neither one of them looked nervous. As they chatted, they walked into the building and found a sofa to sit down on before carrying on with their chat. This was all about one's foundation. One of them was a C-lister and the other was a D-lister. They had encountered all sorts of situations, and had gone through all sorts of storms in the entertainment industry. What had they not seen? Naturally, they were much more calm and composed than other contestants. Even if they were worried deep down inside, it would not show on their faces.

Everyone came in.

The staff were also in position.

Following that, someone brought all the participants through the corridors to an outdoor courtyard.

The crosstalk competition's host immediately went on stage. A temporary hosting podium had been set up in the middle of the courtyard, and there was a wall of screens behind. The details inscribed in the decorations were quite intricate, and seemed ready for a magnificent show. Just from looking at the stage alone, one could tell that they had spent a great deal of money. One had to know that this was just the opening stage for the preliminaries. The host was a very popular celebrity host. However, he was not from Department 11, but was a host from Central TV's Department 3. It was for some unknown reason why he was transferred over for this competition.

"Wang Ge'er!"

"Haha, Wang Ge'er!"

Some of the amateur participants started shouting when they saw a star. Wang Ge'er was his official stage name, so anyone who liked him called him by that name.

The cameras began rolling.

Two cameras were aimed at the hosting podium, while two cameras were aimed at the contestants.

Wang Ge'er chuckled and said, "Welcome everybody, be they new or old friends. The annual National Crosstalk and Skit Competition's crosstalk competition will once again begin. This year, I am honored to stand here as the host of the preliminaries..." After a bout of his chattering, it came to the important point. "Let me introduce the procedure. The first part will be the divisions. We have invited notaries so as to ensure that this part is held fair and square. After the division, it will be the preliminaries within each division..."

Actually, instead of calling it a preliminary round, it was, in fact, more of an audition. It was quite similar to those singing competitions. As there were too many contestants, there was no way all of them could go on television. Hence, there was an internet choice audition. By using one's fame and true strength, the contestants would be promoted so as to formally enter the crosstalk competition. To put it simply, the preliminaries were just a way to create a buzz, so that the audience all over the country would get to know the contestants.

The drawing of lots began.

Thousands of contestants watched intently!

These people were basically in pairs. Of course, there were groups with a handful of partners. There were even some groups with more than ten partners. There were probably a thousand groups total!

Zhang Ye and Yao Jiancai remained rather low key and stood right at the back of the crowd. This was because they knew that even if they walked to the front, the cameras would not focus on them.

"How long will the drawing of lots take?" Zhang Ye asked.

Yao Jiancai said, "It will take at least half an hour. Picking lots would be fast, but the main thing is announcing the divisions. With over a thousand teams, how fast can it be? Just reading the names will take all day."

Zhang Ye was still not particularly familiar with the competition. "Will they finish recording today?"

Yao Jiancai patted him on the shoulder and said, "What are you thinking? The first round of preliminaries would take a few days of recording. Even if all the recording studios opened up, it wouldn't be done in a day. It's best if we can finish recording today, so that we don't have to keep coming for the next few days. It's like this with all talent shows. The contestants will have to endure the suffering."

On the other side, the first pair in division A was chosen. The staff announced the names and sent the two of them to recording studio #3 to prepare for the competition.

Seeing how things were, Zhang Ye said to Old Yao, "I'll go to the bathroom."

Yao Jiancai said casually. "Go ahead. I'll stay here and watch."

Zhang Ye then went back into the building and followed the corridors and managed to find a bathroom. Everyone was outside, so it was rather quiet in here. He was alone, so he went into a stall and locked the door from inside. He took a deep breath...Well, it was a bit smelly. He hurriedly put on a face mask, and then closed his eyes to calm his mind. He did not say a word, nor was he here to use the bathroom. He just stood there strangely.

Suddenly, Zhang Ye's hand moved as he opened the game ring's interface on his pinky. He grabbed out two items from his inventory. It was two dice!

[Difficulty Adjustment Dice] .

These were items that Zhang Ye had drawn a long time ago. He did not dare to use them all this time, or it should be said he did not plan on using them at all. Even at this moment, he was using both his hands to hold the dice carefully, afraid he would drop them. He was nervous and alert. The main reason was because this fellow had lost his wits ever since the hijacking incident. Back then, a tiny die had nearly brought his plane crashing into a building. Once bitten, twice shy. Zhang Ye had later on managed to draw two of these dice and placed them in his inventory, without touching them at all. This time, Zhang Ye took them out and hesitated slightly. He then kept one of the dice and left one dice in his hand

It was time for it to do its job!

He was already at a desperate juncture. The only way to have a fighting chance was to risk it all. As for what would happen if an accident happened? He could not care about it anymore!

Yes, Zhang Ye was planning on adjusting the difficulty. Now with him being banned, he was completely out of options. The difficulty was too great. If he did not adjust the difficulty, he wouldn't know what to do either. However, he was not going to leave it completely to fate. If he were to receive another crazily abnormal difficulty, wouldn't he be killing himself right here and now? The reason why Zhang Ye dared to make this bet was because of another reason. This was because he had managed to buy the rights to a certain Merchant Shop item!

Lucky Halo!

At the moment he obtained the right, Zhang Ye had planned on using the Difficulty Adjustment Die. However, he did not get the opportunity to do so, or was forced to do it. Now, he had to use the Lucky Halo to roll the die. He believed that under the auspices of luck, even if he did not get the simplest difficulty from the die, it would at least not come out with some crazy abnormal difficulty, right? As for his Reputation points, the last lucky draw had nearly emptied out all his Reputation points. However, the revealing of three poems had increased his Reputation points by quite a bit. It was enough for him to switch on the Lucky Halo for about a minute or two!

Alright, here we go!

Whether it worked was up to it!

Zhang Ye's face was one of his "going for broke" expressions. With gritted teeth, he stretched his hand out to tap on the "Lucky Halo" in the Merchant Shop. Click. Activate!

Shua!

A white halo appeared above Zhang Ye's head, just like an angelic halo. Then shimmering light ripples appeared, sending out tiny waves midair. Ripple after ripple, they moved outwards. The game ring's indication also appeared!

[Lucky Halo is in effect]

10,000!

10,000!

10,000!

His Reputation points were decreasing by 10,000 every second!

Zhang Ye felt the pinch as he saw this. The Lucky Halo was great in every sense of the word, but it was just too expensive. Furthermore, it was charged by the second. He was now in trouble, and he could not waste his Reputation points so casually. Hence, he immediately grabbed the dice and closing his eyes, he threw it upwards!

The dice flew up!

Phew, and seconds later it fell down!

When the die fell to the ground, Zhang Ye felt his heart stall. He stared intently at it, watching it bounce and roll on the ground! The die's six faces wrote a corresponding difficulty: Decreasing Difficulty By 10x, Decreasing Difficulty By 5x, Decreasing Difficulty By 1x, Increasing Difficulty By 1x, Increasing Difficulty By 5x, Increasing Difficulty By 10x. These difficulties kept appearing in front of Zhang Ye's eyes as the die rolled.

"Stop, stop!"

"Aiyah!"

"Move over there, hurry!"

"Heh!"

In the bathroom, Zhang Ye began yelling to himself.

Finally after some time, the die lost its energy and with a snap, it stopped. Finally, the text on the top face entered Zhang Ye's eyes!

Upon seeing this, a loud guffaw nearly erupted from his throat. "Hahahahaha!"

The difficulty was lowered by five times!

He had really managed to roll it!

However, Zhang Ye did not switch off his Lucky Halo, as he still had to wait. He needed to wait for the die's duration. Back on the plane, the die's increasing of ten times difficulty had lasted an hour. The duration of the Difficulty Adjustment Die was also random, and did not seem like it had a limit. Hence, even though he felt the pinch with the Lucky Halo draining his Reputation points every second, Zhang Ye had to endure it. It wasn't the end yet!

Finally, the outcome was out!

The die transformed into a flash of light. With a flicker, it was as if the entire world was illuminated. And then with another flash, it disappeared into thin air.

[Difficulty has been adjusted]

[Lowering Five Times Difficulty]

[Lasting for: 6 days 1 hour 17 minutes.]

[Countdown begins. 6 days 1 hour 16:59...]

What?

Six days?

More than six days!?

When Zhang Ye saw this, he was astonished. He could not believe his eyes before he quickly switching off his "Lucky Halo", before gasping...a stench, as he was still in the bathroom. He could not help but roar as if a pie had dropped from the sky! The last time when he rolled the die on the plane, it was just

an hour! This time he managed to get a duration of more than six days? And it was with a lowered difficulty of five times? Heaven will always leave a door open! The Lucky Halo was too awesome!

Of course, he still shuddered thinking of the possibilities. Back on the plane while going to Shanghai, it was thankful that the 10x difficulty only lasted for nearly an hour. If it f**king lasted for a few days, even if Zhang Ye managed to survive the calamity in the plane, he would probably not survive after he landed. He would probably die a few hundred times over!

Thankfully he had the Lucky Halo!

Thankfully, the three poems from a few days ago had left him enough Reputation points to activate the Lucky Halo for a minute or two!

Hahaha!

It was time to recover from this!

Although Zhang Ye did not know what lowering the difficulty by five times would do, according to the analysis and deduction of the crazy ten times difficulty increase, it definitely wouldn't have weak effects! That was to say, from today onwards, for the next six days, Zhang Ye was nearly an invincible existence!

From yesterday to today, numerous good friends and relatives kept giving him calls. They did not know why Zhang Ye wanted to participate in the national crosstalk competition. They felt it was meaningless for him to participate in it. Yes, Zhang Ye naturally knew all of this, that even if he registered, even if Central TV's Department 11 allowed them to participate, it was all meaningless. This wasn't a way out. With the ban in place, Zhang Ye had no way out!

Then why did he come?

Why did he do so even though he knew it was pointless?

Now the answer was out. Since there was no way out, then Zhang Ye would do things according to his own methods. He would not sit still and wait for death!

There was no way out?

Then I'll force my way out!

The National Crosstalk and Skit Competition, which was the talk of the town, was the way out that he had found. He needed to do so before the buzz from the ban dissipated. He wanted to stand on this stage, in front of every citizen, telling those who disliked him, questioned him, cursed him, or hated him, that no matter how much you hated me till you grind your teeth, no matter how tight the ban is, this bro will stand on stage!

What can you do to me!?

Walking out the bathroom, Zhang Ye was in a great mood. Just thinking of the upcoming crosstalk competition, he could not help but recite a poem:

"Bright moonlight before my bed."

A employee, who walked past was stunned. Taking a look, it was Zhang Ye!

"I suppose it is frost on the ground."

Another Central TV's female employee also looked over upon hearing this. Ah, Zhang Ye was reciting a poem?

"I raise my head to view the bright moon."

Another person who heard it was immediately full of anticipation. What a good poem! A good poem!

"I am face-smacking Zhang!"

When the last line came out, the few employees from the Central TV nearly fainted on the spot!

Chapter 475: Huge Blunder!

At the lot picking venue for the preliminaries.

Division A and B were done.

Zhang Ye walked back. "Old Yao."

Yao Jiancai was staring at the stage. "It's not our turn yet."

"It's fine. Let's just continue waiting." Zhang Ye was, at this moment, completely relieved. He did not even consider how to solve the series of problems that would await him. He was leaving it all in God's hands.

Di Di. He received a text message on his cellphone.

Zhang Ye took a look at his cellphone. He won a prize? Telephone bill? He locked his phone after curling his mouth. He was used to receiving such fraudulent text messages. However, when he thought of something, Zhang Ye was momentarily stunned. He took out his phone again and opened the text message. Eh, wasn't this the mobile service provider's customer service number? He decided to follow the instructions in the text message and replied to it as an attempt. Di Di. He received a short message. Top up successful!

Checking his phone bill, he had a hundred yuan (US\$14.50) in credit!

Zhang Ye was overjoyed. Although it wasn't a lot of money, it was an indication for Zhang Ye. This world, which now had its difficulty reduced by five times, had already begun to take effect!

On the other side.

The results were still being announced:

"Wang Kesong, Zheng Jia. Division C, #6."

"Zhang Xiao, Liu Yuan. Division C, #7."

The contestants were in murmurs.

"The members of Division A are all very skilled."

"Division C isn't bad either. Zhang Xiao and Liu Yuan are from Tang Dazhang's Crosstalk Society. It seems that they are disciples of Teacher Tang Dazhang. They are one of the hottest favorites for this year's championship."

"That Wang Kesong, wasn't he in the top thirteen in last year's crosstalk competition?"

"Those who get sent to Division C sure are unlucky. It has the feeling of a death division!"

Suddenly, host, Wang Ge'er announced. "Zhang Ye, Yao Jiancai. Division C, #8." After finishing saying that, he looked down the stage and did a sweep without finding them, before returning to announce the results.

"Division C?"

"The gods of plague are in Division C also?"

When Zhang Ye heard the people in front of them discussing them, he looked sideways at Old Yao, "What does #8 mean?"

Yao Jiancai smiled and said, "It means we are eighth in the preliminary round's Division C. We will definitely be able to do the recording today. Looking at the time, it will probably be our turn by noon."

Zhang Ye said, "Then let's find a place to take a break."

"Sure". The duo walked away while Old Yao was still humming a Beijing opera. He looked relaxed. As he walked, he said to Zhang Ye, "I heard that there were quite a few tough cookies in Division C. There were also two of Tang Dazhang's disciples. They will appear just before us. This time, it will be interesting."

Zhang Ye said with amusement, "You seem pretty confident?"

Yao Jiancai chuckled. "It's not that I'm confident, it's just that I haven't got any hopes up. If our work isn't aired after we are done, I'll just treat it as a game."

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On the web.

Central TV's Department 11's crosstalk competition's official video website.

Division A's first work and Division's B first work were released. The moment the two videos were released, it immediately attracted numerous people.

"Hahaha!"

"Who are these thin guys?"

"This crosstalk was not bad. It was pretty good!"

"That's right. It looks like there really is something to look forward to in this year's competition

In terms of quality, these works in the preliminaries definitely couldn't be compared with the crosstalk performances at the Spring Festival Gala. The reason why many people cursed the crosstalk

performances of the Spring Festival Gala was because they had different expectations. For the Spring Festival Gala, many people had feelings for it, and had higher expectations as well. Just falling short of these expectations was unacceptable, so they would find the crosstalk performances bad. However, in this crosstalk competition, they were contestants from all walks of life. There were farmers, construction workers, and even CEOs of companies. They were all amateurs, so even if professional crosstalk actors participated, they were not too famous. People were naturally more tolerant towards them.

Voting!

Division A #1's contestant pair temporary took the lead. Their votes constantly increased, and in the blink of an eye, they had amassed 700 votes. Note: Every IP can register three votes per day.

In the comments section.

"Ah, some clips have been released for the Divisions!"

"I saw Zhang Ye and Yao Jiancai!"

"Division C? Eh, they are just after Tang Dazhang's two disciples?"

"What a small world between enemies! I'm looking forward to Teacher Zhang's work."

However, there were even more criticisms below.

"What is a host, who doesn't know anything, joining in the fun for!"

"Zhang Ye is treating this crosstalk competition as a game. What crosstalk does he know? That talk show is just some tawdry entertainment program. Although it's also for humor, it's completely different from crosstalk. Crosstalk is a form of art!"

"The buzz from Decree #43 has not stopped. Is what Zhang Ye doing fine? The powers that he is clearly repressing are criminal celebrities and vulgar, base and philistine entertainment. Zhang Ye is every single one of them, yet he still dares to appear? This is a classic case of refusing to repent until complete failure. It's fine if he's here. Let those crosstalk seniors teach him what crosstalk really is. Take a look at what true art is. That talk show of yours is considered nothing!"

"Zhang Ye is a piece of rat shit in the entertainment industry. He goofs around too much!"

"Let's see how he shames himself!"

"The difference between their jobs are like the gaps between mountains!"

Not a while later, the official website released a questionnaire. It was about "Who is the favorite for winning the championship". The result also came out very quickly.

First place was an already famous crosstalk actor. He had an orthodox heritage, and had good foundations in his humor and knowledge. He had few flaws.

Second was a pair of young crosstalk actors. They were rookies, but had recently participated in Liaodong television station's Spring Festival Gala and had performed a crosstalk. They were well received and sought after on the internet. There were even a few crosstalk artists who spoke highly of them.

Tang Dazhang's two disciples were ranked tenth.

As for Zhang Ye and Yao Jiancai? The ranking naturally did not have them. The organizers did not even list their names as options.

This was a ban!

It was a ban from head to toe!

You can contest, you can register, you can even go through the normal procedures of the competition, but if you want to show your face, not a single shot would be given to you. It was equivalent to how the crosstalk competition was internally happening, but externally, Zhang Ye and Yao Jiancai did not exist in this crosstalk competition at all!

That was the situation!

No one believed Zhang Ye and Yao Jiancai would be able to set off any waves in this crosstalk competition. The only meaning for them coming here was to cause trouble. It was meaningless for everything else. Unless Central TV really aired your work, which you could even figure out with a fart, that it was impossible. Did you think Central TV was retarded?

The crosstalk competition's auditions raged on!

Five teams...

Ten teams...

There were more and more contestants who finished their performance in the competition!

Some of them came out with faces of excitement, while others came out with helpless looking faces. Clearly, they had not performed well.

Before noon, Zhang Ye and Yao Jiancai arrived at Division C's recording venue. Under the instructions of the staff, they went backstage, as it was their turn soon.

.....

At the same time.

In a leader's office in the skyscraper.

The Director of Central TV's Department 11, Chen Huo, made a phone call and called his secretary into his office. "How's the competition going? No incidents, right?"

The young secretary said, "Director Chen, everything is normal."

Chen Huo nodded with a smile. "That's good. It's been hard on all of you over the past few days. We have to do well for this competition. Oh right, during the recording, remember to control the phones and recording equipment of the audience members. Previously, I mentioned that the audience's cellphones are to be locked in a cabinet upon entering to prevent affecting the contestant's performances. Also, it is prohibited that these people record anything with their cellphones. You must ensure that this doesn't happen. In a while, inform the program team about this."

The young secretary jotted it down on a notebook. "Got it."

With a thought, Chen Huo added on, "Also, there are two banned celebrities participating in the competition. All of you need to know not to manage this improperly. Mind the ban, do not record anything. Do you understand?"

The young secretary was stunned. "Even our cameras are not to record?"

Chen Huo said, "Yes, there's no need to even switch them on. It's to prevent the video from getting leaked out. Pretend as if there's no one with the decree in mind. Don't ask why, just get the people below to do it!"

The young secretary immediately said, "Got it!"

The station was still very cautious and did things very carefully.

This order was also considered normal, and there was no problem. However, this simple order caused a great blunder!

.....

The secretary returned to his desk.

The secretary used his cellphone to call the person-in-charge of the crosstalk competition's program team. For some reason, maybe there was too much equipment, or because there was signal interference, his mobile signal was very terrible. He did not manage to get through on his first attempt, and only succeeded the second time.

The person-in-charge was instructing the staff and when he saw the incoming call, he went into the lounge, with no one around, to pick up the call. "Hello, Secretary An. Hur Hur, are there any instructions?"

The young secretary smiled and said, "I don't have any instructions, but Director Chen has given orders. Director Chen said...competition...audience's cellphones..controlled..."

The person-in-charge hurriedly said, "Secretary An, the signal isn't very good. I can't hear you clearly."

The young secretary had no choice but to repeat that he had said once again. "This matter is very important. Listen carefully. Director Chen said that for the contestants, Zhang Ye and Yao Jiancai, all of you need to know is not to manage this improperly. Mind the ban, do not have any recordings! Cough!" Up to this point he coughed as he stammered slightly, before he carried on saying, "Did you clearly get that about the recording? Pretend as if there's no one with the decree in mind. Don't ask why. Just get everyone to do it! These are the words of Director Chen himself."

Unfortunately, the signal was just too bad!

Along with the young secretary having a foreign accent, the intonation was slightly out of place!

The young secretary had repeated in accordance to what the leader said, but on the person-in-charge's side, what he heard in bits and pieces was completely different!

What he roughly heard was, "This matter is very important. Listen carefully. Director Chen said... *static*...for the contestants...Zhang Ye and Yao Jiancai... *static*...all of you need...not...mind the ban...do...recordings clearly...Pretend there's no...decree...don't ask why. Just get everyone to do it!"

When the person-in-charge heard this, he was completely dumbfounded!

Do not mind the ban?

Do the recordings!? Holy sh*t, and it has to be done clearly?

Pretend there's no decree? What decree? Decree #43!?

The person-in-charge was scared silly. With his hands trembling, he croaked, "Secretary An, are you sure we have to do that?"

The young secretary was wondering what the fuss was all about. "Of course, just do as I said. It's ordered by Director Chen, so you have to do it well!"

The person-in-charge stared and said, "Are you sure?"

The secretary felt a bit irritated. Was there any need to affirm such a trivial thing? However, thinking of how they were not switching on the cameras for the contestants, he said patiently, "Although it's a bit against the rules, Director Chen has already instructed it, so let's just do as he says."

However, what the person-in-charge understood was completely different!

This wasn't just "a bit" against the rules? This was f**king challenging the authorities! This was trying to tear apart decree #43! Could there be some internal leadership fight within SARFT? Right, there was news a while ago that SARFT's Vice Director had been transferred away. Could this have anything to do with that?

Yes!

This was f**king a fight between gods!

No wonder they wanted to challenge it!

The person-in-charge did not dare to probe any further. After hanging up, he thought about it for a long time and knew the importance of this matter. Director Chen had given this daunting task to him. This was the leader's trust in him. He had to keep it a secret! He definitely could not let down the leader's trust in him!

He had to do it, do it well, and do it perfectly!

Chapter 476: Got onto a live broadcast?

A while later.

The person-in-charge had hurriedly gathered several trusted members of his team and mysteriously ushered them into a small office. After shutting the door, he relayed the 'intentions' of the Director to them — "Need not mind the ban, pretend there's no decree!"

His subordinates reacted in surprise when they heard that!

"Ah?"

"This..."

"But why?"

"Didn't they get banned from broadcasts?"

The person-in-charge waved his hands and said, "Who are we to question the Director's intentions? We only need to carry it out according to his wishes!"

Did a power struggle happen within the management? The policy to ban the artists was not agreed upon unanimously? There were internal rifts? The members of the program team were stunned and looked at each other at the same time. They remembered that the SARFT's Deputy Chief had recently been transferred out suddenly, so did it mean that the power struggle was getting more intense? As Central TV, which was directly under the SARFT, their Station Head was also a member of the SARFT's higher echelons, so did that mean their boss was also involved? Did he intend to take the rank of Deputy Chief of the SARFT? Otherwise, why would there be such a request from the top?

Yes! That must be it!

This was really calling for a change in the status quo!

Everyone of them were alarmed as their imaginations ran wild.

A youth blinked and said, "Then how should we do this? Do we record Zhang Ye and Yao Jiancai's competition and upload it? Or should we use our channel's website to do a live internet broadcast?"

Another middle-aged man said nervously, "Live internet broadcast? There's a limited quota of people that we can do that for. It's usually reserved for the preliminaries of those hot favorites. As we can only broadcast one team at a time, we might not have the resources to do that. Besides, Zhang Ye and Yao Jiancai are amateurs who don't seem like they can actually perform crosstalk. Their performance, no matter how I see it, won't be good, so if we were to do a live broadcast....."

The person-in-charge gave a wave of his hand and interrupted. He thought through it calmly before clenching his teeth and saying, "We will assign a live broadcast slot for them. The words that Secretary An passed to me directly from the Director was to let us do the recording and to do it clearly. What did he mean by recording clearly? He must have meant for us to reserve the resources for this!"

A person said, "Alright then."

The youth hurriedly got up and said, "Then I will quickly go and make the arrangements. It's almost time for those two to begin!"

The person-in-charge said, "Go quickly then. Remember to keep this matter to ourselves. Don't spread the word in case it complicates things. Even if something were to happen and the sky were to fall, we still have a higher up to take responsibility."

The few of them all acknowledged this, "Yes, leader."

.....

On the other side.

Division C's contest recording studio, in a waiting room backstage.

Zhang Ye and Yao Jiancai had already changed into their crosstalk attire. Both of them were dressed in black. As they all say, clothes make the man. Proving this right, the two of them really looked as though they were crosstalk actors. Zhang Ye's clothes were borrowed for him by Yao Jiancai and just barely fit.

In the waiting room were a few other contestants as well.

The makeup artist was touching up their makeup to look better on camera.

A staff from the production team began briefing them on things to look out for, "When you get on stage and after the signal light turns on, it means that the recording has begun. Pay attention to your own expressions and movements as your recorded footage will be uploaded to the website after that. Also, please take note of the field director's hand signals. If there are any issue during the recording, the field director will inform you." The staff said a lot of things in a long winded briefing before finally looking at the few contestants. When his eyes swept over to Zhang Ye and Yao Jiancai, he said, "Did you get all of that?"

Zhang Ye asked, "You're asking me?"

Only then did that person recognize Zhang Ye. He coughed and said, "Man, so it's Teacher Zhang Ye. No, I was just asking them. You know more about recordings than I do." Although Zhang Ye had been banned, no one dared to be arrogant in front of Zhang Ye. A starving camel was still bigger than a horse, much less this man of God. His popularity was increasing by the day even after he had been banned. The only person in the entire entertainment industry who could do that was Zhang Ye. Tang Dazhang and the other celebrities and experts could dare to doubt Zhang Ye, but as underlings, they could not.

When the door opened, a person came in and said loudly, "Next team, get ready!"

Yao Jiancai got up and stretched a little, "It's our turn, right?"

The staff nodded, "Yes, it's time for #8."

Zhang Ye gurgled on some water to moisten his throat before doing his usual vocal warm up, "AH-WU-LU-AH!"

Yao Jiancai also did his vocal warmups professionally.

Subsequently, the two of them followed the staff out of the backstage seating area.

Yao Jiancai said, "Since we won't get broadcasted anyway, why don't the two of us bros just loosen up a little more. I've not done crosstalk in such a long while now, so I must really enjoy it today!"

Zhang Ye smiled, "Sure, but don't you get nervous."

Yao Jiancai said, "Can this old bro even get nervous? I'm just afraid that you'll make a mistake. Even though the both of us have done some practice, I've not heard you do a complete one. Don't worry about your old bro's strength. Even if you were to spontaneously come up with something out of the script, I'd be able to hold it down. I've got many years of experience to back me up."

Zhang Ye was tickled, "Don't boast now and screw up when the time comes, I might really have some unscripted lines to say. You should know me well enough that I have always done things on the spot."

Yao Jiancai laughed loudly, "Come on then, who's afraid of who!"

The two of them only had less than a day's worth of practice, so they obviously were not able to polish the details of their performance from beginning till the end. As they were in a rush for time, Zhang Ye could only practice a few joke segments together with Old Yao and coordinating their timings on when to use a certain expression or a line. Any other thing was left to their improvisation onstage. Lucky for them, Zhang Ye and Yao Jiancai both had a very good understanding of each other, as though they were long lost friends from back in the day. With this understanding, some of Zhang Ye's far-fetched ideas could still be followed up by Yao Jiancai. This made Zhang Ye very delighted as it wasn't easy finding another actor who could match oneself.

There was laughter coming from the set.

Tang Dazhang's two disciples were currently performing their crosstalk segments.

Zhang Xiao: "So what this segment teaches us is that we must all get as far away from the World Cup as possible!"

Liu Yuan: "Yes, we need to get far away from it, but we need to get even farther away from you."

Zhang Xiao: "Why do you need to get far away from me?"

Liu Yuan: "Because you've been talking bad about my dad!"

"Hur Hur Hur Hur."

"Haha."

The audience was very flattering as they reacted positively.

Zhang Ye was getting goosebumps, "What's so funny about that?"

Yao Jiancai threw up his hands and shrugged, "How would I know? I didn't hear it from the beginning, but I've heard them perform before and they are not too bad."

Zhang Ye scoffed. Not bad? This can be considered not bad? When he decided to take part in the crosstalk competition yesterday, he did some research about the good performances in crosstalk of this world. He found out that it was similar to the mainstream crosstalk performance of his previous world, basically the gala type of crosstalk. It had a little bit of laughing points, had different levels to it and had structure, but did not go out of line. It did not seem to be that popular and was not as funny as Zhang Ye thought it would be. To him, it probably matched the crosstalks of the early 2000s in his world, but what was different was that those years were when the crosstalks of his previous world was at a low and on a downturn. In this world, however, it wasn't so. The art of crosstalk was still very popular and welcomed by the masses.

As a result, Zhang Ye had been wondering since yesterday about the current world. He considered bringing some non-mainstream crosstalk works over here, but wondered if the audience would accept it. Zhang Ye always felt that any kind of art form had its own developmental path. Starting from

creation, dissemination, rapid development, bottleneck, commercialization, breaking past the bottleneck, and continued development. That was the general path it would move in, but not necessarily in that same order. It was the same for crosstalk, but the only problem now was that the current situation in the crosstalk of this world was not suffering from a bottleneck of development and downturn. If he brought about the change to commercialization of the industry too early, then would the audience approve of it?

It was worth a try!

Zhang Ye didn't use any of the more common and politically correct gala style crosstalks even when he had a lot of them in his head. It just wasn't his style. He was ready to make a name for himself in this world by going down a different path from the others. He did not wish to do things that others could do. Instead, he only did the things that others didn't or couldn't do. If he did not even have such courage to attempt something new, he would not have the fame he was enjoying right now. For him to have reached where he currently was, it was all because he did things that no one else could attempt to do!

I can do what all of you can do!

But what I can do is not doable by any of you!

That is why he already had a clear answer in his mind. Zhang Ye was going for the challenge of introducing a new style of crosstalk!

Bba Bba Bba Bba!

The audience's applause rang out. It wasn't too enthusiastic, nor too cold, so it would mean that the performance was quite alright.

The judges' comments could be heard.

The set was a place which could accommodate a few hundred people. It was larger than the recording studio which Zhang Ye used for his talk show. The place was filled with audience members and, in the front row, was a row of tables where the three judges sat at.

An old crosstalk actor, who was one of the judges for this round of competition, said, "It was quite well spoken and the content is considered to be new. The structure was also clear. Hur Hur. that's all I have to say since I can't pick out any issues with it. I'll be looking forward to your second round of performances then."

A woman who was a gala director said, "Hur Hur, I want to add on something. This performance's ending was a little soft, so I don't think it was wrapped up too well. I get a feeling that the overall performance was not well supported by the ending."

The contestant, Zhang Xiao said, "Your criticism is right, we will improve on that."

The last judge, a man said, "But your overall performance was still quite good. If I were to give points for it, I would award the two of you 80 points."

Zhang Xiao and Liu Yuan both bowed, "Thank you, judges."

The female judge nudged her glasses up, "Alright then, you can go backstage and have a rest. Let's have the next group." As she said that, she picked up her list and read it, "Let me see which group is next....Eh?"

Zhang Ye?

Yao Jiancai?

The three judges looked at one another.

At this moment, a staff member went over to the cameraman and said a few words to him. He also communicated a little with the other technical staffs.

The cameraman and technical staffs were all stunned!

That person was still whispering quickly about something, as though he was giving the technical team some task.

All of this went unnoticed by the other contestants and judges.

Chapter 477: The madness of Central TV!

Noon.

The National Crosstalk Competition was in the midst of being held.

The official website began posting each preliminary round's footage onto its page. Netizens were already beginning to vote for their favorite crosstalk actors and works. The show had only just begun, but there were already a few bouts of competition. Some supported one team, while others supported another. The corresponding votes grew as a war of words ensued.

"Teacher Sun is still the best!"

"Get lost! When Teacher Chen was performing crosstalk, Old Sun wasn't even born yet!"

"Supporting Zhang Xiao and Liu Yuan! Did everyone watch the live broadcast? Their performance was really too enjoyable to listen to!"

"Oh, right. Are Zhang Xiao and Liu Yuan in Division C? I remember when the group draw was announced, the team after them were Yao Jiancai and Zhang Ye!"

"Oh, that's right."

"Yes, I remembered it too!"

"Those two gods of plague are next?"

"But even if it's their turn, we won't be able to see them."

"What a pity, I really hoped to see Zhang Ye do crosstalks. Although I know that he definitely does not know how to do it and won't be as good as those professionals, I still wanted to see it."

"You're thinking too much. Anyone's performance can be aired but not theirs. Do you think Central TV is stupid?"

Tang Dazhang's two disciples' performance had been live streamed online on the official website's preliminary competition page. Because of the audience's vote for their favorites to win, they were in 10th place and were considered one of the hot favorites. As such, the production team also had paid more attention to them and thus allocated live streaming resources to Zhang Xiao and Liu Yuan. The live broadcast spot on the competition web page was one of the best promotional spots one could get. It had even better reach than banner style advertisements, as a lot of people would take a look at it. Naturally, some people also connected this to the next group performance, Zhang Ye and Yao Jiancai. Although Central TV had been doing their best to suppress and ban them from receiving any coverage, that didn't mean that the viewers did not pay any attention to them.

"Hey, it's such a pity for Zhang Ye."

"Yea, I like him quite a bit. Why did he have to get banned?"

"Old Yao isn't bad either. Attempt at soliciting prostitutes? What kind of misdeed is that! There wasn't any proof or explanation and they've already treated him as guilty? He's just unlucky as hell."

"There's no other way. Decree #43 has already been passed and won't be retracted."

The live broadcast footage went off for a few seconds.

"It's time for the next live broadcast."

"It should be division A's turn right?"

"Oh, it has come back on. Why is it still showing division C though?"

"It can't be? Did they forget to change it?"

"Look, the judges are still the same three people."

Suddenly, an image that left everyone shocked appeared. A staff member could be heard announcing, "Please welcome the next contestants, Zhang Ye, Yao Jiancai!"

What?

Welcome who?

And then, Zhang Ye and Yao Jiancai, who were wearing their crosstalk attires, walked onstage.

At this moment, the whole world fell silent. The image on screen seemed like it froze!

Countless peoples' mouths were left hanging in shock as they could only stare at the live broadcast of the crosstalk competition. They were all dumbfounded and could only say, "What the f**k! What the hell is happening?"

.....

At Zhang Ye's parents place.

It was winter vacation now and Zhang Ye's cousins had come over here early in the morning after hearing of his participation in the crosstalk competition.

His third sister pointed at the computer screen and said, "This is funny, this is really funny!"

The eldest sister pouted, "Those two are disciples of Tang Dazhang. They can't be good people."

"Ah? The one that scolded our brother?" The third sister's tone suddenly changed, "What kind of lousy crosstalk is this! It's not funny at all!"

The second sister, "....."

Zhang Ye's mother said, "Don't bother watching this anymore, Little Ye's not going to be on it anyway."

The third sister said moodily, "These people are really too much. Why did they go and ban my brother for?! Our brother didn't post a poem last night, so his ranking is going to drop soon."

The eldest sister said sighed, "Our brother's done for today. He won't be keeping his spot on the C-list anymore."

His mother turned around and went into the kitchen, "I'm going to cook."

Suddenly, the third sister exclaimed, "Damn! Look at this, quick!"

The eldest sister said, "Look at what?"

The third sister jumped up in excitement, "Our brother! It's our brother!"

The eldest sister took a look and was shocked to see, "It's really our brother! And it's even a live broadcast!"

Zhang Ye's mother looked back at them and said, "Alright, don't tease me so much. You make it sound as if it's really happening. What do you all want to have for lunch? I will prepare it for you."

The eldest sister hurriedly said, "Why do you still want to prepare lunch now? Come and see, quickly! Our brother's really on live broadcast!"

His mother was stunned and she quickly came over to their side and looked at the computer. She was also dumbfounded by what she saw and said, "That's impossible!"

.....

Yao Jiancai's house.

Yao Mi shouted, "Mom! Mom!"

"What are you rushing me for? What's the matter?"

"It's Dad and Teacher Zhang! They are on a live broadcast!"

"What!?"

.....

At a certain shopping mall.

Ci Xiufang was shopping with her children when she heard a young couple, who were seated down beside them using their computer and mumbling about something. Subconsciously, she looked over as well.

"What! That is....."

.....

At the *Party's school.

Peking University Vice President, Wu Zeqing, who was currently undergoing training, was in her dormitory during lunch break and reading news online. She suddenly noticed a promotional banner of the crosstalk competition and clicked on it. She casually browsed through the website and took a look at the live broadcast on the main page. When she saw it, her eyes twitched a little and she broke into a light smile.

"Little Zhang?"

.....

Beijing Radio Station.

Big Sis Zhou shouted out loudly, "They must be crazy! Central TV has gone mad!"

Auntie Sun came over and asked, "What's the matter, Old Zhou? Why did you shout out so loudly for?"

Big Sis Zhou smacked her own thigh and said, "Quickly, have a look at this! Central TV's Department 11 is actually allowing Little Zhang appear on a video! It's even a live broadcast! This is almost defying the heavens! This is almost heaven defying!"

Zhang Ye's ex-assistant, Xiaofang, rushed over when she heard the commotion, "Is that for real? How could Central TV possibly do that unless they are crazy!"

As a result, everyone crowded around them to take a look!

F**k!

Central TV really was mad!

.....

Zhang Ye's friends were all amazingly stunned!

Zhang Ye's enemies were all dumbfounded!

Deputy Station Head Jia, who was watching the live broadcast at home, nearly vomited blood!

All those who had doubted and scolded Zhang Ye nearly fainted!

It exploded all over on the internet! Everyone stared at the live broadcast footage in disbelief, their minds unable to comprehend what was going on!

"It's really Zhang Ye!"

"Didn't he get banned? Oh my God!"

"Teacher Zhang is too godly! Even after being banned and heavily blocked by the authorities, not only did his popularity increase, he even made it onto a live broadcast? This is too damn face smacking!"

"Face-smacking Zhang was born to smack faces in the first place! Ah hahahaha!"

"What is Central TV's Department 11 doing?"

"Damn, this is unbelievable!"

"Live broadcasting banned artists who don't even know how to do crosstalks? What are they thinking?! Did the signal get tapped on wrongly?"

"It can't be wrong! This has already been on for such a long time."

"What the heck! Does Zhang Ye know dark magic!?"

"Yea, how could the most unbelievable and amazing things keep happening to him?"

"Hahaha, I'm looking forward to his crosstalk!"

"I'm only worried that he doesn't know how to do it. Crosstalks and talk shows are two very different things. Furthermore, crosstalk requires years and years of practice to perfect. What would a broadcasting major like him know about the art of crosstalk? And they even gave him a live broadcast? With this live broadcast, they're just going to embarrass themselves!"

There were those who supported.

And those that doubted.

But there were even more of those who only came for the fun of this unexpected live broadcast. Countless people had begun to come check out this live broadcast. When it came to such things, the worry was never about how controversial it may be. The worry would always be that the controversy was not big enough!

Some of the fellow crosstalkers and Zhang Ye's friends and relatives all opened up their browsers to watch the live broadcast upon hearing the news. They all wanted to see exactly how an outsider like Zhang Ye would deliver his crosstalk performance. As for why they could appear on a live broadcast, whether it was an unintended mistake or a deliberate one? No one cared about this anymore!

Chapter 478: A crosstalk performance 7-8 years ahead of its time!

The live broadcast started!

Zhang Ye and Yao Jiancai were performing on stage!

In comparison to the chaos going on outside the crosstalk world, the broadcast hall was extremely calm and unperturbed. Apart from the judges exchanging glances and the dazed looks on the faces of the audience, there was no other activity. Aside from a small number of staff members responsible for the live broadcast, no one else knew that the cameras in the broadcast hall were live. All the phones had already been turned off or been held for safekeeping in specific locations. While recording, the

entrances were all locked. Therefore, no one received the news. Not only them, even Zhang Ye himself did not know what the current situation was like.

Bba Bba Bba.

"It's Teacher Zhang!"

"Haha, Yao Jiancai!"

"What a moment! We are actually breathing the same air as them!"

"We've got something to watch for now."

"But Teacher Zhang's crosstalk? I dare not see what's going to happen next!"

"Zhang Ye's not here to perform crosstalk anyway. He's just here to mess things up. Don't tell me you even have any expectations of him going up against professional crosstalk actors?"

"That's true."

"I guess it would be similar to his talk show style."

"Although that is not really crosstalk, the talk show is rather good too. I quite like it."

The audience were very accommodating as they clapped along with the staff who led the applause. The applause even sounded very welcoming and was obviously more supportive than the other contestants. That was unavoidable as the two's popularity was still very apparent.

The lights filled the studio and helped them stand out nicely on camera.

The other contestants, who were doing a live studio recording for the first time, were all uncomfortable after getting on stage and would feel nervous. Sometimes when the lighting was poorly placed, you wouldn't even be able to tell what was on the stage in front of you, as the lights would blind you. But Zhang Ye stood on stage and really enjoyed the moment. He was too familiar with all of this. After a long while of not recording a program, he even felt a hint of reminiscence and wanted to shout out "I, Hu Hanson, am back again"!

Yao Jiancai was also not unfamiliar with all these either. He was already a veteran of the entertainment business for more than 10 years, so like Zhang Ye, he was also someone who had been through all of this before.

Calmness.

Just their body language alone made them stand above the other contestants.

The female judge held up her microphone and smiled, "Nice to meet you, teachers."

Yao Jiancai also smiled and said, "Ah, please don't address us so."

The female judge said in a friendly way, "Usually when the contestants come on stage, we would ask them for their introductions first, but that won't be necessary for the two of you. I do believe that most of our audience members know the two of you, but even so, they probably did not know that the both of you know how to do crosstalk too."

Another judge, who was a professional crosstalk actor said, "Let me interrupt for a moment. I do not know about Zhang Ye, but Teacher Yao Jiancai used to be a professional crosstalk actor like us in the past."

The female judge said in surprise, "Oh? There was such a thing?"

Yao Jiancai self-deprecatingly said, "That was more than 10 years ago. I wouldn't even dare to bring it up nowadays."

The third middle-aged judge sitting at the far right seemed to not even have had the interest to listen to this, remarking, "Just let them start. Let's first listen to their performance." It was useless chatting so much. Even if Yao Jiancai was a professional who had studied crosstalk, Zhang Ye had never studied anything. He was just an amateur. Even if he carried on in this conversation, it would have the same effect as playing a zither to a cow. Moreover, this person was a celebrity who had been subjected to a complete ban. For him to come over was intentionally looking for trouble. No one believed that they could really perform a proper crosstalk. Would they imitate a talk show? Or mimic a traditional crosstalk sketch? In any case, he was completely disinterested.

The first judge said, "Okay, begin."

Contrary to what one might expect, the female judge revealed an expression of extreme interest.

It was worth mentioning that Zhang Ye caught the sight of someone seated in a corner of the audience. It was Tang Dazhang. This was the first time that Zhang Ye had seen this person. However, since he had seen that person's picture and video before, Zhang Ye was able to recognize him immediately. Tang Dazhang was not only the judge of the first round of the preliminary competition, but he was likely here for the performances of his disciples. One could clearly tell that he originally intended to leave and had already stood on his feet, but when he caught sight of Zhang Ye and Yao Jiancai, Tang Dazhang sat down once again. On his face was a shallow smile, as if he were waiting to watch Zhang Ye make a fool of himself.

Beside Tang Dazhang were several other crosstalk performers.

One of them said, "Allowing Zhang Ye to come pollute the crosstalk stage."

Another elderly comrade also shook his head and said, "Oh, this current crosstalk competition ... There are more and more amateurs, some of whom dare to come compete even though they don't even know what crosstalk is. I really can't continue listening to this. Look, at those people from the third group in Division A and group two from Division C? Ay! This Zhang Ye won't be any better."

Tang Dazhang smiled and said, "In a moment, when he's finished performing, the judges will tell him what crosstalk really is. Does he really think that he can employ the talk show style to masquerade as crosstalk? What a joke."

The several crosstalk performers once again began to nitpick at Zhang Ye.

The performance was about to begin and the hall immediately became quiet. All the spectators looked towards the stage.

At this moment, outside of the hall, all of those paying attention to the crosstalk competition online were all staring intently without blinking at the live broadcast - a total of tens of thousands of eyes!

.....

Zhang Ye's home.

On the phone, Mom said, "Old man, come back quickly!"

On the other end, Dad replied, "I'm grocery shopping right now, I'll be back shortly."

"Forget about getting groceries and hurry up! Our son is going to be broadcast live! He's just about to start his crosstalk performance! Hurry, hurry, hurry!" Mom was extremely emotional. She had originally thought that her son would have to say farewell to the entertainment world for good. She couldn't believe that he was already back before the public's eyes, especially in such a large competition with top nationwide ratings.

To the side, second sister asked, "Can my brother actually perform crosstalk?"

Mom exclaimed, "How would I know? I've never heard him perform it before."

Third sister harrumphed and said, "What doesn't brother know how to do? For him to dare to go compete, then he must be able to."

Big sister worriedly replied, "I hope that is true."

.....

Yao Jiancai's house.

Yao Mi was running around in circles in front of the computer. "Is my dad capable? Oh, don't lose face! Although he was formerly a professional supporting comedian, he never became successful. Now that so many years have passed, he surely has already lost all of his fundamentals. In addition, my unrivalled Teacher Zhang, when did he learn how to do crosstalk? Did he learn from my dad? Isn't that screwing with him?"

Fan Yi frowned and said, "What's the point of watching? Turn it off."

Yao Mi childishly replied, "Mom, are you still angry with Dad? Didn't the public security bureau already investigate everything? Surely, you know what kind of person dad is. He may have evil intentions, but he doesn't have the courage to do anything. How is he able to escape from that grasp of yours? Even if you gave him ten galls, he wouldn't dare to mess around outside."

"Watch by yourself." However, Fan Yi did not leave. Instead, she sat down beside Yao Mi, 'reading.' Her eyes would stealthily look at the video of the live broadcast from time to time. Clearly, she was paying considerable attention.

.....

Somewhere in the Internet Surveillance Bureau. During the lunch break, Fan Yingyun, Fang Xiaoshui, and Meng Yi had all tuned in on the live broadcast.

Beijing Television Station. Hu Fei, the Hou brothers, Xiao Lu, and Big Fei were all watching the live broadcast as they ate.

Shanghai, Weiwo Company's WebTV department. Dong Shanshan and Zhang Ye's former colleagues were all waiting to watch the performance.

Etc, etc, etc.

That this was broadcast live was really too unexpected, so much so that many of those who didn't pay attention to Zhang Ye or Yao Jiancai were this time drawn over, watching this inconceivable live broadcast.

.....

The broadcast hall.

The field director made several gestures, indicating that it was okay to start.

Zhang Ye, on stage, saw this and smiled slightly. He glanced at the expression on the faces of the judges and some of the audience members. He knew that it was likely that everyone here did not think he was capable of performing crosstalk. That's fine. Then in today's first round preliminary competition, this brother would first simply display what is called new trade crosstalk, to display what had been polished and developed to the pinnacle by the people of his world. More than seven to eight years ahead of this world's crosstalk format.

As he smoothed his sleeves, Zhang Ye smiled and said, "Hello everyone."

Yao Jiancai joined in, "Hey, nice to meet all of you."

Zhang Ye said, "This stage will be the both of us giving you a crosstalk performance."

Yao Jiancai smiled. "Yes, it's our turn."

When the audience and those on the internet watching the live broadcast saw this, they felt a bit speechless. In crosstalk, at least 90% of them began with these boring opening lines. This was way too stale, wasn't it? Besides, it was too insipid. Heh, looks like this Zhang Ye really didn't know anything about the art form that was crosstalk. He was too casual.

However, the moment this thought arose, the first strike came at them unexpectedly!

Zhang Ye respectfully pointed to his side. "Firstly, let me do the introductions. This is my partner, and also a distinguished elder that I respect the most, Biting Materials, Teacher Biting (homophone)!"

Immediately a great number of the audience burst into laughter.

Yao Jiancai exclaimed, "Biting Materials? I really am not picky with food!"

The audience laughed again. "Hahaha!"

Zhang Ye said in astonishment, "Then what should it be?"

Yao Jiancai said, "Nice! Don't tell me that you don't even know my name?"

Laughter rang out from the audience again.

Zhang Ye chuckled and said, "It's just a joke, Yao Jiancai, Teacher Yao."

Yao Jiancai said, "That's right."

Zhang Ye said, "Teacher Yao is great at crosstalk. Maybe many of you do not know that more than a decade ago, Teacher Yao was considered a professional crosstalk actor in an orthodox artistic group."

Yao Jiancai said to the audience, "That is true. There's no need to talk about things from so long ago."

Zhang Ye smiled and said, "Today for me to dare compete in this competition, it's because Teacher Yao brought me here. Everyone should know that I am friends with Teacher Yao despite our age gap."

Yao Jiancai said, "That's right, we are old friends."

Zhang Ye pointed at him and said, "As the saying goes, it's hard to find a cock!"

The female judge, who sat in the middle, nearly burst out laughing as the live audience also roared with laughter!

Yao Jiancai hurriedly stopped him. "Hold up, hold up! When did I become another species? It's confidant!"

"Right, confidant!" Zhang Ye said, "I have a very good relationship with Teacher Yao. How good is it? His friends are my friends, his brothers are my brothers, his parents are my parents..."

"Yes, we have a great friendship." Yao Jiancai said.

Zhang Ye carried on, "His daughter is my daughter, his wife is my wife!"

Yao Jiancai immediately pushed him, "Go to the corner! Stop taking advantage of me!"

The audience erupted into laughter!

Tang Dazhang frowned.

The crosstalk actors beside him also could not help but let out a whimper upon hearing this.

The other two male judges also looked at each other in astonishment. They could see within each other eyes. A revised talk show? Clearly not! This was obviously a proper crosstalk, but in terms of rhythm and burden techniques, it was also not a traditional mainstream crosstalk format!

Chapter 479: I am a Scholar!

With a short opening and a few short passages, Zhang Ye and Yao Jiancai's performance shocked everyone, catching them all unprepared. It was easy to explain Yao Jiancai, since he was once a professional crosstalk performer.

But for Zhang Ye?

He was a genuine layman!

The art of crosstalk had a low barrier to enter. As long as you had a mouth, you could perform it. However, to enter into this field was extremely difficult. It could absolutely not be performed well without several years to over a dozen years of practice and training. Although Zhang Ye had hosted a talk show, the basic form of a talk show was merely to set a topic, and then chat and joke about it. All kinds of joke segments could be thrown in, and could even involve guests and images, not needing to follow continuity or logic. As long as all the sketches revolved and were put together around the central topic, everything would be fine. However, this wasn't the case with crosstalk. The difficulty of crosstalk was exactly this. There were only two individuals and two fleshly throats. You could only use language to completely display characters, scenes, and circumstances. It was not something that could be casually assembled using random bits of funny joke segments.

Okay!

Hey!

Ai!

Sigh!

Just the using these few words properly required several years of training.

The art of crosstalk was something completely different from other domains!

And yet what Zhang Ye displayed was an unexpected serious and professional leading comic crosstalk performer. How could this not cause everyone to be taken aback?

When he did learn this?

He really f**king knew how to perform crosstalk too??

Many people that had previously believed that Zhang Ye was an amateur who came to cause trouble, but now, everyone's concerns were left in their throats, choked up. Zhang Ye had used actual action to slap their faces!

"Old Tang? This..." Tang Dazhang's junior brother asked.

Tang Dazhang's face was expressionless, "It has only just begun. A crosstalk work is taken as a whole. An opening doesn't say much. Let's continue watching. There will definitely be mistakes."

His junior brother agreed, "That's true. The subject of the work hasn't even been revealed yet."

.....

On-stage.

Zhang Ye could not hear their soft discussions.

Yao Jiancai said, "Don't keep talking about me. Since you are done introducing me, it's about time you introduce yourself."

Zhang Ye in a showy manner, "Do I need introducing? I am not like you crosstalk actors. Look at my character." He patted himself on his chest. "Look at my temperament, I..". He then suddenly stretched out his hand and indecently lifted his pants with an exaggerated motion. "I'm a writer! Can't you tell?"

"Hahaha!"

There was a female spectator who laughed heartily, clapping a hand against her lap, "Oh my!"

Yao Jiancai remained silent as he stared at him, "I really can't tell. Does a writer behave in such a manner? Why did you lift your pants? Moreover, this appellation isn't self-acknowledged!"

Zhang Ye smiled and replied, "Teacher Yao is once again criticizing me and pointing out my mistakes. Eh, my interactions with Teacher Yao...He is my teacher. Under normal circumstances, if there's anything I don't understand, I am willing to ask Teacher Yao for guidance."

Yao Jiancai replied, "You're flattering me."

Zhang Ye: "You probably don't know, but Teacher Yao is particularly fashionable. He understands more about high-tech things than I do. For example, at present, Weibo is extremely popular."

Yao Jiancai said to the audience, "That's right, I began to use it rather early on."

Zhang Ye: "A few years earlier, when Weibo just came out, we didn't know what it was and whether it would be useful. However, Teacher Yao used concrete actions to tell us that Weibo is really useful. Just that time, after Teacher Yao finished filming, while he was resting with his production crew at the back, he whipped out his phone to look through Weibo happily. He placed the cigarette that he was smoking on the table. When he turned back to look at it after awhile, he realized that the cigarette was gone. He didn't know who took it."

Yao Jiancai nodded while smiling, "My friends from the production crew tend to crack jokes with me."

Zhang Ye said, "Teacher Yao wasn't anxious or mad. Actually, he knew who took it. Everyone was just joking around. Thus, Teacher Yao sent a message on Weibo—Just because I don't say it doesn't mean I don't know."

Yao Jiancai replied, "Hehe, I was just messing with him."

Zhang Ye said with a twist, "After ten minutes, his wife sent a short message—Sorry."

When the punchline was delivered, the entire crowd erupted into laughter!

"Aiyah!"

"Hahahaha!"

"I'm sorry? Pu!"

"Aiyo. I am getting cramps from laughing!"

Yao Jiancai rolled his eyes, "Wasn't that great, that one Weibo message of mine cracked such a big case! Is Weibo useful only for this?"

Zhang Ye continued in a dead panner manner. "This is the importance of Weibo. A few years back, there was something very popular as well. What do we do if we want to read what Teacher Yao wrote? We go on Teacher Yao's prostitution. (piao ke)"

"Hey, wait a moment!" Yao Jiancai exclaimed, "It's called a blog (bo ke)!"

Zhang Ye replies: "Yes, blog. On there, a lot of people... ordered (clicked on) him."

Yao Jiancai curled his lips and said, "Then you can tell them that I won't be coming out for them."

In the midst of the laughter of the crowd, Zhang Ye blinked. "Then how are you going to make a living?"

Yao Jiancai stared at him, "I was making a living out of this?"

Zhang Ye responded, "What is that? Ordering you (dian ni)."

Yao Jiancai flabbergasted, "What do you mean ordering me! It is called click views (dian ji)!"

"Oh!" Zhang Ye exclaimed in realization and said, "This is the first time I know that ordering you (dian ni)... means ordering chicken (dian ji, prostitution)?"

After hearing this, the audience was momentarily stunned before bursting into laughter!

Yao Jiancai was enraged. "How can your mind be so twisted! It's the click rate (Jí lǜ)!"

Zhang Ye: "You even turned green (lǜ)?"*

Some audience couldn't take the laughter anymore. "Hahahaha!"

Yao Jian Cai said, "Hey! No one thinks that way!"

Zhang Ye responded, "That's what I meant. Anyway, Teacher Yao is much more fashionable than the rest of us. He also gets along better than us. A few years back, when I was still in school and struggling for money, Teacher Yao was already the spokesperson for a company, serving as the poop (dabian) for their product!"

The audience burst into laughter again!

Yao Jiancai hurriedly corrected him. "What poop (dabian)?! It is spokesperson (dashi)!"

"Oh..." Zhang Ye said in confusion. "What is the difference? Was what I said wrong? Poop (dabian)? Shit (dashi)? Are you talking about its texture in the mouth or sensation of touching?"

Yao Jiancai howled, "Why are you so disgusting?! Do you have to talk like that?!"

Zhang Ye shrugged and said, "Alright, let's just put it that way. Anyway, Teacher Yao is really incredible. He shot a commercial, a drama, and even starred in a movie."

Yao Jiancai nodded his head. "Indeed, I was featured in a few."

Zhang Ye grabbed his forefinger and said, "Teacher Yao's first movie, that movie was called... called... right, it was called 'The Widow'!"

Yao Jiancai asked in confusion: "The widow? I played the widow?"

Zhang Ye: "No, you are the husband of the widow."

Yao Jiancai: "I'm dead?"

Zhang Ye answered, "This movie illustrated how a widow, after the death of her husband, strived hard in life and how she pushed forward. It was a very inspirational movie!"

Yao Jiancai stared at Zhang Ye with widened eyes. "I am not in the movie!?"

Zhang Ye answered, "You are. Without you, how would she be able to become a widow? You were in the very first scene of the movie, at the graveyard." He illustrated with his fingers. "On top of the tomb, your photo was placed there."

Yao Jiancai, "....."

The audience laughed without any restraint!

Zhang Ye looked at the crowd, "That was Teacher Yao's first movie. Un, he was even more incredible in the second movie. Teacher Yao was the male lead!"

Yao Jiancai delightfully replied, "Male lead?"

Zhang Ye said: "Yes, this movie was called 'Millstone'. It depicted how the protagonist pulled a millstone to explore the world!"

Yao Jiancai asked in a dumbfounded manner, "Pulling a millstone? I was playing a donkey?! Then, what kind of world was I exploring!? Wouldn't I just be turning in circles!""**

The audience burst into laughter, "Aiyohahaha!"

Zhang Ye said, "The movie which Teacher Yao became famous for was actually the third one, 'Zhang Ergou Becomes Brutal and Kills His Father in a Most Urgent Tragic Tale!'"

Yao Jiancai replied, "Woah, that name is really long."

Zhang Ye: "They needed two cinema screens in order to display this title horizontally. Zhang Ergou was a bad child. After killing his father, he chopped him up and incinerated him in flames. Afterwards, when the police investigated the case, Teacher Yao's first appearance was when the coffin was opened."

Yao Jiancai questioned, "So I am still playing as a dead person? Furthermore, in many pieces this time?"

Zhang Ye answered, "It's still okay. Your next of kin was still able to recognize you by your legs."

The female judge covered her face as she giggled non-stop.

The male judge couldn't resist flashing a smile. However, he retracted his smile quickly.

Zhang Ye: "The fourth movie was a huge production. There was a thriller horror movie over at Hong Kong named 'Dumpling' and they invited Teacher Yao to make an appearance."

Yao Jiancai remarked happily, "Finally, a big production."

Zhang Ye illustrated wildly with his hands as he said, "This movie depicted how a murderer made dumplings out of the people he killed. Teacher Yao was playing the role of the 'filling'."

Yao Jiancai replied, "Alright! Looks like even my legs were ground down this time!"

Zhang Ye gave him a thumbs up, "Incredible."

Yao Jiancai said, "What's so incredible about that? I became only minced meat!"

Some of faces of the audience were tired from laughing as their cheeks began to hurt!

Zhang Ye: "We should learn from you and respect you. You are our role model. Just like how the saying goes, there is a mountain beyond a mountain, a brothel beyond a building!"

Yao Jiancai stopped him, "That's not it! That's incorrect! You keep saying the wrong words. It is 'there is a mountain beyond a mountain, a building beyond a building'!"

Zhang Ye stared at him. "Brothel beyond a building?"

Yao Jiancai answered, "Why do you keep talking about brothels! Do you often go there? It is building beyond a building."

Zhang Ye nodded his head. "There is a mountain beyond a mountain, a building beyond a building. A capable person has someone screwing him from behind!"***

Screwing (neng)—This was a slang in Beijing, as well as a phrase from the northern regions with the same meaning as 'doing'.

Yao Jiancai interrupted, "Capable person (you neng ren)!"

"Screw (neng)!" Zhang Ye followed suit.

The hands of the cameraman responsible for the filming shook as he tried to suppress his laughter!

Yao Jiancai shouted, "Who are you screwing (neng)! It is capable person (neng ren)! With this kind of standard, you still dare to claim that you are an academic? What kind of academic are you? Do you research such stuff everyday?"

Zhang Ye: "I also research other things as well, such as the art of crosstalking."

Yao Jiancai nodded in approval: "It is good to research that."

Zhang Ye said, "Crosstalking is a simple form of art, as well as a profound one. It is simple because anyone can do it as long as they have a mouth. However, it isn't easy to do it well. For example, the addition of some cushioning words and empty words can change the tone. There are many things that one has to take note of, as well as many things to research about. Let me give you an example, 'You came, huh? Hurry up ok, uh' sit down, ah' drink some water, o' goodbye. With a cushioning word, it gives the speech an amiable tone, otherwise, it would sound out of place." He suddenly shouted hoarsely: "You came! Sit down! Drink water! Goodbye!"

Yao Jiancai exclaimed in shock, "You will scare the person to death!"

Zhang Ye carried on. "For example, there are some females who like to put the empty words in front. When they meet an acquaintance outside, they would greet them, 'Yo, auntie, what are you doing ah'. It won't do if the empty word is placed at the back."

Yao Jiancai suggested, "You give it a try?"

Zhang Ye imitated the speech of a woman: "Auntie, what are you doing... Ahyo!!!" The last syllable sounded like it was roared out.

Yao Jiancai rolled his eyes. "Lad, did someone step on your foot?"

Zhang Ye pointed to the floor and said, "The auntie fell into the drain."

"Hahaha!"

"Hahahaha!"

The entire room was filled with laughter!

Judges, audience, and even the program staff and cameramen of the show were amused. Some of the young ladies among the audience even had tears flowing out from their eyes from all the laughter!

Tang Dazhang's face darkened!

The three fellow brothers beside him didn't say anything. That was because they were at a loss for words!

This work had already surpassed everyone's expectations!

*Reference to 绿帽, (green hat) means being made a cuckoo of

**Donkeys were used to pull mills in the past. When you pull the mill, you are turning it in circles.

*** He means to say a capable person has a capable person behind his back. Capable person (nengren). He changes it into (ren neng) → person screwing, or person behind his back screwing.

Chapter 480: Embodiment of Guo Degang!

On the official website.

The discussion board beneath the live internet live broadcast page was stirring!

"Hahahaha!"

"Holy sh*t! It's so dazzling that becoming blind!"

"Who the f**k said Teacher Zhang Ye can't do crosstalk?"

"I can't take it anymore. Hahahaha! I'm already having stitches from laughing! It's too funny! Teacher Zhang is too hilarious!"

"Teacher Yao Jiancai is also great!"

"This young and old pairing is godly!"

"The two of them have so much chemistry! The burdens come one after another!"

"And did any of you notice? Zhang Ye's crosstalk is different from traditional crosstalk!"

"That's right. He does not give you a break at all. It's full of burdens from beginning to end. A second one comes just as the first ends. This skill is so f**king awesome! Previously, I was still of the idea that Teacher Zhang Ye did not know crosstalk, and did not look forward to it. Now, Teacher Zhang has once again opened our eyes! An awesome person is awesome no matter what! It seems like there's nothing Zhang Ye doesn't know how to do! To think he can do anything!"

"So interesting!"

"I love Teacher Zhang too much!"

"Just now, I found the other works in this crosstalk competition not bad, but after f**king hearing Zhang Ye and Yao Jiancai's, I realized that bunch of crosstalk was just dogshit!"

"That's right!"

"Ditto+1!"

"Enough from me, I'll keep watching. This live broadcast was probably a mistake. When they realize it, we won't be able to watch it anymore."

"It's fine, I already recorded it."

"Me too. Such a classic work has to be left as a momento."

.....

At this moment.

Central TV's Department 11 was already in chaos.

Phone calls from Central TV Headquarter's leaders came one after another. Phone calls from other related departments also came in!

Only then did Department 11's Director Chen Huo realize that something had gone wrong. After hanging up, he immediately felt pangs of fury. He ordered Secretary An and the person-in-charge, as well as eight others, that had to do with the crosstalk competition, to see him!

"What are you all doing!?" Chen Huo said furiously.

The person-in-charge wiped his sweat and said, "Director Chen, I...I was just following your instructions."

Chen Huo slammed the table, "Bullshit! The two of them are on the ban list in black and white! Not only did you not act in accordance with the ban, you even gave them a live broadcast? Do you want to f**king die!?" He really felt exasperated from his anger that his words were full of vulgarities.

The person-in-charge exclaimed, "It was Secretary An who told me..."

Secretary An turned nasty. "What did I tell you? I said that you have to manage the two of them well!"

The person-in-charge stared and said, "Didn't you say they need not be managed?"

Secretary An nearly fainted. "I even said to mind the ban!"

The person-in-charge said, "Didn't you say we need not mind the ban?"

Secretary An said as if he wanted to vomit blood, "What sort of ears do you have? I even said do not have recordings, and asked if you clearly got that."

The person-in-charge said, "I heard you say to do recordings, and even to do the recordings clearly..."

When Chen Huo and the relevant staff heard this, they nearly vomited blood. Holy sh*t, what the f**k was all this!? Are you f**king spies sent by the enemy!?

No matter how foolish the person-in-charge was, he finally realized it was all a blunder. Your sister! So it had nothing to do with the transfer of the SARFT's Deputy Chief that sparked off a political war. He hurriedly tried to explain. "Our cellphone reception today in the station wasn't good. It was quite intermittent, and the sound wasn't too clear, so I misunderstood your intentions...Aiyah, Hey! Then I'll get them to cut the live broadcast signal right away! I'll do it right away!"

Chen Huo roared, "Go and do it now!"

The person-in-charge ran out in a rush to make a phone call. Du Du Du. No one in the office in charge of the live broadcast picked up. As such, he ran upstairs personally and pushed open door to the office in charge of the live broadcast signal. "Where is everyone? Why didn't you pick up the phone? Hurry and cut the internet live broadcast!"

A female employee said at a loss whether to laugh or cry, "There's no way to cut it. Just about half a minute ago, a few people in charge of the live broadcast got food poisoning after eating the lunch boxes. While they were rushing to the bathroom, they accidentally bumped into the door and closed it. Now there's no one in there, and the keys are in the control room!"

Indeed, many male employees were tinkering in front of the door. There was no way to open it!

The person-in-charge said anxiously, "What about the spare key?"

The female employee said, "It's in the annex building. Someone is already on the way to get it."

The person-in-charge shouted, "Why are there even more troubles the more anxious I get!"

He could not wait any longer. He rushed to the recording venue. He decided to cut the signal directly there, but he too knew that it was likely to be too late. The crosstalk performance was almost done! Heavens, are you kidding me!? And that Zhang Ye! A problem with the cellphone reception? Every word was heard wrongly by him? After realizing the live broadcasting error, the staff had food poisoning? And even accidentally locked the door? The spare key had not been retrieved yet? This whole series of messy events was too much of a coincidence!

Zhang Ye!

This person was really too damn sinister!

.....

At the live broadcast venue.

Waves of laughter surged like tidal waves, and they happened wave after wave!

Zhang Ye stood onstage in a high-spirited manner, and was even coughing in a humorous manner. "When it comes to the art form, crosstalk, there's so much to talk about. Now, crosstalk is quite well developed. Look, you can even have such a large scale competition at Central TV. It receives the concern and love all over the country. Compared to the past, crosstalk was faced with all kinds of difficulties at every turn. Back then, crosstalk actors were street performers. It was hard work and wasn't easy."

Yao Jiancai sighed and said, "That was the case."

Zhang Ye says: "As the saying goes, even if the gale were to die down, all would still be gone when the rain falls."*

Yao Jiancai replied, "You're right."

Zhang Ye says, "Initially, we wanted to do it properly. However, when it was time to pay, with a breeze of the wind, everyone disappeared. Fine, I worked in vain that day. The same goes for rain as well. The moment it rains, no one would be outside to listen to crosstalk performances. Thus, crosstalk is different from other industries, such as the bricklayer. Bricklayers are overjoyed whenever it rains."

Yao Jiancai asked, "Why would they be happy?"

Zhang Ye replied, "Drinking his beer at home, he listens to the wind blow outside... Kacha! His mood immediately lifts. When the rain stops, he would have a job to do. He shouts for his son..." He casually pointed to the side. "Go, buy me 100g of beer."

Yao Jiancai pushed him, "Why are you pointing at me!"

Zhang Ye blinked. "I was just using you as an example."

Yao Jiancai said, "Even so, I won't allow it. Point towards that side."

The audience laughed heartily!

Zhang Ye continued on. "Huaaaa... Kacha, go, get me another 100g."

Yao Jiancai asked, "You drank 200g like that?"

Zhang Ye said, "Huaaaa... Kacha, get me another 100g."

Yao Jiancai asked, "You are still drinking?"

Zhang Ye responded, "Huaaa... Kacha! Un, I can't drink anymore this time round."

Yao Jiancai was curious. "Why aren't you drinking this time round?"

Zhang Ye flicked his hand. "My house collapsed."

Yao Jiancai replied, "Hey, it seems that too heavy a rain isn't good either."

This punchline sent another wave of laughter through the hundreds of members in the audience!

However, there was a rule limiting every contesting group's performance time. It was okay if one's performance ended earlier, but it could not exceed 10 minutes. Only in the semifinals and finals would the time limit be raised to 15 minutes or 20 minutes. They didn't give that much time in the preliminary

rounds. After all, there were too many people in the competition and only 10 groups could take turns to do the recording. It would be considered fast for them if they could finish the recording tomorrow. If they were to be any slower, they might only finish on the day after the next. Thus, it was about time for the conclusion of Zhang Ye's performance.

There was no one to inform them offstage, but Zhang Ye and Yao Jiancai were well-aware of it. Especially for Zhang Ye, as a professional host, when the program dictated how many minutes he was given, he was able to calculate the remaining time left within a margin of error of three seconds without even looking at a watch.

Another minute left.

It was time to put the finishing touches.

Zhang Ye gave Yao Jiancai a wink, and no longer added anything more.

Yao Jiancai got the message. "Since you said you are a scholar, that means you can write poems?"

When the audience heard this, they all responded!

"Haha!"

"Give us one!"

"Give us a poem!"

Everyone knew of Zhang Ye's famous ability of writing poems.

However, Zhang Ye pushed Yao Jiancai. "Are you trying to harm me?"

Yao Jiancai smiled and said, "How am I harming you?"

Zhang Ye said, "My poems have already caused so much trouble, and you still want me to write one!?"

"Yi!"

"Yi!"

The audience kicked up a row.

Having scolded the radio station, disparaging his leaders, belittling SARFT, Zhang Ye's poems had indeed caused quite a stir in the past, and had sparked off numerous controversies.

Yao Jiancai bemused, "Then give us two couplets."

Zhang Ye asked, "What should I write?"

Yao Jiancai gave it a thought, "Write one for the officials."

Zhang Ye exclaimed, "Do you really think there's not enough trouble?!"

Yao Jiancai said, "What's the big deal? We have freedom of speech."

Zhang Ye said, "Then I'll write one for the officials of the old society."

Yao Jiancai said, "Why must it be the old society? Do it for both the new and old society together."

Zhang Ye said, "Alright then, since you dare to die, I'll dare to bury you."

Yao Jiancai said, "Hey, what are you saying?"

Zhang Ye pondered for a moment before saying, "Let me write a comparison between old and new officials. Well, the first half is: Brown rice, pumpkin soup, single wife, a bunch of kids."

Yao Jiancai looked at him. "Then what about the second half? "

Zhang Ye: "White rice, turtle soup, ten kids, a bunch of wives!"

Yao Jiancai said, "Ah, then the lateral comparison?"

Zhang Ye said, "Attainted sooner or later!"

Yao Jiancai agreed, "Heh, yes, they should be attainted."

Hearing those words, the audience offstage clapped their hands!

Yao Jiancai smiled. "This couplet is really interesting. Un, how about you write another one, how about one for me and my wife?"

Zhang Ye replied, "Sure."

Yao Jiancai was extremely happy. "So, what is the upper half of the couplet?"

Zhang Ye pondered for a moment. "The sword of a hero doesn't age!"

Yao Jiancai asked, "What about the lower half? Where is my wife?"

Zhang Ye replied, "...The madam's sultry never wanes!"

Pfft!

The audience erupted into laughter. "Hahahaha!"

Yao Jiancai was speechless. "Comparing the both laterally?"

Zhang Ye casually said, "Adulterous..."

Before he could even say 'couple', Yao Jiancai smacked him and said, "Damn you!"

The crosstalk ended!

Zhang Ye and Yao Jiancai smiled and stood straight before bowing to the audience. Then, deafening applause filled the entire recording studio!

Bba Bba Bba Bba!

All of the audience members gave them a standing ovation!

"Alright!"

"Well said!"

"Hahahaha!"

"Too awesome!"

"Divine piece of work!"

"Zhang Ye! Zhang Ye! Zhang Ye!"

Even the female judge stood up from the judges' table, giving her applause to Zhang Ye and Yao Jiancai. Then, she raised her hand and gave them a big thumbs up!

*The saying originates from the street vendors and stalls. Even if the storm isn't as bad, they still are unable to do business when it is raining. i.e. The situation may not be as bad, but actually it doesn't make a difference.