

Superstar 541

Chapter 541: Settling scores!

At home.

At the dining table, the family of three enjoyed their dumplings.

After the announcement of the news of the SARFT's new list of banned artists, Zhang Ye was informed of it by his eldest younger sister who called him. It was only after her call that he found out about the big news and he hurriedly rushed onto the internet to verify it. When he saw it, he suddenly burst out laughing.

His mother asked, "Why did your sister call you for?"

Zhang Ye laughed and said, "The SARFT has lifted my ban."

"When did this happen?" His mother put down her chopsticks when she heard this.

"Just a while ago. The list no longer has my name on it." Zhang Ye was feeling in such a great mood that he stuffed two dumplings into his mouth at the same time with his chopsticks.

His father also stopped eating and said, "Does that mean that from today on, no one will be able to stop you from appearing on television, doing your own programs or publishing books?"

His mother said, "Of course, if he is no longer banned, who would care about those! This is great, it's already been so many days, but my son is finally free now. Little Ye, was it Chief Wu who helped you?"

"It has to be," Zhang Ye said.

His mother rapped the surface of the table forcefully with her hand. "I really like that Chief Wu! Invite her over for dinner some time. I will cook to thank her myself."

His father interrupted and said, "Forget it. Do you even know how high Chief Wu's rank is? Why would she come here for dinner? Do you think she lacks any dinner invitations?"

"That's true, I don't think we can get her here with an invite either," his mother said.

His father looked at him. "Remember to send your thanks to Chief Wu."

Zhang Ye sighed. "I know, the two of you don't need to worry about that."

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Later in the afternoon.

Having just had his ban lifted, he received a phone call almost immediately.

It was not a number he was familiar with, and the voice on the other side was a woman.

"Hello, may I know if this is Teacher Zhang Ye?"

"That's me, who is this?" Zhang Ye headed back to his room to take the call.

"Teacher Zhang, how are you? My name is Li Mei and I'm with Eastern Publishing Firm." She sounded a little cautious over the phone, like a young and inexperienced worker.

Zhang Ye felt a realization as he said, "Publishing firm? Oh, what's the matter?"

Li Mei paused for a short moment before saying softly, "It's like this. I would first like to ask you if the copyright to Legend of Wukong still belongs to you? Our firm has just had a meeting and we agreed that we would really like to take up your novel as our new project, but we don't know if we can have the honor of working with you on it. Yes, you might not have heard of our publishing firm, so I would like you to lend me your ear on this matter. We might not be very well known in our industry or operate on as large a scale as Beijing Education Publishing Firm, but our funding and marketing budgets are definitely not inferior to any of those big time publishers. If you are willing to let us buy your copyrights to Legend of Wukong, then we will assure you that we will definitely devote our utmost to funding and promoting the novel."

Zhang Ye laughed and said, "The copyright has not been sold yet, but I would like to hold on to it for now. There's no rush."

"Teacher Zhang." Li Mei sounded a little anxious now. "If you're free, perhaps we could meet in person and have a chat? I know you're busy, so anytime is fine. I can follow your schedule."

Zhang Ye rejected by saying, "We'll see how it goes."

When the call ended, someone from Huanan Publishing Firm called as well.

It was a man. "Teacher Zhang, we've read your latest novel and we like it very much. Could we discuss the rights of the simplified Chinese version of Legend of Wukong?"

Zhang Ye still said, "I won't be talking about this today, we'll see how it goes."

That man immediately responded by saying, "You can state the price you want for it and I will report it to my management. If they are okay with it, then we can sign the contract. We will start on the promotions immediately to push for this novel's sales. Since the whole country is currently talking about you and you're the hottest topic right now, we would like to make use of this to our advantage in promoting Legend of Wukong. The sales figures will definitely be better than usual, but if we drag this on for too long, then wouldn't it be a pity? If you're okay, why don't we meet in person instead?"

Zhang Ye did not flat out refuse him. "Let me think about it."

That man said, "Alright then, if you have the intention of selling the copyright, you must remember to contact us. We might not be the top publishers in our industry, but we're definitely a professional team and an old name in the industry."

Four or five calls came in successively and they were all from different publishers.

Zhang Ye just responded diplomatically to them and hung up.

Then, there were also other publishers who probably did not have a way to contact Zhang Ye directly and had to send him private messages over Weibo, using Tieba, and other methods to communicate with him. They all expressed their interest in obtaining the publishing rights for Legend of Wukong. Some of them even offered to buy out the returned copyrights for Ghost Blows Out the Light and Zhang

Ye's Compilation for republication. They also stated their offers to him, with some ranging high and others lower.

But Zhang Ye did not reply, not because he did not want to sell the rights. He did not have much money right now and needed it for his living expenses, but after the previous incidents with the old publishers for his works, Zhang Ye had lost confidence in publishing firms. He thought that he had a rather good relationship with them before things turned sour. When he got banned by the SARFT, they all came to him asking for compensation, stepping on him while he was down. Although Zhang Ye could understand their circumstances as the SARFT was their overseeing authority, Zhang Ye still felt uncomfortable about how it happened, especially Beijing Education Publishing Firm. He burned this into his mind knowing that even though they were also in a difficult situation and were just following orders, the compensation of a few million was still too much to ask for! Hur, they had really burned the bridges back then!

And just as he was speaking of the devil.

At a little past 2 PM, a call from the editor-in-chief of Beijing Education Publishing Firm, Zhang Kui, arrived. When the call was answered, he immediately identified himself.

Zhang Ye laughed and said, "Why would you be looking for me?"

Zhang Kui was the person who had initiated the compensation for breach of contract. He had burned the bridge back then mainly because the ban by the SARFT had led them to believe that Zhang Ye would have no more future in the entertainment business and would not be able to make a comeback for sure. As a result, his firm had decided to make Zhang Ye liable for most of the compensation terms to offset any losses as they had already printed many copies of Ghost Blows Out the Light when it was forced to be taken off the rack. But it turned out, rather than a loss, their publishing firm had actually even made a tidy sum on the novel as Ghost Blows Out the Light was very popular. When they asked for the compensation amount, they were actually squeezing as much out of Zhang Ye as they could.

But who could have expected the matter to develop beyond everyone's expectations? Not only did Zhang Ye not disappear from the public's eye after his ban, he even rose in popularity and was active every day up until just two hours ago, when the SARFT finally removed his name from the ban list. This was clearly not something that Zhang Kui could have considered, and if he had done so, he would not have taken such extreme measures back then!

Zhang Kui had thought through several approaches before the call and said with a laugh in his words, "Teacher Zhang, we probably had some misunderstandings before this. Actually, when we asked for the compensation previously, it was just so that we could answer to our management. You probably understand that we cannot make the decision on a lot of matters just by ourselves. With such strict ban in place, no one in the industry dared to be slow in implementing the measures to enforce upon the banned artists. Hur hur, but now that everything has turned out well for everyone I would like to congratulate you, Teacher Zhang, on your return to the entertainment business. We already expected such an outcome as we know that, with your talents and capabilities, you would come back sooner rather than later. And so, we can now continue working together again."

Zhang Ye curled up a corner of his mouth. "Continue working together?"

"Yes." Zhang Kui continued speaking in his own world of thoughts, "The 3.5 million compensation previously was just a matter of procedure, but since you've already been unbanned now, we would of course return the fee to you. The firm will re-sign the copyrights to Ghost Blows Out the Light back from you together with your new novel, Legend of Wukong. We will continue working together to promote the new novel well to push it to greater sales and, of course, I will be personally overseeing all of that myself."

Zhang Ye understood clearly what he meant.

Beijing Education Publishing Firm wanted the copyright to Legend of Wukong. As long as he sold it to their firm, they would return the compensation fees and get back the copyrights for the simplified Chinese version of Ghost Blows Out the Light. In other words, as long as the copyright to Zhang Ye's new novel were not sold to them, as long as the copyright to Ghost Blows Out the Light was not resold back to them, then the 3.5 million in compensation would not be returned to him!

They were using money to entice Zhang Ye to force him to sign the contract!

Zhang Ye was still wondering when he would settle scores with them, but little did he expect that they would come knocking on his front door so quickly. They even tried to coerce him into a deal? They tried to get their hands on the copyright to his new novel?

Ha!

Zhang Ye said to him in a direct manner, "Editor Zhang, do you know why I did not even hesitate when I transferred the 3.5 million RMB compensation to you at that time?"

"Eh?" Zhang Kui was taken aback by this question. This question had actually been on their minds all this time and they'd always wondered about it. If it were anyone else, they wouldn't possibly have agreed so quickly to the terms. They either would not agree to pay or just haggle the amount. Never had they encountered someone like Zhang Ye who would pay up without a question.

"Because," Zhang Ye said, "The losses that your publishing firm will be facing soon would greatly exceed that amount! That is the reason why I paid up happily without any hesitation!" This guy had such an vengeful soul! Having been so harshly treated by the Beijing Education Publishing Firm when Zhang Ye was in the dumps, if he did not return their favor, it would not be his style! After taking a chunk off me, I don't need you to return what was taken! I would let that chunk rot in your stomachs so that you will feel sick forever!

Zhang Kui's face sank, obviously not believing what he had just heard. Make a greater loss? What could they possibly lose? Even if they could not get the copyright for Legend of Wukong, they would just not earn any money from it, so what was there to lose? Hur, what an odd claim!

The call ended.

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On the other side.

At Beijing Education Publishing Firm.

Zhang Kui laughed it off and began his work for the day. He did not take Zhang Ye's words to heart. Even if it was a pity that they could not get the copyright to Legend of Wukong, they would still be able to operate without it.

However, the matter was clearly not as simple as Zhang Kui thought. Little did he expect that Zhang Ye's words would come true and come true so quickly!

An hour later, Beijing Education Publishing Firm received a rectification notice from the authorities. They also received another, more shocking notice of review!

The whole firm was thrown into a mess immediately!

"How can this be!"

"What? This..."

"Why did this happen?"

More than a dozen published works from the firm had been ordered to be removed from the shelves!

A Widow's Spring.

Milk.

Tang Dazhang's Compilation: Audio and Visual Works.

100 Crosstalk Highlights: Audio and Visual Works.

Etc, etc, etc, all of them were ordered to be removed! Many of the included titles were newly published works and even included Tang Dazhang's crosstalk compilation which they had just bought the copyright for and spent so much on promotions for. The CDs were already printed and packed but not distributed for sale yet. So how could it be banned just like that? They read through the notice and found out that it was because the content was deemed sensitive and also involved some plagiarized works and forbidden words!

An emergency meeting was convened!

The publishing firm's upper management was all called to attend!

Zhang Kui was getting really anxious this time. "How the hell did this happen? Are there even such problems?"

A female deputy editor said anxiously in an unsure tone, "I've just asked them to check and it seems like the authorities have given a valid reason for the notice. But all of them were just minor issues, besides...those kind of issues have never given us any problems in the past. The other publishing firms are also doing the same, so why did they suddenly review this?"

Another person asked, "How about the other firms? Did they receive the notice to take their publications off the shelf too?"

A youth said, "I've just checked and there's no indication that this is happening to them. The only ones who have received such an order to remove such a large number of publications are us!"

Every one of them were shocked to hear that, "This...."

Zhang Kui screamed, "Contact the authorities immediately and find out if there's any room for negotiations. We must not be forced to take down these batches of audio and visual publications! No firm would be able to bear a loss like this! If necessary, we will follow the regulations and make some edits to ensure that it stays up on the shelves for sale!"

A middle-aged man who was responsible for this immediately headed off to do some public relations. But ten minutes later, he returned to the meeting room with a sunken expression.

Someone in upper management asked, "How was it?"

That person inhaled deeply and said, "It didn't work. Those listed works must be taken off the shelves and no exceptions can be made even if we edit them. On top of that, we must also carry out the recall immediately!"

Zhang Kui was dumbfounded. "Even edits won't help?"

The person shook his head and said, "We have to wait for the notice before we know when it would pass their review. But someone I know well told me in secret not to hold out too much hope."

Zhang Kui furiously pounded the table. "Based on what are they doing this to us!"

A middle-aged editor said, "Aren't they bullying us!"

"They have just changed their leader and a newly appointed official would surely take some actions, so are we...being used as an example? But then, why does it have to be us?"

A wave of dissent and grumbling echoed through the meeting room. Everyone was panicking!

It was ten excellent publications they were talking about, especially the crosstalk compilation. At the crosstalk competition this year, despite it being called off, Zhang Ye's outstanding crosstalks that were beyond this era had created a new platform for the crosstalk industry and drove up demand for it. Everyone was paying much more attention to crosstalk than before and thus the publishing firm had ridden on this wave and spent a large amount of money to release this batch of crosstalk audio and visual products. But somehow, it ended up being banned before it even saw any sales! For the Beijing Education Publishing Firm, this was the kind of news that nightmares were made of!

They were finished!

This time, they'd lost a lot of money!

Just counting the number of works and CDs they had on hand would put the amount in the millions! That was just the tip of the iceberg as there was also money involved in obtaining copyrights, promotional budgets, and resource fees to account for. Their loss was immeasurable as it probably reached into the figure of more than several millions! They were likely to lose more than ten million!

Money was not the only thing they would lose as their reputation and brand name would plummet as well. It wouldn't be a surprise if they were to lose a large number of signed authors in the wake of this incident. Why? Because the other publishing firms did not seem to suffer from any of these measures and were operating fine as they were before. Yet Beijing Education Publishing Firm was encountering all

these problems? They had works banned one after another by the censor board? This would obviously make the authors feel a sense of unease, as they wondered about the problems this particular publishing firm had. Just staying around would be too dangerous as the banned publications may belong to other authors today, but would their publications be the next one targeted? They will definitely not look to sign with this publication firm for their next work! This would occur if they suffered a loss in their reputation and it was something that was much more damaging than losing money itself. The foundation of the company itself was shaken to the very core!

Their losses were much more than heavy!!

The female deputy editor suddenly realized, "Could this matter be related to Zhang Ye's unbanning? Our publishing firm had treated Zhang Ye quite harshly at that time when he got banned."

"Zhang Ye?"

"It's because of him?"

"Right, the SARFT's new leader was previously from Peking University!"

"Can this really be because of Zhang Ye's settling scores? How could he possibly be capable of that!"

A few of them were extremely agitated by this suggestion!

Zhang Kui was now thinking of his earlier conversation with Zhang Ye and remembered his pronouncement. Thinking about it now, Zhang Kui's heart turned cold. He did not know if everything that was happening now was planned by Zhang Ye, but he was clear that this matter was somewhat related to him!

The female deputy editor sighed, then paused and sighed again. "I've already said that we should have held back on the compensation figure back then. Even if Zhang Ye had been banned and suppressed at that time, we shouldn't have....He is an unusually odd person and we must never use common sense to make our decisions. Hai, but it's too late to say anything now."

When they previously requested for the compensation, they knew that their firm was not ethical in asking for such a huge sum. It looked like they had made a fatal mistake in doing so as they handled the whole matter too harshly back then! They thus had affected any chance of working out an agreement with Zhang Ye again!

"What should we do?"

"If we really have to take everything off the shelves, then we wouldn't have any funds left to operate the business. We won't be able to recover from this loss and over the coming months, all our authors will leave as well!"

"Damn it!"

"Editor-in-Chief Zhang, please think of a way!"

Unable to come up with any solutions, all of them had to take responsibility!

Zhang Kui did not say a word as he knew there was no way out of this. At this moment, he felt a tinge of regret. A momentary slip-up was all it took and their publishing firm had to deal with this devastating blow now. Their futures looked bleak and he knew that his position as editor-in-chief was over as well. The reason for all of these outcomes was just because of a mere compensation sum of 3.5 million? Thinking about it now, what damned value was that worth! It was only 3.5 million! This was an amount that no big publishing firms would bat an eyelid at. Yet it was precisely because of this amount that they were going to suffer tangible and intangible losses of possibly more than ten times of that amount!

Was it worth it?

Definitely not!

But at the point in time when Decree #43 was passed, who would have thought that Zhang Ye would be able to get through it without being affected? He even managed to make a comeback to the entertainment business like he had now! If they had known it was going to be like this, would they have asked him for the compensation fee? If they had given him assistance when he was down, not only would they not be affected by all these troubles, they would even have gained the copyright to Legend of Wukong and earned far more money from it. But look at them now! They ended their relationship with Zhang Ye too early and even hit him while he was down. All of that had led to the current situation that they were faced with!

Zhang Kui slammed his hands down on the table again, and said, "Try to minimize our losses!"

"What do you mean?" the female editor asked.

Zhang Kui said, "The copyright fees we paid out! Try to get as much back as possible!"

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At another location.

Tang Dazhang was just watching TV when his phone rang.

"Hello, Teacher Tang, I am Xiaoyan from Beijing Education Publishing Firm."

"Oh, hur hur, Xiaoyan, how are you? What are you looking for me for? Has the crosstalk compilation gone on sales already?"

"Not yet. Uh, there are some problems with your crosstalk compilation. The authorities have issued a notice of takedown, so...so we are contacting you now to talk about the copyright fees."

"Takedown?"

"Yes, we just received the notice."

"Your firm wants to recoup the copyright fees?"

"That's right, we..."

"It's your problem if you're unable to publish it. What has it got to do with me?"

"That's because it's down to problems with your works that led to it being taken down. You can't possibly expect our publishing firm to bear all the losses, can you?"

"You don't need to talk about this matter anymore, that's impossible."

"Teacher Tang, you're a leading artist from the crosstalk world, surely this..."

"I've already said it. This has nothing to do with me. I won't return the copyright fee that has been paid to me."

"There are terms on the contract that state that in such a situation, if you don't agree, we can take this to the courts and let our lawyers resolve this."

"Sure then! I'll wait!"

When the call ended, Tang Dazhang had a dark expression and felt disturbingly uncomfortable. Had he not checked the almanac recently? Why did he seem to have so much bad luck these days? When he had learned of Zhang Ye's lifted ban, it had left him in a rather bad mood. Then came another incident that left him highly irritated and annoyed! There was a chance of going to court? What the heck! Just who the hell have I offended recently!

At the same time.

Several other crosstalk actors who had sold their copyrights received similar calls from Beijing Education Publishing Firm to return their copyright fees.

One of Tang Dazhang's disciples said, "What? That's impossible"

An old crosstalk actor who had previously boycotted Zhang Ye said, "Don't even think about it!"

And then there was the author of A Widow's Spring who was also one of the doubters of Zhang Ye in the literary world. His work was also listed in the take down order from the SARFT. Having his work banned had already left him frustrated, but the publishing firm was now even asking for the return of the copyright payment? He definitely did not agree to do so!

A scolding battle occurred between the affected parties and Beijing Education Publishing Firm.

They tried all sorts of ways to force the repayments!

This incident between Beijing Education Publishing Firm and the affected copyright sellers had even made it to the news by the afternoon of the very same day! Some papers published the news report in an unnoticeable corner of their publications, stating that many of these disagreements were even going to end up being fought in court and would last quite a while before they could be settled.

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At home.

Zhang Ye also found out about the news. Seeing this bunch of people who had looked for trouble with him back then and even insulted him, he could only give a wave of his hands and then move on from it. He thought that nothing interesting would come out of this and just casually hummed a song while sitting in front of his computer, continuing to write Legend of Wukong's spin-off.

It seemed as though his scores with those people were finally settled and done with!

Chapter 542: New novel's contract!

Later in the afternoon.

He took a short nap.

The dust had already settled. With his ban lifted and the scores settled with his enemies, all the incidents that affected Zhang Ye had now come to a perfect happy ending for him. As such, the nap he took was exceptionally comfortable and sweet. From the time Decree #43 was passed, Zhang Ye had not stopped to rest for a single moment. He fought against everything with all he had, and was kept busy with scolding battles everyday. Luckily for him, at the disbelief of everyone, he fought his way against all odds and survived

Willpower.

Physical strength.

Mental strength.

Wisdom...alright, it doesn't seem like he had that.

This had been his biggest test since his debut and Zhang Ye had done what everyone else could not. Under this tremendous pressure and oppression, he gave the perfect answer to it all. At that moment, he felt really fulfilled as he took a big step towards his goal of international fame, as though as he "leveled up" through this experience.

Ji ya.

Dong. The sound of the door closing rang out.

Zhang Ye rubbed his eyes and turned over as he got woken by the sound. He looked at his watch and realized that it was already past 5 in the afternoon and almost dinner time. Feeling well rested by now, he stretched himself in satisfaction and finally got up.

There was a conversation coming from the outside.

"Little Li, come in quickly."

"Auntie, that's not necessary. I'd best be going back now."

"How could you? Quickly, come in and have a drink before you go."

"Then...obedience is better than politeness, thank you, Auntie."

Zhang Ye could hear his mother's voice and another voice of a younger woman that he did not know. It sounded like a neighbour, but her voice was also somewhat familiar.

His father went over and asked, "This is?"

Then, he heard his mother say, "This is Li Mei from Eastern Publishing Firm. I was just coming home from grocery shopping and making my way back when I nearly fell because of the heavy things I was

carrying. Luckily, Little Li caught me in time and helped me to carry them up. Later, I found out that Little Li was here because she wanted to look for our son to buy the copyright to his new novel. She checked our address and stood downstairs for almost an entire day, not daring to come upstairs. Hur hur, quickly go and get a drink for Little Li."

Li Mei said, "Auntie, don't trouble yourself. I am not thirsty."

"Drink some even if you're not. Take a seat. I will get Little Ye to come out in a while," his mother said.

Li Mei said, "Teacher Zhang is around as well?"

His mother laughed and said, "Yes, he's napping."

Li Mei?

Eastern Publishing Firm?

Oh, wasn't it the woman who he had spoken to over the phone a while ago? How did she know about this address? Looked like she really spared a lot of thought for this.

With the commotion, Zhang Ye opened his bedroom door, still in his pajamas and saw the person from the publishing firm. She looked about 22 or 23, younger than him, with average looks. She dressed very professionally in a solid colored suit. From the way she carried herself, she probably did not have much working experience.

"Hi," Zhang Ye greeted.

Li Mei turned her attention to him and immediately answered, "Aiyo, Teacher Zhang, how are you? Am I bothering you during your rest time?" Having seen Zhang Ye in person, she became very excited.

Zhang Ye laughed. "No, I just woke up. Thank you for helping my mom bring up the groceries. Here, take a seat."

Li Mei said, "It was just a simple task."

His father and mother also spoke very politely to her, asking her to take a seat and have a drink of water. The two elders were still very friendly and receiving of her despite her being here with a motive. Since Li Mei had helped them out, they would definitely return the thanks. This was also where Zhang Ye took after his parents, having been taught to do so since he was young.

They chatted idly.

Since the family of three did not bring up the issue of the novel, Li Mei also did not mention it. They just chatted about everything else.

But a while later, his mother stood up and said smilingly, "Take a seat first, Little Li. I will go prepare dinner."

Li Mei quickly stood up and said, "Let me help you with that."

"Eh, you don't need to." His mother waved her hands.

But Li Mei followed closely behind her into the kitchen. "I've been in Beijing for a few years now and have always made my own meals. Even though I can't possibly be a better cook than Auntie, I can still help out with washing and cutting the ingredients. Let me help, let me!"

"Look at this child." His mother laughed helplessly. "Don't dirty your hands. How can I ask you to help out with this? Just stay for dinner, alright?"

Li Mei affably said, "If you don't let me help out, I won't feel good if I stay for dinner."

After a long time of pushing and pulling, his mother finally said, "Fine, alright then. Just wash the vegetables and leave the rest to me."

"Yes, Auntie," Li Mei said happily. She was also very dexterous and quickly started helping out in the kitchen. Her movements were all very skilled as she looked like she had done such chores before.

Li Mei had come to this place with a task to complete today, but it shouldn't really be considered a task at all. In the afternoon, during a meeting at the publishing firm, news of Zhang Ye's ban being lifted had just come through. The novel Legend of Wukong, which more than half of the editors in this firm liked very much, was added to the agenda for the meeting. The few leaders of the firm thought that they would really like to be able to get the rights to publish this novel, as they felt that it was an extremely outstanding piece of work. Just based on Zhang Ye's name alone, it would be worthy for them to spend a large amount of money to buy it. Sales figures? Compensation? They did not even consider any of this as Zhang Ye's name itself meant good sales figures in this industry. They were one and the same.

But what did Eastern Publishing Firm have?

If they mentioned scale, they were not as large as the top publishers. As for money, they were not ranked at the top either. They were just a medium-scaled publishing firm. For other authors, they might be an attractive option. But for someone of Zhang Ye's stature, they were basically no one. They believed that if Zhang Ye released news of wanting to sell the the copyrights to Legend of Wukong, or if he wanted to cooperate with any publishers on releasing the novel, having been unbanned, many of the country's major publishers would be attracted like bees to flowers and approach him about it. Even if Zhang Ye did not make any intentions to do so, they were sure that many publishing firms had already approached him about it. Therefore, since they knew that they couldn't compete with the others, they did not hold much hope for it. After the meeting, they just delegated this task to an inexperienced staff member who had been there for only a year.

That staff member was Li Mei.

The leader did not pin any hopes on this task, but Li Mei did not feel that way. She was very serious about it and put her heart into trying to make it a success. The first thing she did was look for a university classmate who was currently working as a reporter. After trying hard to convince her classmate, agreeing to lots of treats, and promising to keep the matter a secret, she finally got hold of Zhang Ye's contact number and his parents' home address. But when she tried to contact him over the phone, she met with a direct refusal from Zhang Ye. However, Li Mei still did not give up. After pondering for a whole day, she finally arrived at this place, waiting downstairs without a clear objective. She felt it awkward and rude to she just make her way to their doorstep. But she got lucky. After she had waited for an hour or so, she saw Zhang Ye's mother downstairs. Because of the mathematical

conjecture's news, Zhang Ye's parents had appeared on the news before. Li Mei, who did her research well, naturally recognized her. That was how it all led to the current situation.

Li Mei thought that since her publishing firm could not offer the best amount of money, and were also not the largest scaled firm, then there was only one thing that they could compete on! They could only compete on terms of sincerity!

"Auntie, let me."

"Aiya, didn't I say that you only needed to wash the vegetables?"

"I cut them as well since it wasn't much trouble. It's fine, please don't stand on ceremony with me."

"This child."

"Auntie, why don't you rest for a bit. The floor is wet, so don't slip and fall."

"It's alright, I'll be careful."

"Auntie, if you are buying so many things again in the future, you can give me a call. I don't live too far away from here, so you can always let me know and I will help you. Don't carry such heavy things by yourself again."

"Where do you live at?"

"Xihongmen."

"Wow, that's already over at Daxing district. How is that not far?"

"It's not that far. I can get here by the subway very quickly. Just let me know whenever you need any help."

Li Mei tried to help out with everything in the kitchen and had a sweet mouth. Zhang Ye's mother took a liking to her. His mother and Li Mei naturally started speaking more. They did not stop as the two of them prepared dinner together.

Finally.

Dinner was ready.

Zhang Ye went to take the dishes from them, "Hand that to me."

Li Mei held onto the dishes and said, "Teacher Zhang, let me. It's hot, I can do it."

His mother beamed and said, "Those two dishes were prepared by Little Li. It looks like she has better culinary skills than me. She's really nice and has a good heart."

"Thanks, Editor Li. We've even troubled you for dinner." Zhang Ye felt a little embarrassed. "Quick, have a seat and let's eat. It must have been tiring."

Dinner began and all of them sat together, enjoying the dishes.

His mother tasted the dish and immediately praised Li Mei's culinary skill. Then, as Li Mei did not mention about the novel at all until now, his mother just went ahead and helped her by asking, "Son, who did you sell your novel's copyright to?"

Li Mei's eyes widened when she heard this.

Zhang Ye who was just putting some food into his mouth said, "I have not sold it yet."

His mother said, "Little Li's publishing firm wants to buy the copyright from you. You're selling it anyway, so talk to Little Li about it and see if the price is right." Then, she turned her head and said, "Little Li, how much is your firm offering?"

Li Mei quickly put down her chopsticks and stopped eating. She spoke in a direct manner, "Auntie, I won't beat around the bush with you. The highest offer that my firm is willing to extend for the exclusive copyright to the simplified Chinese edition of Legend of Wukong is 1.5 million. On top of that, we heard that Teacher Zhang's copyright to Ghost Blows Out the Light and Zhang Ye's Compilation has also been sold back to him. If possible, we would also like to buy them and republish Ghost Blows Out the Light. The sales should still do well since the first edition had not yet fully enveloped the market at the time of it being taken down."

His mother asked, "How much?"

Li Mei said, "1 million for Ghost Blows Out the Light. The compilation series should fetch about 300,000, but we will need to add Teacher Zhang's recent works to it as well. I heard that the copyrights to those fairy tales have been returned as well? Since the North Chinese Youth and Children's Publishing Firm can no longer publish them, if Teacher Zhang trusts us enough, we could also republish them. But as we do not have any experience in the youth and children's market, we can't give any guarantee that we can market it well. This is what I can tell you in all honesty."

His mother nodded and asked, "So the total would be?"

"Altogether, it would be 3 million," Li Mei said so very nervously as she started to notice Zhang Ye's expression.

Zhang Ye did not say a word and just continued eating.

His mother rolled her eyes and gave her son a kick under the table. "So? Is that fine for you?"

Zhang Ye said without much of a care, "That's fine."

Although Legend of Wukong was very famous in Zhang Ye's previous world, the sales figure for it was still unable to compete with Ghost Blows Out the Light. It could even be said to lack by a lot. Besides, the character count for Ghost Blows Out the Light was manyfold more than Legend of Wukong, so it was only fair that it fetched a higher price. Even if it had already been published once, it would still fetch a million easily. Considering the various factors, the offer of 1.5 million for Legend of Wukong was not low, as the novel was already freely available online. Publishing online had its pros and cons. The pros being publicity from early readers which could lead to better physical sales. The cons were that many readers had already finished reading the novel once. Those who thought it was just an average novel would not be enticed to buy the physical copy of it.

Three million?

It wasn't too bad.

When Li Mei heard Zhang Ye agreeing, she was totally stunned. Her hands were shaking from the excitement as she uttered, "Ah? You mean..."

"I will hand the copyrights of those works that you mentioned earlier to your publishing firm. Come back to me with a contract and I will sign it if the terms are OK," Zhang Ye said.

That's it?

Really??

Li Mei felt as though a meat pie had fallen from the sky straight into her lap at this moment. She was feeling a little dizzy and said, "Teacher Zhang, I...I want to thank you for trusting me. Thank you!" Then she turned to Zhang Ye's mother and said, "Auntie, thank you too!"

His mother said, "Quickly eat then."

Li Mei stood up and said, "I will go and prepare the contract right now!"

"This child, why are you so anxious?" His mother pulled her back. "Since Little Ye has already promised you, he will not go and sign a contract with anyone else. It won't matter if you prepare it sooner or later. So just sit down and finish dinner together with us. If not, I will tell my son to not sign the contract with your firm."

Li Mei could only suppress her anxious feelings for now, and said, "Alright, auntie. I will listen to you." Then, with an improved appetite, she ate the dishes with great delight!

His mother commented, "From your looks, I wouldn't have thought that you could eat that much, but you can."

When Li Mei heard this, her face turned red.

After dinner, Li Mei did not care about Zhang Ye's parents' objections and took the dishes into the kitchen. She washed them before leaving.

Outside.

It was almost dark.

Li Mei walked out of the district with quick steps and hailed a taxi. When she got in, she made a call to a team leader from the firm.

Du du, the call went through.

"Little Li, what's the matter?" asked a middle-aged man on the other side.

Li Mei clutched her fist tightly and said, "Team leader! It's done!"

The team leader was left scratching his head and asked, "What is done? What did you do?"

"The task you gave to me this afternoon." Li Mei's heart kept beating wildly as she could still not believe it herself. "I...I...I have completed the task!"

The team leader was extremely shocked. "You mean Zhang Ye's novel?"

Li Mei said, "Yes!"

"The copyright to Legend of Wukong?" he asked.

Li Mei added, "And Ghost Blows Out the Light as well as the others...I've secured them all! Teacher Zhang has agreed to fully let our publishing firm handle them all. We just need to prepare the contract for him to sign! Everything for 3 million!"

Pa! A loud sound of the thigh being vigorously slapped came from the other side of the call. "That's great! You're great too, Little Li! Well done! Really well done! I will call you back. I need to report this to the editor-in-chief! The contract will be prepared as soon as possible! Little Li, you've won great credit for our publishing firm this time! How on earth did you do it? Good! Good! Good!"

When they delegated this task to her in the first place, they did not expect any results from it. Otherwise, they would not have asked an inexperienced staff member to handle it knowing that Zhang Ye was such a good writer. With such great works, why did he chose them instead of some other big name publishers? It did not make any sense as they hadn't even expected to meet Zhang Ye in person!

But who could have known that Li Mei would succeed in just one afternoon!?

With these several copyrights to Zhang Ye's novels, not only would their firm be able to earn quite a tidy sum, they would also gain a step up in their reputations having signed a big name like him!

.....

At Eastern Publishing Firm.

"It's done!"

"What is done?"

"We have signed Zhang Ye!"

"Ah?"

"Are you serious?"

"F**k! Teacher Zhang is now an author of our publishing firm?"

"That can't be?! How did it happen? Who did it? Wasn't it too difficult a task? Even a god like Zhang Ye can be signed?!"

"It was Li Mei!"

"Little Li?"

"What? Isn't she a newbie?"

"Li Mei will definitely be promoted this time! Haha!"

The contract was prepared at double-time and sent to Zhang Ye's parents' house by Li Mei herself. This time, she did not come alone. Rather, there were three or four other people from the publishing firm. People from the legal department, the copyright editor, and the editor-in-chief himself were all present for this symbolic contract signing. Eastern Publishing Firm had given the highest order of treatment to Zhang Ye. When the parties both signed the contract, the editor-in-chief went out to make a call and less than a minute later, the payment was already in Zhang Ye's account. Talk about fast! It did not even seem like it took longer than batting an eyelid!

Zhang Ye was quite surprised at this as he had never received payment so quickly before. 3 million before taxes meant that he still had over 2 million. The taxes for copyright sales was less than income tax, so after the money was transferred to him, Zhang Ye had also resolved his shortage of money issues just in time.

The editor-in-chief and Li Mei spoke in private after that. He had not noticed that there was this new staff member in his publishing firm before and only knew about her after she won Zhang Ye's signature for the contract. They chatted for a while. He thought about what she said, that their firm could not offer anything feasible to attract new authors but they had something else that could. How would they compete with others? They could only do it with sincerity! And so, not only did they pay the copyright fee quickly, they even paid it in full. On top of that, other than the necessary terms of contract breaking, nothing else was included. Yes, they did not include any other terms to show their utmost sincerity to him, as they knew that Beijing Education Publishing Firm had previously caused a big headache for Zhang Ye.

The matter was wrapped up without a hitch!

.....

That night, the news of Zhang Ye signing with Eastern Publishing Firm spread throughout the industry quickly!

"Ah?"

"Eastern Publishing Firm? Who is that?"

"I've never heard of it?"

"I know, it's a mid-sized firm in Beijing. They don't seem like they are large scale at all."

"How could that be? Why did Zhang Ye sign with them?"

"I don't know, but a friend of mine said that the contract included Ghost Blows Out the Light, Zhang Ye's Compilation and even the copyrights to those fairy tales! All of it went to Eastern Publishing Firm! Hai, I'm so envious of them. They've really pulled in a big tree this time, and it's even a money tree! Our firm's boss was still intending for a few of us to form a team to start talks with Teacher Zhang Ye, but even before the team was formed, the show was already over!"

"Our firm was very confident that we would have gotten Zhang Ye to sign over his copyrights to us. It's really unfortunate we were robbed of the chance by Eastern Publishing Firm. They're really the underdogs that no one could have expected to win the race!"

"Who was it that won the contract?"

"I heard it's someone called Li Mei."

"Li Mei? I've never heard of that name?"

"Which great god is that? "

"It's a newbie."

"F**k, that can't be right?"

"All of these experienced editors lost to a newbie?"

"Li Mei?"

Slowly, Li Mei's name started spreading throughout the publishing industry!

In actual fact, only Li Mei herself knew that she did not have it too difficult this time in being able to sign Teacher Zhang Ye. Those who did not know him were biased against him due to news reports. Many subconsciously thought that Zhang Ye's temper was very bad and difficult to approach or communicate with. So they naturally thought that it was going to be an almost impossible task to convince him to sign the contract. But since Li Mei had managed to get in contact and speak to him personally, she knew that Teacher Zhang was not as scary as people claimed. Rather, he was a very friendly and easy person to speak with. He didn't put on the airs of a celebrity and he was even a very filial person.

Chapter 543: B-list!

The next day.

Morning.

At his maternal grandma's house.

When the door was opened, Zhang Ye and his parents were coming into the house. All of a sudden, everyone in the house looked over. Other than his grandpa and grandma, two of his three uncles were here, while two of his aunts were busy preparing meals in the kitchen. There were also three of his cousins who mobbed him as soon as he arrived.

The eldest sister said laughingly, "Brother!"

The second sister giggled and said, "Congratulations on getting unbanned!"

"I heard that your new novel will be published soon?" the third sister said as she pulled at his arms. She went on, "I want to reserve 50 autographed copies to give out to my classmates and teachers!"

His first uncle beckoned him. "Little Ye, come in quickly."

His second aunt said, "Little Ye, Tongtong will be taking her university admission exams soon. Why don't you tutor her in math? She's always been bad at it. If we knew you were so good at it, I wouldn't have invited a tutor for her, hur hur."

"Let the kid come into the house first," his maternal grandma uttered.

Zhang Ye didn't know whom he was supposed to talk to anymore. He could only manage a smile, and went around greeting the elders one by one, "Grandma, grandpa, first uncle, first aunt, second uncle..."

The whole family started chatting.

Today's gathering was suggested by Zhang Ye. He wanted to make up for the time when he wasn't able to join them during the lunar new year. He had really been too busy at that time. First, he went to the venue where the Spring Festival Gala was held, then spent the night at the police station. Following, he was assigned to the Internet Surveillance Bureau before finally getting banned. After that, he joined the crosstalk competition and many other events followed after it. From the beginning of the lunar new year until now, he did not idle around at all and was always busy fighting for his career. Since he did not get to sit down for a meal with his family for the new year, with everything settled and ending on a good note, Zhang Ye decided that he wanted to have a gathering with them. He wanted to treat everyone to a restaurant, but his grandparents refused. Perhaps they'd gotten used to not spending frivolously, or it could also be because their legs weren't as strong as before. So they decided that this meal gathering would happen at home. Other than third uncle who had to work today, everyone else was here.

"Little Ye, you're really doing well!" his first uncle exclaimed.

First aunt also jokingly said to Zhang Ye's mother, "Sis, your son has done you proud again this time."

His mother grinned from ear to ear and demurred, "Hai, it's not too bad, it's not too bad." As she said that, her face reflected a much better mood than her answer.

His grandma held his hand happily as she sat on the sofa, not letting go as she patted on it without stop. She turned her head to Zhang Ye's mother and his uncles. "When I raised you kids so many years ago, it really took a lot out of me. Some of you were so naughty and stole food from other houses or fought in school. I was always so worried and wondered how you'd all end up. But it seems like none of you turned out to be capable anyway. Only Little Ye, my grandson, is good!" Then with a pause, she added, "He has never let me worry about him before."

His second younger sister was almost speechless. "Heh? My brother does not let us worry? Just recently, he picked on so many people on Weibo and scolded them. I still thought that our brother here even wanted to offend all of the other celebrities!"

When they heard that, his uncles and aunties all laughed joyfully.

His grandma stared hard at Tongtong and said, "That's still less worrying than you are."

His grandpa also added, "Little Ye, you must have a few drinks with your grandpa today."

Zhang Ye laughed and said, "Sure, no problem."

His first uncle asked curiously, "Oh right, Little Ye is considered as an artist from which list now?"

His first aunt thought about it before saying, "I remember he was just promoted into the C-list, right?"

"That was ages ago." His third younger sister laughed. She obviously followed Zhang Ye's news very closely and knew about his celebrity ranking. "When I checked this morning, our brother was close to becoming a B-list star! Although he's still a C-lister for now, he's fourth from the top, so he's not that far off now!"

Zhang Ye said happily, "You know it that well? Even I did not pay attention to that."

His first uncle said in surprise, "Your fame grew so quickly?"

"Of course." His eldest young sister said to her father, "Just those three crosstalk performances and the mathematical conjecture incident was enough to push our brother from the bottom of the C-list to the top. That is one of the most difficult mathematical conjectures in the world. Do you think he wouldn't get famous from that?"

His third sister laughingly said, "Right. When we started school a few days ago, a few math teachers, after finding out that Zhang Ye was my brother, all called me over to see them. The head of department for mathematics even wanted to know about more about him and asked me to introduce them. They were really impressed by our brother. My math teacher even said, in class, that our brother really lifted the reputation of our country's mathematics world!"

His second aunt looked to the side. "Sis, even you and brother-in-law got on TV this time."

His mother said regretfully, "We had just woken up from our nap that day and were in our pajamas. I didn't even comb my hair. If only I knew that the reporters were coming. I would have dressed up a little more."

His father shook his head and said, "You're already so old. Does it matter if you dress up or not?"

His mother angrily said, "What did you say!?"

"I've watched the interview a few time. It's quite good. Sis, you looked great in it." His first aunt tried to mediate. "You were very photogenic."

C-List.

Fourth ranked.

Regarding his rise in ranking in the celebrity rankings, Zhang Ye hadn't expected it. It was really fell outside his expectations. Just a few days ago, he was still hovering at the bottom around the last or second-to-last spot. But after the events of the crosstalk competition, his rank rose to the middle of the C-list rankings. Following that, he solved the mathematical conjecture and that pushed him even further up the list. He got within a step away from the B-list rankings. This surge of popularity was really too fast, especially the popularity that he won after solving the mathematical conjecture. It was really too heaven defying!

From the bottom of the C-list to the middle?

From the middle all the way to the top?

Although these two increases in ranking might look the same, they were really different conceptually. The amount of fame needed was not in the same order of magnitude!

As this was the higher-ranked C-list rankings, the difference between each ranking increased as it went up. A simple example would be: If there were a total of a hundred people on the C-list, the integrated assessment score of the 100th ranked might be 1 point. The 50th ranked would be 200 points and the

10th ranked would be 1000 points. So rank number nine required 1100 points and that was the difference!

So the popularity brought by the crosstalk performances which had pushed Zhang Ye from the last few spots to the middle of the list rankings, even if it were to be replicated while he was ranked in the middle, would push him up a few spots at most, not all the way to fourth rank. And so, it could be seen just how much popularity the proving of the mathematical conjecture had brought to Zhang Ye. It was definitely many times more than the popularity gained during the crosstalk competition!

It was incredible!

To the people who were from the entertainment industry or those who paid attention to it, Zhang Ye's rise in popularity was truly incredible!

What did Zhang Ye possess that let him do this?

Was it looks? Well, he didn't have any!

Was it experience? He hasn't even debuted for a full year!

Works? None of them were mainstream!

How many of them had reached the A- or B-list of the celebrity rankings by hosting programs? Almost none! But you might find three or four of them if you really looked up their past works. Then how many celebrities had done it through their writings? Not a single one! As for directing, crosstalk acting, calligrapher, painter, literary works, lyricists, none of those that did such things could be seen in the top tier celebrity rankings! Why? Because they were all unconventional works! Due to the scope of the work, most viewers only paid attention to movie stars and singers. Those were jobs that would gain the most reputation. It was the easiest way to make your way into the top tiers of the celebrity rankings. It was evident if you scanned through the ranking list. Most of those at the top were either singers or actors, or both!

But what about Zhang Ye?

He wrote poems and literature? They were mainly used to scold people!

Talk show? No one knew that such a thing existed in the past!

He spoke about the Three Kingdoms and Dream of the Red Chamber? Many people have not even read the Four Great Classical Novels before!

A global mathematical conjecture? There were many people who couldn't even multiply two digit numbers, so you could say that it was a really dull and dry subject!

And those were the list of Zhang Ye's works and achievements.

Just looking at it, they were works that were more than unconventional, they were f**king one of a kind!

Yet somehow, a person with such average looks, whose works were all more unconventional than unconventional, had actually defied the heavens and almost reached the B-list celebrity rankings as a

rookie who had debuted for less than a year! Many people who were not interested in math, did not listen to crosstalk performances, were not good at literature, or even those who never knew what a talk show was, started paying attention to Zhang Ye and began to enjoy those things that they would never have listened or watched in the first place. It truly made everyone gasp with astonishment!

Since everyone enjoyed music, you can just sing well to let them enjoy it. This was not a difficult task.

If people did not enjoy poetry, did not like talk shows, or hated mathematics, yet you are able to attract them to start liking these things that they wouldn't have in the first place, that would be a most difficult task!

And Zhang Ye did it!

Zhang Ye's surge in popularity this time was known by thousands and thousands of people and industry insiders. Many of them had seen the rankings and were moved deeply by it!

A wondrous person doing wondrous things!

For Zhang Ye to have such great popularity and achievements today, it was truly deserving as something no one could pick a bone with it! Everyone had to be convinced!

Why?

Because what Zhang Ye had achieved, even if you were to look thoroughly through the entertainment circle, going forward or backward several decades, you would not find another person capable of it!

Chapter 544: The Most Popular Celebrity Awards!

Before noon.

At Zhang Ye's maternal grandma's house.

"Brother, where's my new year's money?" his third younger sister asked with her hands held out.

His eldest younger sister also swung her hair back elegantly and asked, "And mine?"

His second younger sister sat up on bed. "Me too! Me too!"

Zhang Ye rolled his eyes. "How long has it been since Lunar New Year? It's been more than half a month already and we can't even consider it a late new year, so what new year money are you talking about? No!"

The third younger sister pouted. "Why not? You haven't been home at all during the new year. So the new year's money was owed to us. You have to give it to us no matter what! Besides, didn't you just sell the copyright to your new novel? And aren't Ghost Blows Out the Light and the fairy tales going for a second reprint too? I heard from Big Aunt already that you've earned 2 or 3 million from this. So hurry up! I'm just waiting for your new year's money to save my life. There's so many things that I want to buy!"

Zhang Ye said, "Don't talk about money. Talking about it will only harm our relationship."

The second younger sister said, "It would harm our relationship more if we don't talk about money, Brother!"

The eldest younger sister blinked several times. "Brother."

The third younger sister tugged at his arm. "Brother..."

"Just give us a little, just a little will do!" the three sisters said peeved.

Zhang Ye couldn't do anything about them and finally took out his wallet unwillingly. New year's money? They might as well take his life! And so, he took out some money and said, "You all said just a little, so I will give you this much. 200 for each of you."

His third younger sister nearly fainted. "You're such a miser, brother. You're almost a B-list celebrity now. How can you possibly hand out only 200? It does not fit your status at all!"

His second younger sister, "....."

Finally, Zhang Ye could no longer bear with the begging of his three sisters, so he took out the remaining 5000 from his wallet and had nothing left. His three sisters excitedly took more than a thousand each and laughed happily. The eldest was still a little reserved as she did so, but his second and third younger sisters were already laughing crazily. Afraid that the adults in the house would suddenly come barging in, they quickly took the money and hid it on themselves. The second younger sister stuffed it into the pocket of her dress, while the third younger sister, who did not have pockets, took off her shoe and stuffed it under the insole.

If they let their parents see this, then this money was as good as gone. They were afraid of one of the greatest lies that parents say: "Let us save the new year's money for you."

Ring, ring, ring. His third younger sister's cellphone rang.

"Hello. What's up, Lingling?" she answered. "Ah? What awards?...Oh, oh, oh, I remember now. Of course I know about it....It's beginning today? What time? Understood....My brother? Of course he'll be taking part, he's just beside me right now, hehe....Yes....he'll definitely place well. Who do you think my brother is? He'd surely sweep away those bunch of people....I am boasting? I'm just telling the truth....Right, Lingling, you and the others must vote for my brother! Vote when the award polls begin, don't forget....Yes, ask your parents and your sister to vote as well...."

After hanging up.

His eldest younger sister asked, "What vote were you talking about?"

Zhang Ye couldn't understand either. "Awards?"

His third younger sister had an expression full of anticipation as she explained, "It's the Most Popular Celebrity Awards poll that's being held on Weibo. There's one every year and always happens after the Lunar New Year, around February or March!"

"Oh, that awards poll? I know it!" exclaimed his second younger sister when she remembered it. "They were promoting it on Weibo a while ago and many celebrities had already started pulling for votes."

Zhang Ye asked, "Why did I not know about this?"

His eldest younger sister said, "You were busy at that time, so you probably just missed it."

Zhang Ye was still unfamiliar with many things of this world, so he asked for some explanations, "What is the nature of the selection? Is it official? Is there an awards ceremony?"

His eldest younger sister explained, "It's not exactly official, just something organized by Weibo. They hold it annually and it should be in its 4th or 5th year this year. There are two awards One of them is Weibo's Most Popular Celebrity poll and the other is the Weibo's Most Unpopular Celebrity poll. As long as you're a celebrity, you stand a chance to be in the polls. Each Weibo account can only vote once for their favorite celebrity. It starts at noon and ends at midnight."

"There's even a most unpopular poll?" Zhang Ye was surprised.

His eldest younger sister nodded, "Yeah, there is."

Zhang Ye laughed and said, "Then wouldn't those who get into the top 3 for that poll cry?"

After listening to the explanation, Zhang Ye understood that in the entertainment business there were all sorts of polls that were held. This round of Most Popular Celebrity Awards would be considered as organized non-officially by a private corporation, unlike the authoritative awards like the Golden Rooster awards. The rankings wouldn't be considered too reflective of true popularity nor would it mean the celebrities' works were exceptionally good. For example, if there were some hot topic on the day of the polls, a random might end up ranking ahead of an A-list celebrity. Besides, Weibo users were definitely differentiated from those who observed the entertainment business on a daily basis. On top of all that, these polls would not hold an awards ceremony. On the surface, it would not affect the celebrities much even if they were to get ranked at the top since there weren't any awards given out.

But that was just from the view of a layman.

In fact, to those working in the entertainment industry, no matter what sort of poll or award it is, they're all equally important to them, as these are all additional qualifications and glory for them. They are a form of support and affirmation from the audience for them. If they won it, then they would be able to claim that they had such an achievement the next time anyone asked or even brought it up when they appeared on a program. "So-and-so is so-and-so's award top ten winner" was also a form of popularity. Moreover, with so many Weibo users, this award poll could even be considered as important! As such, many celebrities who had not yet climbed onto the A-list were already pulling for votes since several days ago. They all wanted to be able to claim being one of the best in this Weibo poll to show off their strengths and fan cohesiveness.

Competing on strengths?

Competing on the fans' cohesiveness?

Hur hur, if that was the case, then would Zhang Ye be afraid of other celebrities?

His third younger sister's eyes gleamed. "Brother, are you going for it this year?"

"Of course I am!" Zhang Ye exclaimed without hesitation. "Since you've already let me know about this, then of course I will be aiming for the top. After having been suppressed for so long, today will be the

day that your brother, I, will make a reappearance into this world! Using this Most Popular Celebrity Award poll, I will let everyone know that Hu Hansan has made his return!"

The eldest younger sister was taken aback by this, "Who is Hu Hansan?"

Only then did he remember that people of this world had not heard of this great name, so Zhang Ye vaguely said, "It's just a figure of speech, forget it, you wouldn't understand anyway."

His second younger sister positively added, "Then let's hurry up and use this time wisely to pull for votes. It's almost 11:50 AM now and there are only 10 more minutes before it begins!"

"Alright." Zhang Ye logged in to Weibo on his phone and browsed through the awards poll.

Although it was just a poll organized by Weibo, the scale and momentum of it was still very adequate. Weibo was promoting it via the main page and had positioned it in a very conspicuous location. The trending topics indicated that this awards poll had already been discussed more than 10 million times, but whether that was true or not would be another matter. On the list, a few thousand names of public figures was displayed. As the voting had not started yet, the numbers following each name showed 0. They were ordered according to alphabetical order and with Zhang Ye's name starting with Z, his name was also all the way at the back and not on the first page. But Zhang Ye was already satisfied with this as he knew that if his ban hadn't been lifted, he might not even have a chance to participate in this poll.

He browsed through the Weibo accounts of other celebrities.

Heh, there were quite a few people that he knew and friends who were trying to garner votes for themselves.

Yao Jiancai's Weibo was inactive, probably because he knew that he didn't stand a chance of getting voted into the top 100. But Zhang Ye's university classmate, Dong Shanshan, was very active.

Dong Shanshan's Weibo: "'Online Talents' will be ending soon! Did everyone feel satisfied with my hosting? If you are, then please vote for me. Little Shan thanks everyone for their support!"

Below, countless supporters left their messages.

"Ah, Goddess!"

"My sexy Goddess! I'll support you fully!"

"Go, go, go, Teacher Shanshan! We are supporting you!"

"'Online Talents' is great and you're too beautiful! Too sexy!"

"I'm salivating! I love you, Shanshan!"

Looking at the Weibo IDs of her supporters, he could see that Dong Shanshan's fans were generally males since her debut.

After Zhang Ye browsed through her Weibo, he found out that Dong Shanshan's program was also coming to an end soon. Back then, her "Online Talents" had started its run together with "Zhang Ye's Talk Show." But to avoid certain policies from the SARFT, "Zhang Ye's Talk Show" had to expedite its broadcast run to several per day and thus ended its run much sooner than her program.

Following that.

The Hallyu star, Lee Parkwoo: "Please give me your vote, thank you!"

A newly debuted actor: "It's time for this year's Weibo Celebrity Awards, need I say more? Let's go!"

The crosstalk actor, Tang Dazhang who was currently mired in a lawsuit: "Friends who support crosstalk and traditional arts, please let me see your support!"

Countless celebrities were trying their best to pull for votes.

But Zhang Yuanqi was missing from all of these. Clearly, her name was so famous that she did not even need to ask for votes and support. Or perhaps to her, this platform was not in her sights as she was no longer looking to conquer the domestic market but rather the international one. She was clearly on a different level.

Anyway, the slew of activities relating to the awards poll was very pompous and had attracted a lot of attention.

"Brother! You better hurry up!" his second younger sister nagged at him anxiously!

His eldest younger sister seemed like she was even more anxious than Zhang Ye. "Quickly ask for voting support! It's about to begin!"

Zhang Ye nodded and logged into his own Weibo account. After hesitating for a long time and considering his own status, he felt that if he wrote the same thing as others like "Please give me your support and votes", then it would be too disgraceful and wouldn't show his bearing as a literary person and artist!

Got it!

He'll use that!

He quickly typed in something on his cellphone and posted it onto Weibo.

Follow your own course,

And let people talk!

This quote* came from Zhang Ye's previous world's Italian writer, Dante, and his representative work Divine Comedy. If he remembered it right, it should be a verse in the part of the work called Purgatorio! It was a quote that anyone would know in his previous world! This sentence was also the best response for Zhang Ye, who had been banned for some time. It was also a follow up to his The Road Not Taken that he had recited on the live broadcast previously!

See me?

Or not?

There will I stay, to let the others talk!

Chapter 545: Voting begins!

On Weibo.

Many of those who liked Zhang Ye had come online to observe the happenings.

"Wow, Teacher Zhang has finally appeared!"

"Zhang Ye is aiming for the Most Popular Celebrity Awards as well?"

"Haha, there's something interesting to watch again this time. The first battle of Teacher Zhang Ye after his comeback!"

"He's posturing as though he's different from the others! This guy is too good at posturing! He's even using English! But...I like it! Hehehe!"

"Follow your own course, and let people talk? Well said! How philosophical! Only from Zhang Ye's mouth can such timeless quotes come out as though they were cabbages being sold in the market. He can just throw them out whenever he wants to and we can get as much of them as we want like it's on a one-for-one offer! If we have to narrow it, this has to be Zhang Ye's literary talents!"

"Teacher Zhang, we're cheering you on!"

"We're all supporting you and have voted for you!"

"Right, members of Zhang Ye's fan club, let's do it!"

"This catchphrase is really good, it seems like it's coming from the same direction as The Road Not Taken!"

"The voting is about to begin, let's not lose to the others. We will give our votes for the most popular celebrity to Teacher Zhang! To celebrate the return of Face-smacking Zhang, we have got to vote him up!"

"I'm here!"

"I'm here to support too!"

"Nothing to say except, I support Zhang Ye!"

"Teacher Zhang, you're finally back. We've waited for so long!"

Zhang Ye still had quite a large number of fans on Weibo, in comparison to the average C-list celebrity. The cohesiveness of his fans and their loyalty could even match up to some of the B- or A-list celebrity's fans. In other words, they were all hardcore fans who liked Zhang Ye very much. Even when he was not active before he updated his Weibo with that message, these fans could understand Zhang Ye and came rushing like the wind to support Zhang Ye.

But there were many netizens who also had differing opinions.

"This year's most popular celebrity rankings should still have those Japanese and Korean stars, right? There should be a few top spots that will be taken by them for sure. Zhang Ye has no chance."

"Although Zhang Ye's popularity is quite good, but compared to those top celebrities, it is nothing. There is still a large gap in the quality and volume of votes. If Zhang Ye wants to compete, the only thing he has

is the recent coverage he has been getting for the mathematical conjecture that he proved. With the help of that, I think he should be able to place in the top 100 without any problems, but top 50? That could prove a little difficult."

"That might not be necessary. Zhang Ye's a wonder in the entertainment business. He's different from those common celebrities. Even if he were to break into the top 50 spots, I wouldn't be too surprised."

"He's asking for votes a little too late."

"Yeah, so many of the other celebrities had already started asking for votes a few days ago."

"I'm not optimistic about Zhang Ye's chances too. If he can even get into the top 100 spots, I would say he has done well, because that person's style does not have anything in common with the world's 'most popular'!"

If he can get into the top 50 spots, it will be an extremely good result for him. As there were close to 10,000 celebrities' names up for voting, and even included writers, models, overseas celebrities, placing in the top 50 would mean that he was already a top act in the entertainment circle. At least from previous years, those who managed to place in the top 50 were either B-list or A-list celebrities. Even for the B-list celebrities, they did not number many since this poll also included overseas celebrities like the Japanese, Korean, European, and American actors or singers. Many of them would occupy the spots in the top 50, and as such, being placed among them already said a lot.

It was almost 12 PM.

Many Weibo users had already logged on and focused to give support to their idols with their one or two votes. Every account could vote for the most popular celebrity as well as the most unpopular celebrity.

The poll had attracted countless people to Weibo. Zhang Ye was not the most well-known celebrity here and was just one name among many others. He could not compare to those A-list celebrities who got most of the attention, but compared to many others, his Weibo post could still get some attention. Those who liked or disliked him had all seen it!

.....

At his grandma's house.

The 3 sisters were getting busy.

The eldest younger sister sent a message into a group chat with a link and asked, "Is everyone around? Classmates with Weibo, please give your vote to Zhang Ye. Thank you!"

"Hey, Sis Dan!"

"Dandan, I'm coming!"

"Classmate Cao has spoken, so we must support!"

"Alright, I'm casting my vote immediately!"

"Oh, my vote's already been reserved for Brother Yan. Sorry about that Dandan, maybe next time."

The eldest younger sister was quite good looking, good tempered, quiet, and got along very well with her classmates in university. Although no one knew that Zhang Ye was her cousin, many of them still gave her face. Only those who had their own idols that they wanted to vote for could not oblige, but the others were fine with whoever they voted for. Under Cao Dan's call, they went to the polling page to cast their votes for Zhang Ye.

When the second sister saw this, she also followed suit and sent a message to her high school's group chat: "Brothers and sisters! Weibo's Most Popular Celebrity Awards poll has begun! Please vote for Zhang Ye!"

Her classmates chattered at this.

"Who is Zhang Ye?"

"I don't know this person."

"How can you not know? He was the god who proved the global mathematical conjecture a few days ago. Tongtong, why are you pulling votes for Zhang Ye? Is he your idol?"

"There are so many handsome guys out there, why choose Zhang Ye?"

"Woah, Tongtong, you've got really unique tastes!"

The second sister whined, "Stop talking nonsense and vote!"

A female classmate said, "No, I've already given my vote to Steven, my Caucasian prince!"

Another female classmate said, "Me neither. I'm going to vote for Endo. I love that Japanese hunk! He's so handsome! I've always voted for him as the most popular celebrity every year!"

In the end, none of them gave any face to the second sister.

Cao Tong could only angrily stomp her feet. Unlike her sister, she did not have that much popularity among her classmates and it made her feel like giving up!

Meanwhile, the third sister, Cao Mengmeng was making some calls: "Hello, Dongzi. Don't ask me anything, just get on Weibo now and vote for my brother....What do you mean who is my brother! He's Zhang Ye!"

The room was full of noise and sounded like a big mess of chattering.

Zhang Ye felt a little embarrassed by all the goings-on, feeling as though his stature dropped. He couldn't help but say, "Come on you all, don't go around begging for votes. It's just a few votes, so what effect could it have on the poll? No matter what, your brother is a top C-list celebrity. If I just called out for votes, I would be getting lots of them within a short moment. With all of you going around begging for votes, it makes me seem like I'm not a popular person."

The three of them ignored him, acting like he wasn't there. They just continued looking for their friends to ask for votes.

Seeing his sisters trying so hard, Zhang Ye felt quite touched about it. He felt if he did not try hard himself as well, then he would have let down his sisters!

Canvassing for votes?

He should get to it himself too!

The quote earlier from the Divine Comedy suited the occasion but lacked some charm and impact.

Suddenly, Zhang Ye's doubters appeared on Weibo.

"He wants to compete for this award too?"

"He's overestimating himself!"

"This poll belongs to the A- and B-lists celebrities. What has it got to do with you?"

"Zhang Ye has really been unbanned? His name is included in the nominee list? What the heck is the SARFT doing? This sort of person should be banned for life! If you let him make a comeback, he will surely go around scolding people and cause a mess in the entertainment circle again! The previous time, when he went around scolding the other celebrities saying 'what lousy XX is this,' do you know how many people hated him to the bones because of that? Everyone hated him so badly that they wished they could just silence him!"

Most of the doubters were fans of Zhang Ye's adversaries.

When Zhang Ye saw this, his temper flared and he sent another Weibo post: "Please vote for me!" and added a quirky quote, "...Wear the shoes of others', so that others have no shoes to wear! Walk on others' paths, so that they have no paths to walk!"

When the people saw this post, many of them burst out laughing!

"Pfft!"

"Why does he even have to steal shoes!"

"Teacher Zhang, what are you trying to do!"

"Hahaha, what a great way to let the others have no paths to walk on!"

"Right, those of us from Zhang Ye's fan club must adopt such a stance of imposition! If God blocks us, we will kill God! If Buddha blocks us, we will kill Buddha! I want for the sky to not cover my eyes! I want for this land to not bury my heart! I want for all those countless celebrities to pack up and scram!"

"Get them!"

"Vote for Teacher Zhang!"

"This is the first battle since Teacher Zhang has returned! Let's fight it out with them! We need to get Teacher Zhang a good ranking!"

"Get ready for battle!"

"Haha, let the tempest come strike harder!"

Zhang Ye's hardcore fans were more than willing to battle it out for him. They'd bled and sweat together with Zhang Ye all the way up until now. There was no trouble they were afraid of. Instead, they craved

it. Whenever they saw a battle happening, their eyes would light up—this was a common characteristic of Zhang Ye's fan club. Wherever you looked, whether it be internationally or domestically, you could only find such a fan club right here!

When the other celebrities and their fans saw Zhang Ye's newly posted Weibo update, they were speechless. Especially those fans who had earlier battled countless of times with Zhang Ye, the representatives from...Lee Anson's fan club, Lee Parkwoo's fan club, Tang Dazhang's fan club, etc. They all could only think of one thing, if you have been unbanned and are trying to make a comeback here, do it quietly. Don't go around offending others when no looked to make trouble with you. What are you trying to do here, carpet bombing everyone and talking about walking on someone's path so that they couldn't walk on it? Whose shoes were you intending to wear so that they would have no shoes to wear?!!

Be careful of getting smelly shoes!

Many of them immediately started to counterattack him.

"Pfft!"

"We need to get rid of Zhang Ye!"

"Yeah, everyone, join our hands together and get him!"

"That person really makes my blood boil! His fan club is also asking for it!"

"Hur hur, it's not like everyone has only just gotten to know Zhang Ye. The sort of person he is, don't you all know it well already? He just has a special charm to him—a word from him and everyone will hate him! Look at this, he has just made his comeback recently and he's acting up again! A leopard doesn't change its spots!"

He was getting a mixed reception!

The disputes were renewed!

In everybody's eyes, Zhang Ye seemed to have the innate ability to create trouble. But only Zhang Ye himself knew that his words now didn't carry any other meaning. It was just to ask for votes with some impact behind them, and to hit at those who doubted him. So why were all these people reacting so strongly? It was as though he was intent on declaring war on all of the other celebrities? But he did not have that intention!

Really, this was all just for the sake of art, don't you all know?

Zhang Ye could only shake his head slightly. Wear the shoes of others', so that others has no shoes to wear, walk on others' path, so that they have no paths to walk, what did those words mean? It can't be that none of you can understand it, right? There was a deep meaning to this, a hidden meaning that was the ultimate answer to all of literature. It was not as simple as anyone thought it to be. When you look at it for the first time, that phrase might not seem like anything. But if you looked hard and thought about it, it would dawn upon anyone with a sense of upbringing in literature that...well, that it doesn't have any other meaning to it.

Chapter 546: The laurel of the Most Unpopular Celebrity Award!

At 12 o'clock sharp.

Weibo's Most Popular and Most Unpopular Celebrity Awards polling begins.

"It's beginning!"

"The polling system is up!"

"Haha, supporting Heavenly King Chen!"

"Supporting Sister Zhang!"

"This year still belongs to 'Fatty Wu' whose acting was incredibly godly! He fully deserves my vote!"

"Supporting Zhang Ye with one vote! Teacher Zhang has had a difficult year!"

"Damn, I despise your vote for Zhang Ye!"

"Same here, despising your vote for Zhang Ye. I can give my vote for the most popular celebrity to anyone but him. He is even trying to call for people to support him? How is he not embarrassed? Going around scolding and offending people with that character of his, as long as it doesn't have the world's 'most popular' in it, I will be willing to vote for him! Come to think of it, Zhang Ye has got such a thick skin. The Korean celebrities, literary world, crosstalk world, and so many others have all been offended by him before. Yet he dares to ask for supporters to vote for him? Go figure! How could any normal person be as thick skinned as him?!"

"I'm supporting Zhang Ye for his role in bringing glory to our country by proving the global mathematical conjecture!"

"Pfft, if Zhang Ye hadn't used 'On Horses' to scold our Chinese mathematics world, I would have voted for him for sure!"

"Willing to give a vote to anyone but Zhang Ye. During the Lunar New Year, that Brain Gold commercial kept playing so much that I vomited more than 10,000 times!"

"To add on, that wretch even tainted the crosstalk and skit competition."

Zhang Ye's current status in the entertainment circle was too eccentric. You wouldn't be able to find another celebrity as controversial as him in this business.

The contention for the rankings began furiously!

Every celebrity used novel ways to canvass for votes. In the blink of an eye, the top 100 names were already out. Of course, they were not consistently placed as the vote numbers kept changing. Because the rankings were refreshed every second in real time, there wasn't any delay with the rankings. They were seen clearly by everyone. The first page only showed the top 100, and even though the latter rankings could be checked as well by navigating to the next few pages, the netizens were mainly only concerned with the top 100.

On the rankings for the most popular celebrity.

Continuing from her previous post to call for supporters to vote for her, Dong Shanshan suddenly posted another Weibo update that had no text. It was but a picture. It was a selfie, apparently taken at home. Dong Shanshan did not have much makeup on, but her clothing was on the sexy looking side. In the picture, Dong Shanshan posed with both her hands under her chin and sending out flying kisses. From this, it was evident that she had placed great importance on the outcome of this award.

"Shanshan, we're here!"

"My Goddess!"

"Everyone, let's vote together!"

Within the first few minutes, with a Weibo post attached with a picture to canvass for votes, Dong Shanshan's votes kept rising steadily and her name was pushed into the top 100. At one point in time, it even hit 89th place and stayed there for a while before getting pushed out of the top 100 spots before finally settling at around 300th. As Dong Shanshan had only debuted a short while ago, she was still not at the height of popularity, even though her WebTV program had very good viewership, she was beautiful looking, and had a lot of diehard fans who treated her as a goddess. She was still just an E-list celebrity. Briefly ranking in the top 100 at the start was already an outstanding achievement.

Although Yao Jiancai had risen into the C-list celebrity rankings after the crosstalk competition, since he did not ask for voting support, and with no new works recently, he was placed outside of the top 500.

Similarly, Zhang Yuanqi did not ask for voting support, but being a heavenly queen, even if she did not explicitly state it, she would still have the support of her countless fans. From the minute the voting began, Zhang Yuanqi was already firmly placed in the top 10, hovering between 8th or 9th place.

Lee Anson was currently in 105th place—since the incident at the Spring Festival Gala, his popularity in China had been greatly affected. He didn't even get into the top 100.

Korean singer Lee Parkwoo was in 59th place.

Crosstalk actor Tang Dazhang was currently 233rd.

Songstress Grandma Zhang Xia was in 399th place currently.

Famed skit actress Ci Xiufang's placing was the 421st spot.

It could be seen that Weibo's most popular celebrity rankings varied from the official Celebrity Rankings by a lot. The latter relied more on comprehensively collated data, with specific objects affecting the overall ranking. It was thus the most authoritative ranking list around. It presented the celebrities' overall strengths through the rankings and was recognized by everyone. As for the popularity award poll by Weibo, it was just an unofficial ranking with aims on finding the current "most popular" celebrity. It had more motivation behind each vote, possibly from fan base cohesiveness, mass appeal, or recent news and activities. Of course, it also had a direct effect from whether a celebrity canvassed for votes on Weibo. Because of all these factors, there was such a large fluctuation in rankings making it a much more interesting selection. Otherwise, if the rankings mirrored the official Celebrity Ranking system, then what meaning was there to all of this?

As for Zhang Ye's ranking right now?

At his maternal grandma's house, his three sisters were yelling!

"Brother, I've already voted for you!"

"Seven of my classmates have also voted for you."

"What rank are you at now?"

Zhang Ye had also conveniently cast a vote for himself before scrolling through his phone with his sisters to check the rankings. Wow, it looked like his canvassing for votes had worked to great effect as there were already 70,000 votes for him! He was currently in 58th place.

His third sister clapped happily and said, "One spot above Lee Parkwoo?"

"It's still not enough," said his second sister. "Our brother has the strength to be within the top 50!"

Zhang Ye laughed and said, "I like what I hear."

His eldest sister said excitedly, "I will ask my classmates if they still have any votes!"

His third sister stood up and said, "My parents are Weibo users too! I will get them to vote!"

Actually, Zhang Ye knew that being placed 58th currently was already a very good result. As he was still only a C-list celebrity, though not far from the B-list, his popularity was still not there yet. There were many others who were more popular than him. Just the number of S-list and A-list celebrities, together with those foreign celebrities that were very popular in China, would already take up the top 50 spots. In fact, there were probably even more than that, so for a C-lister like Zhang Ye to get his current ranking was definitely down to his proving of a global mathematical conjecture. The momentum that he got from that incident had not died down yet. With the constant coverage on the newspapers, the people were still actively discussing about this matter. Just these past few days alone, the headlines on Weibo were still focused on him. Because of all these reasons, Zhang Ye managed to get a rather good ranking at the start of the voting.

Zhang Ye's fans were out in full force!

"Charge!"

"Teacher Zhang's already in 58th place!"

"Is that all we got?"

"Keep pushing it up! We can't let Teacher Zhang's first battle after his comeback end with a fizzle. We need to kick this up a notch! Only that will suit our usual style!"

"Well said! Let me get my friends to vote too!"

An hour passed.

56th place.....

50th place.....

49th place.....

Votes for Zhang Ye steadily increased as he edged forward in the rankings. However, it could be seen just how much effort it took for him to climb up the ranks. Those singers, actors, and foreign celebrities had fans that numbered more than 10,000. So being able to move up the rank by one spot took everything from his fans. Luckily, being able to get into the top 50 was already a form of achievement. Before the voting started, no one had expected him to be able to get such a rank!

On Weibo, many of those who disliked Zhang Ye could not bear to watch any further.

"Holy sh*t!"

"That Zhang Ye actually advanced into the top 50!"

"Why did so many people vote for him?"

"We can't let him get up there! We have to stop him!"

"Down with Zhang Ye!"

"Fellow victims of the Brain Gold commercial, let's do this!"

Countless people started taking action. For example, those who Zhang Ye offended before, the crosstalk world, the literary world, and so on, the fans of those who had ever been scolded by him and even those who were here just to have fun, all of them were trying to stop Zhang Ye's advance together! The action they took was to naturally vote for Zhang Ye in the "Most Unpopular Celebrity Award." Since the two awards were separate, it meant that, even if they voted for him in the unpopular poll, it wouldn't affect the popular poll. If everyone was not able to stop him from rising in the positive rankings, then they could only take it out on him on the negative rankings!

Zhang Ye was eating right now.

In the house, lunch was served. His three sisters were called by the elders to eat. The whole family sat in the living room, but as there were too many people, they were divided into two tables. The tables that drank and the one that didn't.

His grandma asked, "What were you kids doing just now?"

His third sister said cheekily, "Voting for brother on Weibo's Most Popular Celebrity Awards. He's already in the top 50 and the only C-list celebrity there. The others are all celebrities from either the A- or B-list." For Lee Anson, Lee Parkwoo and other foreign celebrities, the Chinese Celebrity Rankings did not include them. Even though Lee Anson was also a C-list celebrity, he was a C-list in Korea, so it was a different matter.

His mother said, "He's ranked that high?"

Zhang Ye who was drinking with his grandpa said, "Of course, your son, me, is no longer a common person. My fans number in the tens of thousands, so my appeal is for real."

His father raised his chin and said, "Alright, stop boasting."

"How am I boasting? It's the truth," Zhang Ye said, not liking what he heard.

First Aunt said, "Ahem, seems like a lot of people are scolding that Brain Gold commercial."

Zhang Ye waved his hands and replied cheerfully, "First Aunt, just because a lot of people are scolding me online doesn't mean I am unpopular. Actually, they're not really scolding me at all. In fact, they like me a lot. I think you can see that from the rankings, right? If everyone does not like me, why would they vote so many times for me? Would I be able to garner so much support just by saying a few words? Don't be fooled by some criticisms you just see online. They are all fake and come from my enemies' fans trolling me. If you don't believe it, just go online and asked around. I'm sure 99 in 100 like me and support me."

His eldest sister laughed without saying a word.

His second sister rolled her eyes, not bothering to explain either.

Only his grandma agreed, "Yes, no one can compare to our Little Ye."

"See? Grandma is the only smart one around here." Zhang Ye took some food and gave it to his grandma.

Suddenly, his third sister who had been looking at her phone all this time exclaimed, "Damn! What the hell is happening here?"

"What's the matter?" asked his first aunt.

His grandma stared at her. "You gave me a fright! What a loud girl."

Zhang Ye also looked at her with a smile and said, "My ranking went up again, right? What place am I at now?"

His third sister didn't know whether to laugh or cry. "Brother, take a look yourself. When you see it, you'll understand!"

"Heh, you're even trying to make this suspenseful?" Zhang Ye took out his phone from his pocket and browsed to the most popular celebrity rankings, "It's still at 49th. There are no changes?"

Zhang Ye's mother, second uncle and aunt also took out their phones to check Weibo.

His third sister sighed and said, "It's not the most popular celebrity rankings. You should be looking at the most unpopular celebrity rankings instead!"

Zhang Ye scoffed at this. "Why should I be looking at that? Your brother here is a famous national celebrity who is being called 'the celebrity with a conscience' by the people in the industry. How could I be on that list of ranking?" Saying so, he still proceeded to scroll through the list as he was curious who would be voted into the top 10 of this year's most unpopular celebrities.

Each year, at the Weibo celebrity rankings, people did not pay the most attention to the most popular celebrity rankings but were always more interested in the most unpopular celebrity rankings. Why? This was the kind of mentality that most people had when they sensed trouble for others. Whichever most popular celebrity, most sexy celebrity, most outstanding song, most talked about movie, etc, there were too many of such kinds of rankings around. Whether it were domestic or international rankings, they were usually focused on the positives and it had become the norm for ranking selections. However, a most unpopular ranking selection was almost unheard of anywhere. A green leaf would stand out if it were placed in the middle of a thousand flowers, like a national treasure. These sort of reverse trending

rankings were rarer than rare. And so, because of these reasons, everyone adopted a joking mentality when they approached such ranking selections and always paid the most attention to the most unpopular celebrity award, curious to know who would be the unlucky one to walk away with the "honors"!

Last year, the top 3 most unpopular celebrities were a close fight and had a very tight finish. It was settled between 3 directors and deputy directors involved in the scandals of unspoken rules within the film industry.

The year before, the fight for this ranking selection was between 3 people involved in the production of a repugnant viral song, namely the lyricist, singer, and music composer. It was as though the people had come to a common understanding when it came to voting for them. Their positions were only decided at the very last minute of voting as the voters finally agreed that the lyrics to that viral song was the worst of it and therefore voted the lyricist into first place.

As for this year, there were some discussions earlier about who should be the most unpopular celebrity. The most discussed celebrities slated to be in the top ranks of this award were those who had taken part in the filming of *River*, a movie with big investments and a highly acclaimed director and top actors. But when it premiered, it was so disappointing that everyone could only curse at it from beginning to end. They all felt that this film was basically rubbish and shouldn't be watched, so naturally, the film's director, screenwriter, and main lead became the top contenders for the award. They were also slated to do a clean sweep of the top 3 ranks—Well, that was what everyone thought anyway.

But what happened in reality?

What happened made everyone overjoyed!

When Zhang Ye tapped on the most unpopular celebrity ranking, he nearly vomited blood. He saw his name in bright crimson at the top!

—Zhang Ye!

Votes: 1.91 million!

Mom: "..."

Maternal grandma: "....."

Maternal grandpa: "....."

Second uncle: "....."

His eldest younger sister: "....."

Zhang Ye nearly blew his top, "Why is it my name?!"

His second younger sister coughed and added in an almost speechless manner, "And you're even running away with the lead!"

Following in second place for most unpopular celebrity was the male lead of *River*. Though he was second, his votes only numbered 87,000. Compared to Zhang Ye, the gap was so large that it differed by

two orders of magnitude! Not only was Zhang Ye firmly in the lead, he was clearly in the lead by an overwhelming amount of votes!

It has only been slightly more than an hour?

Almost 2 million votes for the number one most unpopular celebrity?

Zhang Ye nearly threw up his gall bladder as he stood up and hit on the table in anger. "There's definitely vote fixing involved! Those bunch of people are buying fixed votes against me!"

His second younger sister cleared her throat and said, "What are you talking about, brother? This doesn't look like vote fixing at all. This ranking selection has always been fair every year. There have never been any cases of vote fixing before."

Zhang Ye stared at her. "Those were in the previous years, but there's surely vote fixing involved this year!"

His second younger sister, "....."

Zhang Ye scolded, "Those people are really too wicked, they are wicked beyond all compare! A celebrity with a good conscience like me has somehow ended up being voted as the most unpopular?"

His eldest younger sister was wiping away her sweat as she continued checking her phone. "This...The votes are still increasing."

2 million!

2.5 million!

2.7 million!

The voting only began slightly more than an hour ago and the votes for the most unpopular celebrity had actually hit 3 million already? This had totally broken the record for the most number of votes cast for the most unpopular celebrity ranking selection! And with each second passed, the record was broken again!

There were too many votes!

As if countless people were stepping on Zhang Ye!

.....

On Weibo, other users also noticed this anomaly in votes!

Many of those who had something against Zhang Ye were laughing out loud!

"Ahahahaha!"

"How awesome! Great one, brothers and sisters!"

"Everyone's well supporting! This year's Most Unpopular Celebrity Award will definitely belong to Zhang Ye!"

"Hehe, that title was tailor-made for him!"

"Pfft, and we still thought that it would go to one of the people from River? Looks like Teacher Zhang has outdone himself again. A rubbish movie like that can actually be overtaken by Zhang Ye. Look at the votes! This is truly unbelievable! Teacher Zhang has a few million votes in first place while second place is only at slightly less than 100,000! What pleasure to witness such an outcome! Looks like Zhang Ye getting the Most Unpopular Celebrity Award this year is welcomed by everyone!"

"You're all terrible people, haha!"

"Actually, I'm also Teacher Zhang Ye's fan, but I've also given him a vote for the Most Unpopular Celebrity Award. Hehehe, there's nothing to worry about if I'm just here to enjoy myself!"

"Friend above me, you have left me speechless!"

"Aiyo, I'm dying from laughter! This voting selection is really too funny!"

"Yea, I'm dying from laughter too. If only they held ranking selections for the most unpopular artist every year! How fun would that be?! It would be awesome!"

"Teacher Zhang deserves the title!"

"Compared to Zhang Ye's wickedness, River has been thrown more than ten streets away!"

"Hahaha, can you all not be like this? Teacher Zhang is really pitiful. If we anger him again, he will surely cause some big ruckus again!"

"That's good! We're just waiting for him to come up with something big!"

"Right, right! Actually, it's not that I dislike Zhang Ye. I only gave him this unpopular vote because I wanted to see him stir up some trouble! How fun would that be! Ha, would everyone give your unpopular votes to Teacher Zhang? Since he has such thick skin, I don't think he will be embarrassed by this. Today is Zhang Ye's day of return to the entertainment business. I believe this award will put him at the forefront of everyone's discussions. So what if it is the most unpopular award? It's still first place anyway, right? It's all the same! He's already in first place anyway!"

"Then let me add some fuel for his ascent! Vote cast!"

"I think all of you are more wicked than Teacher Zhang Ye....Vote cast!"

"You're all terrible people....Vote cast!"

"Oh, Teacher Zhang Ye is so pitiful....Vote cast! Don't thank me, just call me a Red Scarf!"

"Pity him yet you still voted for him? Pu!"

3 million!

4 million!

Zhang Ye was leading the way in the Most Unpopular Celebrity Award...by miles!

Finally, even fans of Zhang Ye could no longer do anything about it. By the looks of it, they also decided to cast their unpopular votes for Zhang Ye.

"Vote!"

"Oh, it won't make a difference anyway."

"He definitely won't be able to get past the top 40 on the most popular celebrity rankings. At most he'll settle somewhere between the 41st and 50th spots. I guess if it has to be the most unpopular celebrity rankings, so be it. At least it's still 1st place. Let's help Teacher Zhang break the record! In the past, this ranking's No.1 spot would usually get around 1 million votes, so even if it has to be this unpopular celebrity ranking, we mustn't lose out to the others. We'll break the record and break it by more than 10 times! Only then can we show our reputation as Zhang Ye's fan club! We reject being average!"

"Well said! Since we can't be the best, then we'll be the worst!"

"...I give up!"

"F**k, everyone is so open minded!"

"Could Teacher Zhang be crying because of this?"

Zhang Ye, who was currently having his lunch at his grandma's house, was indeed about to cry. He could not have expected that his cheerful canvassing of votes could have led to this situation. He only did alright in the most popular ranking but took a big lead in the most unpopular ranking! Even his own fans were happily voting for him in the negative ranking awards!

These are my fans?

You guys must be spies!

Not only that, there were also people who laughed at his misfortune and teased him.

Yao Jiancai had come out of his slumber and sent a message to him on Weibo: "@ZhangYe , congratulations, old bro, on securing your victory so early."

Zhang Ye replied: "....."

His old classmate, Dong Shanshan, sent a "congratulatory" message over: "@ZhangYe ,you'll be first for sure, when should I be expecting a meal from you?"

Zhang Ye once again replied: "....."

His fellow colleague from Peking University, Teacher Su Na: "Teacher Zhang deserves the 1st place for this without a doubt."

Teasing!

It was all teasing!

Zhang Ye might as well just ignore them. This bunch of friends was really good at stepping on him when he was down. What do they mean by "I truly deserve to win"? Am I that unpopular!?

On the most popular celebrity rankings, it was still difficult to say who would win it as the number of votes for top 10 places were too close to call and still very suspenseful. However, on the most unpopular celebrity rankings, there was no suspense at all. The first place was Zhang Ye's for sure! Even if the

second place got rigged votes, even if the celebrity used money to bribe the official organizers, he wouldn't be able to catch up to Zhang Ye!

That's how big a lead we're talking about!

It was just so certain!

Afternoon turned into night.

At midnight, the voting system stopped and the tabulated data showed that Zhang Ye received 1.957 million votes and placed 49th on the Most Popular Celebrity Awards poll with outstanding results. Then, with a total count of 21.7035 million votes received, Zhang Ye again placed as overall "winner" of Weibo's Most Unpopular Celebrity Awards poll!

The official numbers were put to the record.

It had been recorded into the annals of Weibo's history books!

When the results of the poll were declared, everyone was once again heatedly discussing the outcome!

"Hahaha, Teacher Zhang had fought and won such a great glory for our country, but you guys actually voted him to the top of the most unpopular celebrity rankings? Is what you've done considered good!?"

"Friend above, if you didn't include the 'hahaha' in front of your post, I would have believed that you were really trying to help Teacher Zhang seek justice."

"So what if it's a loss of face? It's not like this is Zhang Ye's first time being treated as a joke to so many people. He should already be used to this. Look at the Weibo of Teacher Zhang Ye's friends and colleagues. Aren't they all also teasing him? The most unpopular...is still a form of honor. It's not something that anyone can get even if they want it!"

"Teacher Zhang did not take part in last year's awards polling, right?"

"No, Zhang Ye only debuted in the middle of last year, so this is his first year taking part in it."

"Only his first appearance and he has already won the Most Unpopular Celebrity title? I have a feeling that Zhang Ye will be a big contender for this award again next year! Haha!"

"With Zhang Ye's bad temper, that award will probably be his for the next 3 years!"

"Only for the next three years? My guess is that, as long as Zhang Ye is still in the entertainment business, that award will automatically be his from now on! No one will be able to take it from him!"

The more they discussed, the funnier it became!

So it could be said that a person like Zhang Ye...has really poor popularity among the people!

Chapter 547: Upgrade unlocked for the game ring's system!

Late at night.

At Zhang Ye's parents' place.

It was already the deep of night. In the district, almost everyone had turned in. Only the sounds of two cats mewling in the garden downstairs could be heard. The breeding season of cats was beginning again and it was becoming slightly noisier than before.

"Meow!"

"Ouh..."

Zhang Ye, still in bed under his blanket, was browsing Weibo with a depressed mood. Having just won the award and title of Most Unpopular Celebrity, he could only swear and grumble at his luck. He felt that those Weibo netizens were really too wicked. Even if this bro could not get the Most Popular Celebrity Award, surely he did not deserve the title of Most Unpopular Celebrity? Weren't you guys just teaming up against me!?

Heh, forget it.

As long as everyone enjoyed the process.

So be it. If it's the most unpopular award, at least he was still crowned champion, right? If there were any others who wanted the title, they would not be able to get it. It was still somewhat a reflection of being popular. Like those small-time celebrities who really attracted a lot of hate, like those who behaved like they were divas, like those who had terrible acting skills, like those whose singing would go out of tune—even if they wanted to win the title of Most Unpopular Celebrity, they were still not qualified enough to do so, not to mention winning it with a record of more than 20 million votes. This record had broken the previous one by more than 10 times. Zhang Ye fully deserved being the most "Most Unpopular Celebrity" of all time. With all the votes added up from the previous rankings for this award, it would still not be able to surpass his vote total!

Though it might be called the Most Unpopular Celebrity Award, in actuality, if it were truly an award of unpopularity, the people would not remember your name in the first place or even know who you were. So how could they vote for you? They wouldn't even be bothered by you. This award was pretty much similar to the Golden Raspberry Awards (Razzies) in his previous world. So the reason for Zhang Ye being selected for this award was not a true reflection of him being unpopular. It was done more so for entertainment's sake, to make the event more lively. Furthermore, even if it was a title of being the most unpopular, it would still give Zhang Ye some additional fame and reputation points. Compared to being average in the polls, he still gained some positives out of this. He could only make the best out of the situation and think positively this way.

Oh, right.

Speaking of reputation points, he suddenly remembered.

Zhang Ye looked at the game ring on his pinky and remembered that he had not checked it for some time now. If he recalled correctly, the last time he used the game ring was back at Summer Palace during the International Math Olympiad to search through his memory for the topic on Fermat's Theorem, also known as this world's Dale's Conjecture. After he bought a memory search capsule and used it to prove the mathematical conjecture, he had not checked his total reputation points again. The memory search capsules he had used to write Legend of Wukong were eaten earlier, before he went on

to prove the mathematical conjecture. As the pace of events was too messy, he had forgotten all about it.

But this was his greatest asset.

Zhang Ye's focus immediately shifted from the Weibo polling awards back to the game ring's reputation points. He estimated that he would have gathered a large amount of reputation points this time. He was excited by the prospects of this since he hadn't played the lottery draw in a long time now. After having had his ban lifted and being able to start work again, he knew that he needed to gain some items to help him in his future endeavors. With a spot on the B-list Celebrity Rankings so close, Zhang Ye was full of energy and confidence!

Activating the game ring.

He brought up the virtual screen.

The display looked as the same as always, with the menu listings:

[Items]

[Merchant Shop]

[Lottery]

After them, [Reputation Points]: 224,570,003.

Since it was possible that people from all over the country were noticing Zhang Ye's new or old works, his reputation points were increasing constantly. For example, the recent Legend of Wukong, the Weibo Celebrity Rankings, or the essay "On Horses" and poem The Road Not Taken from the past few days, and so on.

+3!

+2!

+11!

+8!

+6!

It continually added the relevant amount of reputation points in real time.

During the times when he had no new works, this counter would increase less often with a lower rate.

Zhang Ye was not too shocked by the 200 million reputation points he had gained. By now, he had already been expecting it. However when he saw it, he still felt a sense of surprise. He knew that some of these reputation points came from the novel Legend of Wukong and some other written works, but they probably did not form the main bulk of it. The majority of the 200 million reputation points should be due to him causing a sensation when he proved Dale's Conjecture. Although math had never been something that most people paid attention to, or rather, it was something that people did not bother about. But with Zhang Ye proving one of the top ten most difficult math problems that had eluded even

the world's brightest mathematicians, even those who didn't know what a mathematical conjecture was or had never heard of Dale's Conjecture would understand just how unbelievable this achievement was. With that kind of admiration, shock, and praise, all of that had naturally propped up Zhang Ye's popularity. It, in turn, became reputation points for him through the game system.

200 millions worth of reputation points!

This was the largest amount of points that Zhang Ye had gained ever since he had the game ring. Compared to what he had earned in the past, this was on a whole different level!

It was too much!

So much that he did not know how he should spend it!

Zhang Ye was smiling very happily. Just as he was about to bring up the next screen, and his fingers touched the virtual screen, the command did not go through but up came a notification message.

[System update detected.]

A system update?

The system could even be updated?

Zhang Ye was a little stunned and could not react.

The message automatically closed before a detailed description appeared.

[Update instructions]: Upgrade conditions have been met. The upgraded system will require 200 million reputation points. After the upgrade has been completed, there will be improved lottery functions and special category item rewards.

[Confirm] / [Cancel]

Finally it gave two options to choose from.

Zhang Ye could not process all of this right now. An update of the system? Because he had gained 200 million in reputation points, he had reached a milestone that had unlocked the upgrade notification? Was it because he had not brought up the game ring's virtual screen before this, therefore only receiving the notification now? And this upgrade came at a price of 200 million reputation points? Damn it, this bro had gone through so much before amassing such a large number of reputation points. And now, almost all of it would be required if he wanted to upgrade the system? What a scam! Do you even know how much can be done with 200 million reputation points? How many lottery draws that can be bought with that? With this upgrade, he would be back at the state before his liberation again after just one night? What kind of improved lottery functions after the upgrade are we talking about? Doesn't he have the lottery draw function already? Oh right, he suddenly remembered that in the past the lottery draw usually gave him a treasure chest that was usually labeled as "(Small)". That would mean that there were still treasure chests other than that? What about the special category reward? What kind of reward was it?

There wasn't enough information to enable his decision!

There was totally no way to judge or decide what he would do next!

Zhang Ye felt hesitant. He clenched his teeth, and then, finally clicked on [Cancel]. He really could not bear with the amount of reputation points required. After he canceled the update, the message minimized to the bottom right corner of the virtual game screen and turned into an exclamation icon. Zhang Ye tried to click on it and the message reappeared. Then he clicked on [Cancel] and it minimized back to its place again.

He needed some time to consider it.

He wanted to give it some thought first. So he decided that he would go ahead for 2 turns at the lottery draw before he made any decision. With so many reputation points, he wanted to spend some of it first, like a tycoon would.

He began his lottery draw.

His mind kept sweeping through the thought of his reputation points as he clicked on the lottery draw screen. He bought a chance for the spin at 100,000 reputation points, then clicked on the additional stakes and added 19 to it, spending a total of 2 million reputation points.

The wheel started spinning!

The needle quickly passed through the different areas of rewards!

After about ten seconds, it slowed down, nearly to a stop!

Consumption Category...

Stats Category...

Finally, it went back to the Consumption Category and stopped there!

Zhang Ye was just trying his luck in the first round and did not care too much about what items he got. He just wanted something good. He was looking forward to it quite a lot as he brought up his inventory to retrieve the 20 Treasure Chests (Small) and open them. With a flash of brightness, the treasure chests opened to reveal a green liquid, containing a test tube and a seal with a wooden cork. The inside glowed with a mysterious aura.

[Strength Potion (Small)] x 20: Effective immediately after consumption. Increases physical strength.

Since strength was something that could recover or lost, this potion did not have any time constraints but was instead considered a one-time usage consumption item.

20 bottles?

It felt like just a so-so item.

Zhang Ye lightly shook his head, not fully satisfied with what he received. But he wasn't too disappointed either. After thinking about it a little, he decided to go for another draw, but this time with a little twist. Naturally, he opened up the merchant shop to use his trump card.

[Lucky Halo].

Activate!

A dazzling white ring of light appeared over his head suddenly, emitting a mysterious and radiant glow.

Reputation points -10,000!

Reputation points -10,000!

Every second used up 10,000 reputation points. It was a very extravagant item!

It was good that Zhang Ye was "rich" at the moment. As such he wasn't too bothered by it. He immediately went back to the lottery draw screen and bought a chance at the draw, similarly adding 19 additional stakes like the first time!

The lottery draw began!

The needle spun!

1 revolution...5 revolutions...10 revolutions...

Because of the Lucky Halo's effect, Zhang Ye had some expectations for this round of the lottery draw. He was hoping to get something from the Special Category, something that he could purchase from the Merchant Shop. No matter how good an item was, it was much harder to get again after the first time. If it was limited by that, then of course it couldn't compare to those that he could easily get from the Merchant Shop. Those were the items that he would never mind having an unlimited supply of!

Special Category!

Special Category!

He kept wishing for it, hoping that the Lucky Halo would make his wish come true!

The needle was almost coming to a stop as it got closer and closer to the smallest area of the Special Category!

But when it had just moved into the Special Category area, the needle seemingly gained that last bit of strength! It moved a little more and ended up in the Stats Category area!

20 Treasure Chests (Small) appeared.

[Fruit of Agility] x 20: Takes effect after consumption, increase agility of user.

Zhang Ye immediately switched off the usage of the Lucky Halo and sighed. This time, it didn't seem like the Lucky Halo helped him much. At the key moment, it couldn't fulfill its purpose. Thinking about it, and according to his past experiences, the Lucky Bread should be a similar item to the Lucky Halo, except that it was a consumable item while the latter could be used as long as Zhang Ye had reputation points. There was a fluctuation in the effectiveness of the luck of both items as there was a limit to how much good luck it could give to its user. For example, when he used it alongside the Difficulty Adjustment Die, if the Lucky Halo had given him maximum luck, he would probably have rolled a ten times reduced difficulty effect rather than just five times reduced difficulty. So from this round of lottery draw, the limits of the Lucky Halo could be seen and it couldn't possibly always be so effective and fulfill its promise with every use.

And so, the unsatisfactory outcome of the lottery draws this time might be down to this factor. There were only those few factors which could affect it. From the looks of the system update message, it seemed like there was also an upgraded version of the lottery draw system. Did this mean that he had no choice but to spend 200 million to receive the delivery of the system update?

To receive the update or not?

Should he do it or not?

Zhang Ye was now faced with a conundrum that all women faced when they discovered that they were pregnant!

Chapter 548: New Lottery Draw!

He decided to eat the fruits before he would decide on whether to upgrade the system.

He swallowed each Fruit of Agility one by one into his stomach.

These Stats Category fruits were very delicious and did not take up any space in the stomach, so there was no feeling of fullness. After it's put into the mouth, it changes into a heat flux that spreads through the body. Zhang Ye took just two minutes to eat all twenty Fruits of Agility, and then casually lifted his elbow and moved it about a few times. He threw a few punches at the air, and could actually feel quite an effect. He felt that his movements had sped up from before, not because of his muscular strength increasing, but because he had an increased flexibility and reaction rate. After his brain had given its signals, his body reacted much more nimbly. Having eaten so many Fruits of Agility, he felt his body getting lighter. It was a very pleasant feeling.

Unfortunately, it did not seem like there was much use for this.

First, it did not seem like it would help his career since his job didn't require him to be agile. Second, it was only a little important to his self-defense since his main martial arts style was Tai Chi, which wasn't dependent on agility. It instead used a style that was relatively "slower" and did not require him to be too quick.

If he had to insist that these agile fruits could help him in something, it would be the time when he offends others and gets surrounded and attacked by thousands of people. Then he could depend on this item to help him escape.

Well, at least it can be used for emergencies.

After he was done, Zhang Ye didn't carry on with the lottery draw. Instead, he lit a cigarette and pondered for five minutes. With a final affirmation of his eyes, he decided to update the system, mainly due to his curiosity. As the system update was there, if he didn't update it, something would always feel wrong and he'd keep thinking about it. Besides, Zhang Ye was getting more and more popular now, his ranking in the entertainment circle becoming higher. The few items in the merchant shop and the existing lottery draw system were no longer able to satisfy him.

Like before, when the Lucky Bread (Small) helped him create the accidents and opportunities that led to him winning the Silver Microphone Awards. The Lucky Halo also helped to get Zhang Ye's "Woman Flower" playing at Lee Anson's concert and disgust him. It even helped him roll a five times reduced

difficulty effect when he used the Difficulty Adjustment Die. Based on these previous experiences, these items had all helped him a lot and were very effective. But right now, and even in the future, this bit of luck might no longer be enough to help Zhang Ye as much any further. Furthermore, the Lucky Halo was not always effective or useful when he needed something to go his way. This did not mean the Lucky Halo or Lucky Bread (Small) were getting lousy. Rather, because Zhang Ye was moving to a higher level now, the situation required a different magnitude of effectiveness.

Like how the "Invisibility Potion" did not work on clothes.

Like how the "Red String of Fate" broke when a slight situation occurred.

Or even the "Unlucky Sticker" that was only effective for five minutes and other Consumption Category items that were similarly limited to a short effective time.

These items all had many restrictions in their functionality. However, since Zhang Ye's demand levels before were low and he had limited situations in which he could use them, they still weren't too bad when used. However, like today's lottery draw, it seemed like they had become a lot less effective.

It was time to upgrade!

200 million? Fine, 200 million it shall be!

Zhang Ye's heart felt like it was already bleeding. He clicked on the exclamation icon at the lower right corner of the game interface and a system upgrade message popped up!

[Confirm] / [Cancel]

This will hurt!

He could feel the pain of losing all those reputation points at once!

He clenched his fist and firmly pressed down on "confirm"!

[Starting System Upgrade.]

[200 Million Reputation Points will be consumed.]

[Upgrading, Please wait.]

[Upgrading Process: 1%... 12%... 17%...]

After approximately half an hour, the system upgrade process finally moved slowly towards 100%. The game interface closed with a swish before reopening almost immediately. But this newly reopened interface did not look the same as before. The option selection items had changed slightly and another new option selection was now added to it.

[Reputation Points]: 20,048,211.

[Inventory]

[Merchant Shop]

[Lottery Draw (One)]

[Lottery Draw (Two)]

Zhang Ye clicked to go into Lottery Draw (One). In it, he could see that this was the same "Lottery Draw" interface as before and only was only labeled with an extra "(One)" in its name. To get a chance at the draw, it still required 100,000 reputation points to activate. So it seemed that Lottery Draw (Two) was obviously the newly added option, and was the upgraded lottery draw which the system message mentioned.

He clicked on it!

After choosing the new option, a completely different interface popped up.

Inside Lottery Draw (Two), an interface similar to a slot machine appeared instead of a wheel and needle design. It had a bit of a 3D effect and there was a lever handle on the side. However, unlike a normal slot machine, there was only one middle window viewing panel instead of three. For example, instead of a "7-7-7," it could only show one "7." At this moment, the window was showing a blank icon, and the top and bottom, though partially hidden, said "Consumption Category" and "Skills Category" respectively.

It was a brand new lottery draw system!

Zhang Ye was a little unsure, but when he saw the purchase option, he casually pressed it to try. Although he was mentally prepared and expected the new lottery draw system to be different from before, he still nearly swore when he saw the required reputation pointed needed for this upgraded Lottery Draw (Two).

[Ten Million Reputation Points]

[Yes / No To Confirm Purchase]

Ten million! Why don't you go and rob a bank instead!

Although the saying goes that you get what you pay for, it was still too much!

Immediately after that, the system brought up a notification message: [Upgraded system. A reward has been activated. For the first time running of the new lottery draw systems, you are entitled to make a spin with a 100% chance of getting a Special Category item (limited to one time).]

You will definitely draw a Special Category item on the first spin? This gave Zhang Ye some comfort as otherwise, the 200 million reputation points would have just been a waste! Using so many reputation points for a system upgrade plus a chance to get an item that could be bought in the merchant shop? Who knows if this will be worth it!

Draw!

Let's see what will be gotten from drawn!

Zhang Ye took a deep breath and clenched his teeth as he pressed on Lottery Draw (Two) and spent those ten million reputation points. He purchased the lottery draw rights, then put his hands onto the virtual screen. It was just like the inventory storage. He could feel the physical space from within as he held onto the handle lever of the slot machine!

He pulled and let go!

The slot machine's lottery wheel window started spinning very quickly!

Special Category!

Special Category!

It was still showing the Special Category!

There were no more "Consumption Category" and "Skills Category" icons shown on the slot machine's window as this was a reward spin given to him by the system! It was guaranteed to give a Special Category item!

And of course he would be fine with it.

The machine was clattering as the icons within the window showing "Special Category" cascaded. It was going at a very fast speed and rolled on for some time before it started to slow down. It slowed down gradually until a click sounded, and the window showed one of the Special Category items.

Clatter!

The slot machine rang to signal that a prize had been won!

The prize was announced: [Congratulations Player, you have received Lucky Halo (Upgraded) purchasing rights at the merchant shop. The previous Lucky Halo purchasing rights will be overwritten by the new version.]

What?

Upgraded version?

Zhang Ye's eyes twinkled with joy. He cried out in happiness. Earlier, just now, he was still whining about how his luck could not sustain his career development anymore. Now he had gotten himself a great gift? He immediately went off to the merchant shop to check on the item. It turned out that the "Lucky Halo" icon had been replaced by an icon that showed an even larger off-white halo. It was labeled clearly: Lucky Halo (Upgraded)!

[Effect: Increases the luck factor.]

[Price: One hundred thousand reputation points for every second it is in effect.]

Needless to ask, this upgraded halo was definitely more effective than the normal version. He could tell just from the paying price. The normal version only cost ten thousand reputation points for every second in use while the upgraded version cost one hundred thousand reputation points with every second it was in effect. If the price were equal to the effectiveness of the item's effect, then the upgraded version would likely increase tenfold in effectiveness over the normal version. This was like a free meal dropping out of the sky for Zhang Ye. It was such an ultimate trump card. The only drawback was that the price was really too high. If it was a hundred thousand reputation points per second, then in one minute, six million reputation points would be spent?

The greater the ability, the greater the cost.

Zhang Ye decided to not care about it for now. Having an extra trump card was always good. Then, after checking and seeing that he still had a little over ten million reputation points left, he decided to go for another shot at the lottery, obviously still choosing Lottery Draw (Two).

Purchase!

Start lottery draw!

Along with the reputation points spent on operating the slot machine, most of his 200 million reputation points had now nearly been emptied.

The icons on the window kept spinning at a very high speed!

[Empty]

[Consumption Category]

[Consumption Category]

[Stats Category]

[Empty]

[Skills Category]

The icons cascading in front of Zhang Ye's eyes had no pattern. It was different to Lottery Draw (One)'s compass mechanism as every icon did not have a fixed arrangement, and were randomly assigned. Some categories were even right next to each other or repeated every other category. It all seemed completely random. There were also a lot of "Empty" icons. Obviously, if the draw landed on one of these, then the ten million worth of reputation points were as good as having gone down the drain. This "Empty" icon basically just meant that there was no prize for it. Occasionally, the slot machine showed a glimpse of the "Special Category" icon, but a faint glimpse of that category was all there as to it and he couldn't see it anymore after that. It was difficult to even glance at it again, so just wonder how low the probability of getting a Special Category item was.

Soon, the spin started to slow down!

Zhang Ye took a deep breath as it was about to stop!

Click, the icon for the Stats Category moved into view as it reached the result zone, then with another click, the "Empty" icon moved into the result zone. Above this "Empty" icon was another "Empty" icon. When Zhang Ye saw this, he shuddered with fear!

Move along!

Quickly, move!

Click, the second "Empty" icon came into the result zone!

Seeing that the slot machine was about to stop spinning, he nearly wanted to kick it a few times with his leg in a bid to get it the icon to move on! Don't stop! Move along!

Bba!

Finally, the "Empty" icon moved away at the very last moment and slid down inside the window. The next icon that came in its place was the Consumption Category icon. With a final click, it moved into the result zone and stayed still!

It's a Consumption Category item!

The slot machine disbursed the won item!

A golden treasure chest flew out from the slot machine and moved directly into the inventory at the upper left corner of the game interface. Zhang Ye quickly opened up the inventory and took out the treasure chest with his hand, then placed it on his bed. Although this treasure chest was also golden in color, it was bigger than the Lottery Draw (One) treasure chests, much bigger in fact. It measured about one meter in length and half a meter in width and height.

The name for this item was: [Treasure Chest (Medium)]

Medium sized? Then that would mean that apart from the small- and medium-sized ones, there could also be large-sized treasure chests?

Zhang Ye didn't think too much of it for now and just flipped open the treasure chest's lid as he wanted to know if the ten million reputation points used for the draw was worth it or not. He wanted to know what kind of prizes could be won from the upgraded Lottery Draw (Two) and the differences between it and Lottery Draw (One). When he finally opened the treasure chest, he could only see a tiny, heart-shaped, red object on the inside. It looked crystal clear and full of vitality, glittering in the soft and translucent light as it rotated continuously in its spot.

What was this?

It seemed to be quite beautiful?

When he bent over and took the red heart into his hand, an explanation for the item popped up.

[1-Up] x 1 : Gives an extra life to the player.

Zhang Ye was confused when he saw this. 1-Up? Now he even had...an extra life? The games he played before in his previous world like Contra and Super Mario, as well as many other console games, had this sort of a design. An extra life meant an extra chance. He would never have expected that he could also get an extra life. Then did it mean that if he got hit by a car while walking on the road and died, he could be revived on the spot?

F**k!

Then this item was too powerful!

If it were really like this, the ten million reputation points spent would definitely be worth it!

Whether it really had such an effect, Zhang Ye did not know, nor would he dare test it out. Get on the road and get run over by a car? That was basically just seeking a quick death. But from this prize, it could be clearly seen that Lottery Draw (Two) was not a improved version of Lottery Draw (One). For example, one hundred thousand reputation points to draw an Unlucky Sticker that could be used for 5 minutes, while ten million reputation points would gain you an Unlucky Sticker that worked for 500 minutes? It

was not a change in quantity, but the quality and level of the prize. The items that could be gained from the newly upgraded Lottery Draw (Two) were of a whole different level of usage!

Like the 1-Up!

Like the upgraded Lucky Halo!

If it were won from Lottery Draw (One), don't say ten million reputation points, even if he spent one billion or ten billion reputation points, he wouldn't be able to get those prizes. Just for reason alone, the 200 million reputation points spent on upgrading the system was already worthy in itself. At last, he could find some comfort in this.

Yes, only just a little comfort.

200 million!

It still hurt him very much!

Zhang Ye carefully placed the 1-Up item into his inventory and did not go on with the lottery draw anymore. He didn't have enough reputation points to continue doing so anyway, so he closed the game interface and lit a cigarette. The system upgrade was really a timely arrival for his future career development as it had laid out a bright path for him to walk forward on. It made him look forward to the future with even greater expectations now, but the only thing was...the 200 million reputation points hadn't even been his for long and he had already spent it!

In the bedroom, he kept mumbling to himself.

"Ah, 200 million!"

"200 million!"

"Well, alright, it's pointless to keep rambling on any further. Reputation points can be earned back if there aren't any left. It's no big deal. Who did you think I, Zhang Ye, am? What storms have I not been through before? I only keep rambling on like this because I have nothing else to do. Even if I lie down now, I won't be able to sleep. I'm only complaining a little and besides, it was just a little bit of reputation points. Spending a little is normal. Do you really think that I would keep rambling on for the rest of my life? You really think I see it with such importance? You really think I wouldn't be able to snap out of it? Haha, then I'll tell you that...Yes! !! Really! Couldn't! Snap! Out! Of! It!"

200 million!!!

Chapter 549: The most sought after elective class!

After the game system had been updated.

Total Reputation Points: ~100,000.

Skills: Trivial amount.

Stats: Trivial amount.

Merchant Shop Items:

1. Memory Search Capsule.
2. Taiji Fist Skill Experience Book.
3. Lucky Halo (Upgraded).

Inventory Items: Difficulty Adjustment Die (1), X-ray Vision Eye Drops (1), Pause Game (1), Strength Potion (20), 1-Up (1).

This was all that Zhang Ye had up until now. After taking note of his inventory items, he went to sleep. After so many days of rest, it was about time to prepare for his next job.

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The next day.

In the morning, Zhang Ye woke up much earlier than usual. He was heating up the milk in the kitchen and boiling a few eggs. One of them even cracked, but it still got cooked in any case as he somehow managed to finish making breakfast.

His mother who had just woken up, was surprised to see him, "Oh, did the sun rise from the west today?"

"Little Ye made breakfast?" his father said as he walked out from the bedroom.

Zhang Ye laughed. "Just eat, you two."

His mother found fault with him by saying, "The eggs cracked, didn't they? Next time, add some salt before boiling them. Then the water's temperature wouldn't get too high."

"Enough. It isn't every day that Little Ye cooks for us, yet you're picking on this and that," his father said as he walked to the bathroom to wash his face. "I'll have the cracked one."

Zhang Ye sat down and said, "No, I'll have it instead."

He switched on the television and the morning news was already halfway through its report.

"Yesterday, the Japanese Prime Minister..."

"To negotiate on on issues regarding economic and trade cooperation..."

"Turning to a new page on the relations between China and Japan..."

The news went on for quite a long time. At the end, it even gave an overview of the past two years of icy relations between the two, China and Japan, and how it was slowly thawing again. In this world, many of the historical characters and events had some slight changes to them, but the overall major events in history were still similar. For example, the Second Sino-Japanese War and the Nanking Massacre. Some historical events slightly differed in name and time of occurrence only.

He did not listen to the news too seriously as he wasn't interested in these matters.

After his father had washed his face, he came over to eat. "Eh, there even an education cooperation? There will be people coming from the Japanese universities? There will be a meeting at Peking University today?"

Zhang Ye who also heard from the news, said indifferently, "I guess so."

"Son, don't you have to go to school now?" his mom asked.

"I do. Today is the first back-to-school day for Peking University. They already informed me yesterday. But there won't be any classes until a few more days. I haven't even thought of what I will be speaking about for this semester. Since I am in charge of an elective course, I guess there's no rush for now, since Peking University has allowed me free reign when it comes to planning for classes." After Zhang Ye had been unbanned, he had not taken up any new roles or jobs yet, and there wasn't a need to rush to do it as well, because he knew that Peking University's "Appreciation of the Classics" class was still his first priority that he needed to handle. Any other things could wait.

His mother instructed him, "Then you better dress well and neatly. Don't be late."

"I won't be late," Zhang Ye said.

His father also added, "Lecture well. Don't deceive others or slack off."

Zhang Ye laughed. "Rest assured, I won't lead my students astray."

After breakfast, Zhang Ye went downstairs to his car and drove straight for Peking University.

When the car had almost reached its destination, he saw quite a number of students going in and out of the school. Some of them looked like they had just gotten back today, like they had just gotten off the train and headed straight here. Some were carrying large bags and luggage, while others had their parents come along to help them with their belongings. Since the area was considered a university zone, with several universities all located close to each other, the school reopening was staggered. Some a day earlier and others a day later, so it led to the streets being very busy with many students choosing to come back today.

He drove in through the main entrance.

When he just got into the campus grounds, Zhang Ye's car was immediately recognized by someone.

"Look, it's a BMW!"

"That license plate belongs to Teacher Zhang!"

"Teacher Zhang!"

"It's Zhang Ye! I need to get a few photos with him!"

The Peking University students were very excited and kept peering into the car. Some of them even shouted.

Zhang Ye had only just won the most unpopular celebrity award and had initially felt a little depressed. But when he saw the students showing him so much support, the gloom of it suddenly went away. Look, what most unpopular celebrity award were we talking about? This bro was still as popular as ever! His

mood was extremely good because of this. This illustrated just how wonderful a place school could be. At this place, he could find good memories, he could find youth spirit. Seeing all these cheerful and smiling faces, Zhang Ye was also infected by the positiveness of it. Compared to the entertainment industry, he definitely liked the school more.

Yao Jiancai's daughter, Yao Mi, was also in the crowd. She waved at the car with all her strength. "Uncle Zhang! Uncle Zhang!"

The twins, Li Ying and Li Li, who were basically inseparable from Yao Mi, were all from the same class and had a very good relationship. Li Li said, "I wonder what Teacher Zhang will be teaching this semester. I'm so looking forward to it."

Li Ying threw his hands up in resignation. "Whatever he teaches, we won't be able to sign up for Teacher Zhang's classes anymore. We have already gotten the credits for the 'Appreciation of the Classics' elective last semester."

Yao Mi said, "If it's a public class, then we could join in too."

Zhang Ye did not notice them and slowly drove the car away.

Only then did Yao Mi stop waving. She looked to her side and said, "Let's go. I'm going back to the hostel first. I heard that there will be many Japanese university students coming in the afternoon. They are even holding some kind of a welcome ceremony for them and we are required to attend it. How meaningless! What's the point of welcoming that group of people? I get annoyed when I see them!"

Li Li quipped, "When did you become a nationalist as well?"

"I've always been one, didn't you notice?" Yao Mi said, giggling.

Li Ying helplessly said, "Our relation with them last year was pretty bad, but it turned better this year. Aren't the media and so many others advocating a Sino-Japanese friendship?"

A Peking University student who was passing by them said, "Bah, what friendship could there be with them? Why would they bother holding a welcome ceremony anyway? I'd rather think of how I can sign up for Zhang Ye's 'Appreciation of the Classics' elective class!"

"Eh, you signed up as well?"

"Yeah, I signed up at the end of last semester."

"Me too. I heard that the enrollment has already been filled."

"Right, I wonder how it will turn out. With so many applicants, they couldn't possibly accommodate us all."

In the past, Peking University's elective classes had always required the students to sign up beforehand or at least be surveyed to find out the interest in it. The elective classes that did not get much interest would be adjusted and the classes rearranged. However, it was different this semester as Zhang Ye's elective class had become one that was up for grabs due to the sensational Dream of the Red Chamber talk last semester. On top of that, with Zhang Ye's popularity also increasing to a point that was

unimaginable, it seemed that 80% of the students were all registering to join the class. This would definitely not be arrangeable by the school.

.....

Peking University Chinese Department.

Upstairs in the teachers' office, many people were also discussing this matter.

The Chinese Department Dean, Chang Kaige, was surrounded by several teachers who taught other elective classes. Su Na and a few other Chinese Department teachers didn't know whether to laugh or cry as they watched them.

A middle-aged teacher who was handling the liberal arts elective course said in anger, "Old Chang, in the past, whenever the elective course applications have filled up the quotas, they would stop taking in new applications. Why is it that your Chinese Department's elective course is exempted from this? Just how many people have applied up until now? The students are still able to send in their applications? Just what sort of a class are you all holding with so many people?!"

Chang Kaige was former classmates with the person complaining to him and had a good relation with him too. "Old Hai, there was a problem with the application system previously. That was why the issue occurred."

Another female elective course teacher said, "Still, shouldn't you have left some for us?" As she said so, she felt very unfairly treated and distressed. "Right now, basically every student had applied for 'Appreciation of the Classics.' You might not have seen the number of students who have applied for my course, but there's only nine of them! Nine! How am I supposed to teach this semester then?"

Another male teacher said, "Only 11 applied for my course! I might as well field them as a soccer team!"

The female teacher said, "It was the same last semester when Zhang Ye held his public classes. All of my students skipped class to go attend his class. How do you expect me to conduct a lesson then!?"

Everyone complained and looked very frustrated. It would be a wonder if they weren't. If an elective class had too little applicants, they might have to stop the class for the semester.

Chang Kaige smiled as he tried to appease them. "Dear teachers, I've already reported the situation to the school leader. As for how this will be handled, I'm sure they will let us know soon. Don't worry about it. Teacher Zhang Ye's class definitely won't be able to accommodate so many people. I'm also certain that there won't be any public classes held like last semester."

At this time, Zhang Ye was just walking into the teacher's office. When he saw that there were so many people around, he smiled at them and greeted, "Dean Chang, Teacher Wu. Yo, Teacher Su Na is so early as well?"

Su Na made a signal to him.

Another young teacher of the Chinese Department also smiled while nudging Zhang Ye's attention over to the other side.

When the the female teacher who taught the elective course saw him, she suddenly said, "You're finally here, Teacher Zhang. The elective application has already ended but your elective class has too many students applying for it. Surely you wouldn't be able to take such a large class, so why don't you send 50 of them over to me."

The middle-aged liberal arts elective course teacher said, "Little Zhang, I won't beat around the bush. Can you spare me 30 students?"

A few teachers did not hold back and just started asking for students.

Zhang Ye said in surprise, "Ah? We can even decide like that?"

Chang Kaige said in a speechless manner, "You can't ask for students this way. It's not right. We still need to let the students choose for themselves what elective classes they want to attend. I suppose when they reapply for the electives, all these issues will be sorted out very quickly."

It was a mess over here.

Zhang Ye, who was still a little unsure of the situation, turned around to ask.

Su Na covered her mouth and giggled, telling him in a whisper, "2,100 students applied to join your elective class. Most of them are second and third year students, while quite a few are freshmen, so the other elective classes had almost no applicants. Some had at most a dozen or so, and that was already quite a high number for them. When I arrived at school today, I overheard that there was even one elective class that only had two applicants. I guess that's the reason why all of them are here looking for you."

Zhang Ye was a little anxious as he was wondering why that bunch of teachers had come looking for him and sounded so aggressive.

Over 2,000 applicants? And that was only for one elective class?

This was, in the full history of Peking University or any other institute of higher learning, something that had never happened before! Too many! This number of applicants was totally unbelievable!

There was no other way! Zhang Ye was too popular!

Finally, when the Chinese Department's Secretary, Zhen Shuquan, came back with the chancellor's answer, it was announced that only applicants up till the quota limit were allowed to join Zhang Ye's class. The rest would be required to reselect their choice of elective class.

Only then was the matter resolved.

Otherwise, these elective teachers really would have ended up surrounding Zhang Ye to pick a fight with him!

Chapter 550: The Youngest Associate Professor in the Country!

In the morning.

The other elective class teachers left the Chinese Department's Teachers' Office.

The teachers of the Chinese Department started chatting again once they had gone. After the winter break, they definitely had a lot to catch up on, but most of the focus was still on Zhang Ye. This was because, in just a short winter break period, Zhang Ye had caused so many incidents, such as taking part in the Spring Festival Gala, beating up someone, joining the crosstalk competition, getting banned, solving a mathematical conjecture, getting unbanned, being voted as Weibo's most unpopular celebrity, etc. This was why everyone was so curious about all that had happened

Teacher Wang smiled and said, "Little Zhang, you are really something."

Teacher Li said, "When did you begin your research into math? Haha, you've really garnered face for the Chinese Department. Just a few days ago, Dean Chang even joked about how our Chinese Department had hidden talents that could take over the jobs of those at the Math Department."

Zhang Ye waved it off. "You're too generous with your praise."

A teacher asked, "Has Dale's Conjecture really been proven?"

"That's for sure." Su Na smiled and said, "Mathematicians from all over the world are here in Beijing to do the verification work now. Although they have not concluded the verification of the proof yet, it seems that there are generally no problems with it. They're just doing some final validations on the details." Having said that, she looked over to Zhang Ye. "Teacher Zhang, don't forget to give treat us to a meal when the proof is accepted."

Zhang Ye nearly cried. "I don't even have any money left in this pocket of mine."

Su Na rolled her eyes. "Don't try that. I know that you've already sold the copyrights to Legend of Wukong. Although I don't know how much you got for it, it has to be at least upwards of a million."

Professor Zeng, who had a very good relationship with Zhang Ye, had just walked into the office and heard their conversation. He laughed as he said, "In my opinion, Teacher Zhang getting an associate professor title this year is definitely on the books!"

Su Na nodded. "Yes, there's a really good chance of that."

Zhang Ye chuckled. "Come on, I don't have the qualifications to become an associate professor." Actually, he really hoped to get it as well, even though the title of professor did not matter in the entertainment industry. It still sounded nice and would be considered a good qualification anyhow. So if he had the chance, Zhang Ye definitely would like to become one.

The Chinese Department's colleagues continued bantering about the matter. Zhang Ye's proving of the global mathematical conjecture had not only become a topic of conversation for them at the Chinese Department, but was also the topic of conversation throughout Peking University.

After about 10 minutes.

The Chinese Department was about to begin their meeting and all the teachers had gathered into the conference room.

Secretary Zhen did not attend the meeting. The Chinese Department Dean, Chang Kaige, who was chairing the meeting, did not start until the last person, Professor Yan, who had arrived late, walked into the room.

Chang Kaige raised a tea cup and took a sip of tea before putting it down again. He smiled as he looked at everyone, and then said, "School has started and it's a new semester again. After such a long break, I hope that every one of us can hit the ground running as classes will begin tomorrow. Let's not be too relaxed anymore. Alright, enough with the cliché speech for now. For today's meeting, I would like to touch on the welcome ceremony that will be held this afternoon. As all of you should know by now, we are hosting a delegation of Japanese university principals, expert academics, and students at our Peking University today to discuss key exchange and cooperation projects. It is very important. There will be staff from the television stations and reporters present as well. The welcome ceremony will be held at the Centennial Hall, so if our teachers don't have anything important scheduled today, they must attend the event. This was instructed by the chancellor, so unless you have something so important that you can't attend this ceremony, please seek leave approval from either me or Secretary Zhen. Is that understood?"

"Understood."

"We'll definitely be there."

"No problem."

Quite a number of teachers and professors were nodding at this.

Chang Kaige said, "As for the students, get some volunteers. Otherwise, if that's not enough to fill the seats, I will need every one of you to select some students and then consolidate their names into a list. Remember to remind them to follow the rules, to not boo or create any trouble. They're already university students. Students these days all have a mind of their own, especially when it involves a sensitive issue like the Sino-Japanese relationship. We must ensure that the welcome ceremony finishes without a hitch. Yes, but of course, since our Peking University students are all of the highest standards, this is just something that you all need to remind them about."

Professor Zeng said, "In such a setting, I'm sure the students know their limits."

Chang Kaige nodded. "Hur hur. Finally, there's one more issue to discuss. The chancellor has given us, the Chinese Department, the task of giving a speech at the welcome ceremony. Since we're in the profession of the Chinese language, this task is naturally ours to carry out."

Speech?

Another speech?

When everyone heard this, their instinct was to look over at Zhang Ye. They couldn't help it since, previously, at the National Primary and Secondary School New Year Gala, Zhang Ye's closing remarks had left everyone in shock. The "Ode to Young China" was even published in the People's Daily the next day and was considered to be a sensation. Compared to Professor Yan's speech, it brought about a much more refreshing view and was considered to be far more outstanding. As such, at the mention of a speech that was to be given later at the welcome ceremony, the first person who came to mind was Zhang Ye.

Although Zhang Ye was the youngest teacher in the Chinese Department, had the least qualifications, and did not even come through as part of the academia system itself since he had only become a

teacher through his work in the professional industry, when it came to the quality of giving speeches, none of them in the Chinese Department dared to claim that they were better than Zhang Ye at giving one. Even if "Ode to Young China" was not mentioned, there was still the example of "The Last Speech" that Zhang Ye had given at the Shanghai SARFT's press conference. It was an irrefutable fact that none of them had or were even near his standard in giving speeches.

With one Zhang Ye sacrificed!

Thousands and thousands of Zhang Ye will stand up!

Just thinking of each and every word from that speech would leave a person's blood boiling with passion!

However, Zhang Ye looked reluctant to partake in this ceremony, or rather, unwilling to do so. For a speech that carried political undertones, he knew they would definitely require him to speak along the lines of promoting good Sino-Japanese relationship. Yet for a nationalist like him, it would already be a good thing if he did not go looking for trouble with these foreigners. How could they expect him to praise the friendship between China and Japan? That was basically impossible, so whoever wanted to do it could instead of him!

Chang Kaige, who seemingly had expected that Zhang Ye would not want to do it, said, "I'd already given this task to Professor Yan a few days ago. Old Yan, is the script ready?"

Professor Yan said expressionlessly, "Yes."

Chang Kaige looked very reassured and did not ask for the script to check it.

The previous time, even though it could be said that Zhang Ye's speech had made Professor Yan lose quite a lot of face, everyone knew that it wasn't because Professor Yan's speech was lacking. As the theme had already been set beforehand, even if it were someone else giving the speech, they would have encountered the same problem. The main issue at that time was due to Zhang Ye not following the routine. That left Professor Yan in a passive and embarrassing situation. However, since the speech this time was imbued with a political undertone, Chang Kaige tasked Professor Yan to handle it, knowing that it was in much safer hands compared to Zhang Ye's.

The meeting went on for a little while more.

Finally, Chang Kaige said, "Alright then, actually there is one more issue to bring up." He looked at Zhang Ye and said, "It regards our department's Teacher Zhang Ye and his promotion to the rank of associate professor. Ever since Teacher Little Zhang took over the elective class for 'Appreciation of the Classics,' the results he had shown can be seen by all. He has received lots of attention from society and attracted many good reviews from the the academic world. At the same time, he has also helped our Chinese Department gain back the top spot in the national university rankings. Though I understand this was down to the hard work of everyone, but the final 'shot at goal' is to Teacher Zhang Ye's credit."

Before he could finish, Professor Yan, who was already frowning, immediately interrupted and said, "Dean Chang, I don't agree with that. Zhang Ye is too young. How can a young man in his early twenties be an associate professor? Let's not talk about Peking University alone, you won't even find this

anywhere else in the country! Besides, Zhang Ye's academic research is still considered to be controversial within the industry."

Zhang Ye looked impassive, as though the matter did not concern him. He did not say a word.

Professor Zeng frowned and said, "Why are you always harping about age? We are in the field of education and academics, so shouldn't we be looking at results instead? Shouldn't we be looking at the standards of teaching instead? If we were to base this on age, then we shouldn't be looking at any other things during the title selection every year. You're thirty? No way! You're forty? Wait a little longer! Oh, you're fifty? Alright, you shall receive the title! It would be over if we just base this on age. What's the point in that?"

Professor Yan said, "Old Zeng, don't take this out of context. Besides, we have no more positions for the title of associate professor to be awarded anymore this year. The allocations are all used up!"

Professor Zeng said, "If there's an outstanding teacher, I'm sure we could make an exception."

Professor Yan smiled coldly. "Zhang Ye's academic research can be considered an outstanding contribution?"

Professor Yan and Professor Zeng squabbled over the matter for a while.

Chang Kaige came in to smooth the situation out by saying, "Alright, how this matter will be decided is not up to you all. It is not even up to me. I have already discussed this with Secretary Zhen and we have nominated Little Zhang and sent in his application. Whether or not it will be approved is all up to the chancellor's decision." He had only submitted the application but the determination of the appointment was still subject to many other procedures.

Professor Yan was still highly against it. In the past, Zhang Ye was invited by President Wu and had her backing. But now, since Wu Zeqing had been promoted and transferred to another institution, Zhang Ye no longer had anyone to back him. Being the more qualified and experienced professor of the department, Professor Yan had become much more direct in the way he spoke, "This nomination does not follow the procedures. Dean Chang, I still disagree with it. The title of associate professor should not be given out so easily. Besides the allocations have already been used up, so nominating him will only bring more inconveniences to the school lea—"

At this time, a middle-aged man suddenly walked into the conference room. As the conference room was located in a much bigger suite, the doors were not closed.

The man in his fifties looked quite imposing. As he came into the conference room, he immediately said, "There are no more allocations in the Chinese Department? No problem then. We still have a spot in the School of Mathematical Sciences!"

Chang Kaige was taken aback. "Dean Pan."

"Dean Pan?" The other teachers were also taken aback.

The person who had walked in was the Dean of the School of Mathematical Sciences, Pan Yang!

Dean Pan was a rank higher than Chang Kaige, therefore the way he spoke to him was less restrained.

"The doors were open and I simply overheard what you were discussing when I stepped in. Old Chang,

don't worry about Little Zhang's associate professor title. We will do an application over at our School of Mathematical Sciences since we still have an allocation for one more associate professor nomination. And it won't need to be scrutinized. I'd already signed the documents this morning to nominate Little Zhang, but we will need him to be transferred to our Math Department!"

Professor Yan was shocked.

Chang Kaige also could not react in time. "Math Department? That won't do, Dean Pan. Little Zhang is the backbone of the Chinese department...."

Pan Yang said, "Little Zhang can still continue teaching in the Chinese Department. I don't care about that. What I want is for him to be listed as a teacher for our school. After he joins our Math Department, we can decide at a later time again whether or not he needs to lecture on any of the main courses. However, as long as the Math Department holds any symposiums or open seminars, we will need Little Zhang to attend as a member of our faculty. We can discuss how to work this out again at some later time since I am just letting you all know in advance.

Zhang Ye blinked a few times.

Su Na and the other Chinese Department teachers also looked at each other curiously.

The School of Mathematical Sciences was here to steal one of their personnel? F**k, Zhang Ye was really highly sought after!

Chang Kaige shook his head and said, "Holding the duties of being a teacher under two departments, there are prior examples. But to do so under the Chinese and Math Departments? That is unheard of! Dean Pan, I cannot agree to that!" He was treading carefully on this subject. Although this was being proposed as a concurrent post, if they went along with it, the Math department might just snatch Zhang Ye away from under their noses and make him theirs.

Besides, who had ever concurrently held the duties of a teacher in both the Chinese and Math Departments? These two disciplines were poles apart! If he really went ahead and held a concurrent post like this, not only would the appointment seem strange, it would be seen as a wonder of wonders!

Dean Pan said, "The procedures are already being handled as we speak. I have already discussed this with the chancellor and even though this has never happened before, we also know that there has never been a case of any Chinese Department teacher proving a global mathematical conjecture before. Since it's just the holding of another title in another school, it shouldn't be a big matter! In any case, we will definitely be taking Little Zhang into our School of Mathematical Sciences. Such a young and world-class mathematician like him must not waste his talents in the Chinese Department!"

Chang Kaige was almost left speechless by this. "What do you mean by wasting his talents? Teacher Little Zhang's literary standards were meant for the field of Chinese language. This is where he is most suited to be."

Dean Pan looked at him and said, "I didn't say that Little Zhang has to quit his work over here. I've always stressed that this would be a concurrent posting."

Finally, Secretary Zhen, who had been working on the application, had also made his way back due to this issue. In the end, the matter was escalated all the way up to the chancellor's office.

The School of Mathematical Sciences insisted on having Zhang Ye transfer to their school.

The Chinese Department did not want to let go of Zhang Ye no matter what.

After much wrangling, one of the chancellors finally made the decision based on Zhang Ye's talent in both mathematics and literature, as well as the strong wishes of the School of Mathematical Sciences of wanting him. They approved Zhang Ye's concurrent position in both the Math and Chinese Departments. They also agreed to the exception of making Zhang Ye associate professor under the School of Mathematical Sciences. Even though there were still some formalities to be completed, the title of associate professor was as good as sealed!

The news got out.

Peking University, which had just restarted its school term, was getting lively again!

"Associate professor? Really?"

"Is that for real? Teacher Zhang is going to become an associate professor?"

"He's too young! Not only will he be the youngest in Peking University, he's going to become the youngest associate professor in the whole country! How old is Teacher Zhang? 24?"

"The key here is that he is going to become an associate professor in the Math Department! Teacher Zhang has been grabbed by the School of Mathematical Sciences! He is going to teach both literature and mathematics!"

"Wau, Zhang Ye is going to teach in our Math Department?"

"That's great! I wonder which years he will be teaching!"

Not only were the students of Peking University fervently discussing this issue, even the teachers of the various schools started talking about this with great interest. Having been teachers for so many years, this was still the first time they had heard of such a case like this!