

Superstar 651

Chapter 651 I teach physical education!

[collapse]

The old man was taken away to fill out some forms.

Left at the scene of the audition were a group of people from the staff of The Voice, all looking shocked.

Ha Qiqi could no longer just sit around and keep quiet anymore. She knew of Zhang Ye's temper and also knew that he was the executive director. Even if all the decision-making in passing or failing a contestant was up to him, she still had to say something about it, because if this was not handled properly, it could turn out to be a very serious problem. She asked, "Director Zhang, are you really serious about letting the grandpa on to the show? Why don't you reconsider. That really isn't doable. He's too advanced in age. If anything happens, the people responsible will be those of us at Central TV. You should know that Central TV Department 1's broadcast coverage is nationwide and even airs on some overseas channels, so this pressure is not something that everyone can take. I've even seen many youngsters who look very healthy and strong faint during program recordings due to anxiety. This has happened so many times just in Central TV alone, and they're even young people, so let's not mention what would happen to a 60-year-old grandpa!"

Wu Yi wiped away his sweat. "Yes, Director Zhang."

Assistant Director Zhang Zuo also came over to the audition venue after finishing his work. When he heard that Zhang Ye had let a 60-year-old grandpa through the auditions, he too very nearly fainted. He hurriedly stepped forward and said, "Teacher Zhang, you must never, ever, ever do that. If something happens, then it will cause big trouble!"

Zhang Ye laughed, "That's why I asked him about his health first."

Ha Qiqi immediately interjected, "He might have said that he is all well and good, but that doesn't guarantee anything. Aren't there exceptions?"

Zhang Zuo said in panic, "We can't take such a risk. Tha-that's really too dangerous."

"What's so dangerous? Are you all taking the elderly to be too weak?" Zhang Ye disagreed. "I agree that being cautious is correct, but an elderly person is still a person. They have things they like as well as dreams to chase after. No one has the right to take that away from them. You guys have seen it for yourself too, the grandpa isn't in bad shape at all. He's still very strong and able. How could he perform a rock song like that otherwise? So why don't we not take Grandpa Zhou to be just the typical old man, alright?"

Ha Qiqi replied, "But there's never been any case of an old man on a talent show before."

When she said that, many of the program team staff at the side couldn't help but snigger.

Zhang Ye chuckled. "If other programs don't have that, then we'll have it. The programs I make have never aimed to be the same as others. To me, there's no difference whether it's an old or a young person. Since we've already said that we would not look at their ages, then we shouldn't judge them based on that!"

Ha Qiqi: "..."

Zhang Zuo: "..."

No one else said anything.

Zhang Ye added, "I don't see a problem with Grandpa Zhou. In fact, I think we should give him more focus. I believe that all of you were too concerned with his age earlier and did not listen to his singing, right? Grandpa Zhou's style of rock, that scream, that attitude to life—those are all things a young person can't express through their singing. The feeling it gives to me...can only be described as shocking! It was that great!"

Ha Qiqi wondered, "Was that so? I didn't notice it."

Wu Yi and the others also weren't listening attentively back then.

"That performance was recorded. I'll show it to you all again later." Zhang Ye said, "But for now, let's not talk about it. We'll just settle it this way!"

With those words, it didn't matter if there were any more objections.

Ha Qiqi, Zhang Zuo, and the others could only look at each other helplessly. They knew better than to say more. Whatever, if it's settled, then it's settled. We'll just do it however you decide, hai.

Qian Pingfan.

Sun Daxuan.

Zhou Danian.

In the first round of the preliminary auditions, three people had qualified for the next round.

At this time, Ha Qiqi thought of someone else who had come. She said, "Oh right, Director Zhang, didn't you bring a woman here earlier? Is she a contestant too? How's she?"

Zhang Ye smiled and answered, "You'll know when you hear her sing."

Little Wang blinked. "Then, should I?"

"Call Teacher Luo in," Zhang Ye said.

Little Wang went out to get her. She knew that this person was brought here specifically by Zhang Ye, so they might have known each other beforehand. Because of that, Little Wang was more polite to Luo Yu than she was to the other contestants.

The door opened.

Luo Yu walked in with a gust of wind following her—because she was fat.

Faced with a contestant like that, with looks that wouldn't have passed most auditions, the program team's staff no longer cared anymore as they were already numb to it. In the past, they used their own understanding and expectations when it came to such kinds of auditions. But today, after Zhang Ye had overturned their cognitive understanding over and over again, they were no longer bothered by any

surprises. Even if a mute person walked in now for the auditions and was given a pass by Zhang Ye, they wouldn't have any reaction. Because to them, Zhang Ye's criteria for picking a contestant was really not something that they could understand at all!

Luo Yu looked to the left and the right, then said, "Teacher Zhang, what now?"

Zhang Ye said, "Oh, you may begin singing now."

"Alright then." Luo Yu did some warm-ups by flexing and stretching her arms, and then by kicking out her legs a few times.

Zhang Zuo: "..."

Ha Qiqi was wondering to herself what was up with this person? Warm-ups? But these warm-ups were too much, weren't they? Were you getting ready to sing or to throw a shot put? Does singing require this kind of warm-up?

All the other staff also came to a conclusion. As expected, it was another odd one!

Other contestants might clear their throats or do some light singing to open up their throats. But Luo Yu was different from other people. Due to her profession as a physical education teacher, she was more used to such a way of warming up. Perhaps for her, this was a way to relieve the stress, to move around a bit more to take the edge off and get into the best condition, So whether she was going to sing or throw a shot put, this had always been Luo Yu's standard warm-up routine.

Exhaling, Luo Yu said, "The song I want to sing is 'Wishing We Last Forever.'"

This song again?

There were already four or five people who had sung this song today.

No one said anything and just sat there quietly, ready to listen. They were curious about how different this contestant who Teacher Zhang Ye had brought would be.

Then Luo Yu started singing.

When her voice came out, everyone immediately understood how she was different from all the others!

"When will the moon be clear and bright?"

"With a cup of wine in my hand, I ask the clear sky."

"In the heavens on this night..."

It turned out to be such a raspy and rough voice. The roughness and friction that her voice brought out gave people goosebumps. This woman was actually singing in an old man's voice!

Luo Yu's voice was the direct opposite of Qian Pingfan's voice, although still with some differences. Qian Pingfan was a male singing in a female voice and his singing was much better than a woman would have sung. But Luo Yu was different; her voice was very deep and very rich. It sounded like a male voice yet there was still a hint of a woman's charm in it. On top of that, the emotions in the voice were no doubt a

woman's. As long as their eyes were closed, they could still tell that it was a woman singing, only that her voice was somewhat rough.

Ha Qiqi gave a long sigh. I knew it, I just knew it!

Wu Yi also facepalmed himself and rubbed his forehead for a long time!

Why?

Why was it all these kinds of people!

Teacher Zhang, can't you find someone normal? Just one will do! A man singing in a woman's voice, a burly man singing a soft love song, an old man rocking it out with his performance, a woman singing in a man's voice. This was a competition of who was the strangest!

But Zhang Ye quietly listened in appreciation, as though he did not notice the speechlessness of those around him. He really liked Luo Yu's singing, not only because of her extremely unique voice but also the way she handled the song. Even if her voice was raspy, she was able to keep the softness and delicate feel of the song and expressed it in her own way that was different from others! Voice, singing, emotions—all of these were flawlessly expressed. It was like an uncut piece of jade, devoid of any complex singing techniques but leaving people very comfortable listening to it.

This was what you'd call a good contestant!

In the future, for whichever coach chose her, she would definitely be one of the key members of that team!

Yes, even Qian Pingfan and Zhou Danian were the same, but as for Sun Daxuan the train driver, he still wasn't quite as good compared to them, but he was still good anyway and would definitely pass the blind auditions!

On this first day, four seeded contestants had qualified. Looking at the statistics, it might look like a poor qualification rate, but Zhang Ye was already extremely satisfied with the outcome as he had uncovered some gems. To him, the numbers did not matter. What was important was their quality. If he had wanted to just make up the contestant numbers, he could easily get it done, but to have found these "red flower" contestants, it was really one in a million. Each and every one of them were treasured finds. And just like Zhang Ye had predicted, although there were some differences in this world's recognition of what a good singer was, there were still some good voices in it. There were still talented people around, which made Zhang Ye hopeful and expectant of many hitherto undiscovered prospects. Right now, Zhang Ye could finally thump his chest assertively, knowing that The Voice he had brought over and reproduced from his previous world would really have no problems at all!

Luo Yu finished singing.

Everyone stayed silent for a long time.

Luo Yu seemingly got hooked on her own singing, even suggesting to do another one. "Why don't I give 'Woman Flower' a try too?"

Zhang Ye laughed and said, "Teacher Luo, there's no need. I hereby announce that you have passed the audition and qualify for the next round as our fourth-seeded contestant. Congratulations."

Luo Yu said happily, "Then I...Does that mean I can appear on television then?"

Zhang Ye gave her confirmation. "We will be starting the program recording in some days."

With regards to Zhang Ye's decision this time, Ha Qiqi and the rest did not find it surprising at all. They knew at this point that they just had to go along with whatever Zhang Ye decided.

But hearing Zhang Ye's words, Ha Qiqi got a hint of surprise and immediately asked, "Director Zhang, this Teacher Luo is? From a school? Or?" Hearing Director Zhang address her as a teacher, Ha Qiqi's first thought was that it was her profession.

Zhang Ye affirmed, "Yes, she's from a school. She's a teacher of a relative of mine."

A real teacher?

That's great!

When everyone in the program team heard this, they finally managed to regain some of their composure. A music teacher from a school, no matter what, would still be considered a professional musician. At last, there was a professional, even if her voice was a little...Well, regardless, at least she had given the program team a shot of confidence. Compared to those other contestants who had qualified, Luo Yu's profession as a teacher was really comforting and reassuring to know!

Ha Qiqi casually spoke, "Teacher Luo, you'll still have to teach normally, won't you? Our program recording schedule can take up to a day sometimes. Hopefully it won't delay your classes and inconvenience the students."

Luo Yu laughed and replied, "I'm not too busy usually."

Zhang Zuo smiled and said, "That's true, a music teacher has a lighter workload than a teacher teaching the sciences."

Hearing that, Luo Yu was taken aback. "Huh? What music teacher?"

Ha Qiqi was also a bit stunned. "Aren't you teaching music at the school?"

Luo Yu nearly fainted. "What? I teach physical education!"

Ah?

You teach physical education??

Everyone: "....."

Teacher!

A respected teaching professional had finally joined the competition, but how the f**k did it turn out to be a physical education teacher!

At this moment, only the image of a beautiful creature called the Grass Mud Horse¹ could be used to describe everyone's feelings. They could no longer see the future of their new program as it became enshrouded in pure darkness!

Chapter 652 The four “wonders”!

Later that afternoon.

After the first round of preliminary auditions ended.

Zhang Ye gathered Ha Qiqi and the others and started going through the demos sent to them with email. Although today’s audition had ended, they were still going to have another round tomorrow or the day after, and thus needed to sort out the contestants to notify them to come for the auditions. For those candidates who lived further away, if they really had the potential to qualify, the program team would have to be responsible for their plane or train tickets, covering their return trip as well.

“Come, everyone have a look at this.”

“I will be in charge of these 100 candidates.”

“Leave this page to me.”

“Alright, if there’s any demo that’s good, let me know. I’ll listen to it as well.”

“Hey, Teacher Zhang, this one sounds good, come and listen.”

“Let me take a look.”

“Will this person do?”

“Sounds quite good, notify her.”

“Director Zhang, I found one who’s quite good as well.”

“Coming.”

They kept busy for a full two hours and only managed to go through about a fifth of the applications. There was nothing they could do about it as there were far too many candidates. If it was said that people did not have much optimism for The Voice of China before, but after landing the Brain Gold title sponsorship and with the four famous music coaches coming aboard, the applications increased severalfold. It was an unprecedented number three or four times more than those of other similar talent shows. This was due to the fact that none of them ever had such a prestigious lineup of coaches and such an astronomical title sponsorship fee. The first move made by The Voice of China had already cast all thoughts of other similar talent show programs far from the minds of the audiences!

Ring, ring. A phone call came in.

Zhang Ye answered. “Director Jiang.”

On the line was the deputy director of Central TV Department 1, Jiang Yuan. He said, “Little Zhang, why did I hear that you have chased away four of the music consultants I appointed to your team?”

Zhang Ye laughed and replied, “Director, it wasn’t that they were chased off, it’s just because we did not see eye to eye with the concept and requirement, so they were not of much help in the picking of contestants. Since it was that way, I thought that it would be better to just handle it on my own. At most

I will have to attend every round of the preliminary auditions and spend a little more time. It's not a big deal."

Jiang Yuan could not say anything to that, so he just told him, "Alright then, I won't be bothering with this matter then. But I'll still say the same thing: I want results, and that means the viewership ratings."

Zhang Ye said, "I understand."

"How many people qualified from today's auditions?" Jiang Yuan asked concerned.

"Four contestants," Zhang Ye said.

Jiang Yuan reacted in shock. "So few?"

Zhang Ye said, "But they're all the most excellent ones."

Jiang Yuan said, "Fine, I will just wait for your good news."

After hanging up, Zhang Ye looked at his watch and gathered everyone again. He said, "Let's stop here for today, it's about time to leave anyway. Thank you for your hard work, everyone."

"Huu."

"It's no trouble."

"It's our job, Director Zhang."

Everyone could finally take a breather and relax as they got ready to leave work.

Zhang Ye was a workaholic and in other times, he wouldn't even be getting ready to knock off at 7 PM. Sometimes he would even work until 8 or 9 PM, but today, he was the first to leave. 20 minutes before the official end-of-work time, Zhang Ye had already left. This was because there was still a little one waiting for him at school. He had to rush to the Experimental Primary School to pick up Chenchen. If he were late, she would surely be unhappy.

When Zhang Ye left, everyone started talking to each other without needing to hold back anymore.

Zhang Zuo sighed, "Tell me honestly, do you guys think that these contestants can make it?"

Wu Yi gave a forced smile. "I don't know, but I suppose Teacher Zhang has his own considerations."

"Ai, I don't know what to say anymore." Ha Qiqi said while pinching her brow. "I just hope it works out by some miracle." Having said that, even she did not believe that this miracle would happen!

Everyone was looking at each other with worried faces!

Some of the program team staff even had expressions that seemed to say "we're screwed!"

With regards to the chosen contestants today, everyone had great doubts. They'd seen odd ones, but never such strange ones before!

Qian Pingfan.

Sun Daxuan.

Zhou Danian.

Luo Yu.

These four “wonders,” each one more “amazing” than the other!

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After work.

The lights in the office of The Voice’s program team blinked out as everyone dispersed and proceeded downstairs.

In the elevator, Assistant Director Zhang Zuo bumped into a friend from his previous program team. The two of them had known each other for quite some years now.

That person greeted, “Old Zuo.”

Zhang Zuo said, “Ai, it’s Old Yu.”

That person asked, “How’s it going? Have you finished busying yourself with the equipment work yet? I heard that your program team has spent more than 20 million on purchasing new equipment?”

Zhang Zuo said, “Yeah, we bought a bunch of equipment. They should be delivered within the next 2 days.”

That person said, “Heh, your team is really rich, but that can’t be helped with a 100 million title sponsorship. Even if you all just spent it recklessly, it would take a long time to deplete those funds. Just look at the program team that I’m in, they’re so petty. We only exceeded the budget by tens of thousands of yuan, but the leader has already curbed our spending with immediate effect. We’re not as lucky as your team, getting whatever you want.” Then he paused before suddenly asking, “Oh right, didn’t they hold auditions for your program today?”

When he heard that, Zhang Zuo’s expression changed into something slightly unnatural. He replied, “Ahem, yeah, I guess it was.”

That person asked, “What do you mean by ‘I guess it was’? How did it turn out? How many good ones were there? When I walked passed the venue earlier, I spotted a very pretty one. She was dressed in red and had big, round eyes. Did she get through to the next round?”

Zhang Zuo said, “No.”

That person asked, “Then which ones did you all choose?”

Zhang Zuo mumbled, “I’m not in charge of that, so I’m not too sure either.”

That person didn’t believe him. “You’re an AD. Even if you weren’t in charge of that, you would still know something, wouldn’t you?”

Zhang Zuo coughed, “I really don’t know.”

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Elsewhere.

Below, at the bottom of the television station tower, Wu Yi ran into an old colleague from his previous department.

That woman greeted, "Wu Yi, you're off work?"

"Yes," Wu Yi said.

The woman asked, "You all held auditions today, right?"

Wu Yi said, "Was there an audition? I'm not sure."

The woman rolled her eyes. "Who're you trying to bluff? The entire Central TV staff knows auditions for The Voice were held today. It was even reported on the news. Hurry up and tell me a little about it. How many people were chosen? How did they do? You should know that I love watching singing talent shows the most, right? So how were the contestants you all chose compared to the contestants from the other satellite channels?"

Wu Yi suddenly said, "Eh, you bought a new pair of shoes?"

"Yeah, they look good, right? Hey, I was asking you about the contestants. Why did you talk about my shoes instead?" The woman was almost at a loss for words because of that.

Wu Yi lied, "I'm not sure, I wasn't at the venue."

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Somewhere else.

Little Wang got on her bicycle and was preparing to ride it home.

Behind her, one of her university schoolmates came up to her. They had graduated together and come to Central TV to work at the same time, so they'd always had a pretty good relationship.

"Wang'er, I've been looking for you the whole day!"

"Ah? Looking for me?"

"I wanted to ask you about the auditions. I'm really curious."

"Uhh."

"Does your Executive Director Zhang really not choose the contestant based on their looks and only listen to their voices? What do the contestants who qualified for the next round look like? Did you take any photos? Show them to me."

"Uhhh."

"What are you hesitating for? I'm asking you, did you get any behind the scenes videos? Show them to me first! Recently, there've been so many people who pay attention to this new program of yours, even many of us in Central TV are guessing what kinds of contestants you all selected. Just today alone, I've heard seven or eight people discussing it in the office."

“Uh, about this...”

“Weren’t you at the venue? Tell me about it.”

“No, I can’t. Director Zhang...has told us to keep it confidential.”

“F**k, what’s there to be so secretive of.”

“I really can’t say.”

“Just tell me a little, won’t you? We’re close friends, aren’t we?”

“Ahem, I really cannot. Well, then, I’ll go off first. See you tomorrow.”

“Hey, you! Wait, wait! Why are you rushing off!?”

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The same situations were playing out for every staff member of The Voice. At the moment, there were a lot of discussions about The Voice. The internal staff at Central TV were also very concerned and curious about how the program was progressing. Some of them even wanted to go and observe the auditions, but due to regulation, non-related staff were not allowed to enter the venue. As such, without an answer to their curiosity, they could only wait until it was time to knock off to find someone they knew from The Voice’s program team, whether it be friends, ex-classmates, or ex-colleagues, so that they could get an update on the status of the program.

But without exception, none of them managed to find out anything!

Not one of the staff members from The Voice’s program team leaked any news or information at all. It was as though they had all discussed beforehand to keep it a secret. Some of them even acted dumb by saying that they were not present at the auditions even though they were there. Did they really not know anything? Did Zhang Ye really ask them to keep it a secret? Actually, there was nothing like this at all! When did Zhang Ye ever ask them to keep the details of the audition under wraps?! As long as no video clips leaked, why would such small matters require them to keep it a secret!

However, no one said a thing! Not a single person!

Because the staff of The Voice’s program team basically did not dare tell anyone! They were too embarrassed to do that!

Tell them? Nonsense! How should they tell them! Your sister! Look at the singing talent shows on all the other satellite channels, including those that aired in the past ten years. Counting all of them, which one did not have contestants who were either handsome guys or beautiful women? Which one of their contestants were not in the peak of their youth!?

Pretty boys!

Pretty girls!

They were everywhere!

But for their chosen contestants from the preliminary auditions?

A bruiser!

A skinny and ugly man!

A woman weighing between 80 and 90 kilograms!

And there was even an old man!

But that was not the weirdest yet. The weirdest things about these people were their occupations. In the other talent shows, what did the handsome guys or beautiful women do for a living? They were either students from a music college or musicians who had graduated from performing arts schools. There were music teachers, piano teachers, guitar teachers, backup singers, independent musicians who composed their own songs, and even rookies who had just signed with a media agency! They had either already debuted or were working in music-related jobs as industry insiders! Their professional quality was for all to see!

However, when you looked at the chosen contestants for The Voice!?

A train driver!

A physical education teacher!

A bicycle repairman!

And there was even a sixty-year-old retiree!

How could they compare!!

How could they say anything!!

When comparing their program with other programs, the contrast was vastly different! Even if they were thick-skinned enough, they still would not have dared tell anyone about the backgrounds of their program's contestants. If they did, they would surely become laughingstocks!

Chapter 653 Countdown to the recording!

Two days later.

The second round of preliminary auditions began.

"Contestant No. 1, please come forward."

"You may begin singing now."

"Stop, that will do. Sorry, but you did not qualify for the next round."

"Next contestant."

The contestants came into the audition venue one by one. Most of them could not qualify for the next round. Only a few people passed Zhang Ye's strict criteria, but the program team staff still didn't think too highly of them. They knew that Zhang Ye's appreciation of aesthetics and selection criteria were different, so they did not say anything. Basically, the more they thought that a contestant was not up to

mark, the more Zhang Ye liked them; while the more they liked a contestant, the more Zhang Ye had his doubts. They were basically at odds with him on this matter.

At this time, the 28th contestant was being called in for her audition.

From outside, a young and glamorous woman walked through the door. She was dressed in western fashion and looked very confident. From the way she moved, it was obvious she carried herself quite well.

The eyes of the program team staff lighted up, but immediately turned to sighs.

Ha Qiqi scanned her over. "Please introduce yourself."

The young woman said in a crisp and clear voice, "Hello, teachers. My name is Yuan Tong and I'm 24 years old. My occupation is...I guess you can say that I'm a white collar worker."

"White collar?" Ha Qiqi repeated.

Yuan Tong said, "Yes, I work at my parent's company."

Oh.

An affluent second generation?1

Ha Qiqi said, "Alright, you may begin now."

Yuan Tong smiled and said, "Then I will be performing 'Blooming.'"

Da, da. Yuan Tong was lightly snapping her fingers to create a rhythm. After a few beats, she started to sing softly and her beautiful voice resonated.

"Flowers bloom on the windowsill.

"But you aren't here.

"Remembering that spring, when you were still beside me.

"These petals and your smiling face."

With a sudden change from her soft singing, she launched into a soprano!

"The flowers have bloomed!

"But I'm crying!"

She could reach a very high pitch and still have her singing sound full without much vibrato in her voice. Her lung capacity was also very good as she held the notes for a long time without fading, so that was something worth mentioning.

The song ended.

Yuan Tong bowed and then said, "I've finished performing."

Ha Qiqi also felt that she was really good. She was beautiful, had a good aura, and sang well, but regrettably, she had come to the wrong place because their executive director was unlike other people.

If this were a different program, the producers would definitely be fighting for her to be on their show. Unfortunately, their executive director preferred those who didn't look good, had vocal "deficiencies," and worked low-level jobs. Hai, what a waste of a promising contestant.

As a result, Ha Qiqi said, "I'm sorry, you did not meet our requirements."

Yuan Tong was a little surprised.

The other staff members of the program team already understood what made Zhang Ye tick. They knew that if it were someone they fancied to be good, Zhang Ye would definitely not bat an eyelid at them. Wu Yi also said, "Please go back."

Helpless, Yuan Tong could only reply, "Thank you, teachers."

But this time, Zhang Ye was dumbfounded. "Please go back for what?"

Ha Qiqi looked at him stunned. "Ah?"

Wu Yi and the others also stared blankly at him.

Zhang Ye was baffled, so he asked, "This contestant sang very well, so what's there to question? Of course she has qualified, what do you all mean by not meeting the requirements? What kind of standard do you all have!" He even sounded a little angry at them. This bro had it so difficult trying to make this program work, yet you guys weren't only not helping me, but instead making me even busier?

When Ha Qiqi and the others heard that, they nearly vomited blood!

Didn't you dislike such contestants? Why did your attitude suddenly do a 180?

Ha Qiqi said, "Then what about Chang Si from before..."

Zhang Ye remarked, "Which Chang Si? Oh, I remember. That contestant didn't hold a high pitch stabler than her and is also not as beautiful as her. We definitely need more focus on good-looking contestants who can also sing well. How did it end up with you all trying to eliminate her?" Then he turned to the young woman and said, "You've qualified for the next round."

This was the contestant Zhang Ye was most satisfied with today, although her singing wasn't exactly the best. But it was still considered quite outstanding already. At least compared to the train driver of the four "wonders," her singing was a bit better. The key here was that she was also very beautiful and good-looking, so that too naturally qualified her as a key contestant!

Yuan Tong was so delighted it showed. "Thank you, Teacher Zhang. Can I also make a small request?"

"What is it?" Zhang Ye asked.

Yuan Tong said, "I would like your autograph. The two songs you wrote for Teacher Zhang Yuanqi have always been my favorite songs. I play them on repeat every day."

"Hur hur, that's great." Zhang Ye did not say anything and just gave her his autograph.

Ha Qiqi and the others looked at each other. They finally understood that their auditions were never based on fundamentals or criteria, that there were no rules for whether a contestant performed below

standard in this area or did well in another area. Whether they qualified or not, was all down to the executive director alone. If Zhang Ye said they met the requirements, then they met the requirements. If he said they weren't up to standard, then they weren't up to standard! Ai, in meeting such an executive director, this was as difficult as it could get.

Everyone on the program team thought that Zhang Ye chose the contestants based on his mood, but in fact, that was not true. They had arrived at such a conclusion simply because Zhang Ye had a different way of looking at things than them. Ha Qiqi and the others were not exactly professionals in the field of music and could only be considered observers. They were only looking for someone who, ideally, was good-looking. Or they liked a performance because of their own subjective tastes, while those music professionals who had been asked to leave were all looking at singing skills or if the contestants were from a performing arts college. But they were too traditional in their judgment of a voice and could not accept voices that sounded new or odd to them.

It could be said that these two groups both had their limitations.

Compared to them, Zhang Ye looked for something much complexer. When judging a contestant, he was looking for their overall qualities, whether they could sing well or not, uniqueness of voice, whether their occupations were worth hyping, and even if the contestants could become subjects of conversation. These were all the factors Zhang Ye was considering. He rejected good looks? Who said so! If the contestant could sing well, had an extremely unique voice, and was especially beautiful, only an idiot would reject her! It's not like you could find such a contestant if you went out to specifically look for one, so why wouldn't she qualify?!

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Half a day passed.

The second round of preliminary auditions ended.

Zhang Ye inquired, "It looks like several of the candidates we picked as potential contestants did not turn up? Why didn't I see them?" There were a few candidates whom he was rather looking forward to meeting based on their demos.

Ha Qiqi answered, "They did not come. There's one who needs to go to school and does not have free time, while another one needs to work overtime. Although I did mention that our program team would reimburse the cost of her return flight, the entire trip and audition would still take two days minimum. She probably feels that her work is more important and did not want to risk taking time off, since she might end up getting rejected by us as well as losing her job. Her boss at her workplace must be a really difficult person to deal with."

They were finally seated in front of the computer again, sorting through all the demos that were emailed to them. The number of applications was getting increasingly higher by the day, but the quality of the candidates was not as uniform as the increase. There were hardly any good ones.

Zhang Ye thought for a long while before finally deciding to change the way the auditions were held. He would hold the auditions just like how the original The Voice of his previous world held them. "Sister Qi, how about this? Tomorrow, we will hold one more round of preliminary auditions here. Then after that you will choose some staff members and send them to various key cities in the country to carry out the

additional preliminary auditions. If there isn't enough manpower, we can hold the preliminary auditions one at a time in each city, otherwise we will hold them simultaneously across several cities."

Ha Qiqi was taken aback by this suggestion. "Won't that cost a lot of money? If we need to mobilize an entire team, the hotel accommodations, audition venues, equipment, and publicity will all cost money."

Zhang Ye said, "I'll allocate 5 million to you first. Will that be enough?"

Ha Qiqi suddenly became more spirited and she readily agreed, "Sure!"

See, money talks!

They had seemingly forgotten that their program had a production budget of over 100 million and was unlike the other talent shows on rival satellite channel stations that scrimped and saved on every penny. The Voice did not want for money at all!

Wu Yi said worriedly, "Director Zhang, if we expand the auditions to cover so many places, then without you leading the selection, how will we know which contestants qualify?"

Zhang Ye delegated his authority and replied, "As long as you all find them to be good, just send them my way. Those contestants I previously approved are all going to be the seeded contestants and the ones I like best. They are the red flowers of our show, but the only reason they can be that is because they will have some green leaves to make them stand out. So I want to reassure everyone a little here. Don't worry too much about who is good or bad, as long as you all unanimously agree they are good, send them my way. We'll sort them out after we know the number of contestants who passed."

Those words reassured the team a lot. If they really had to apply Zhang Ye's selection criteria in choosing the contestants, they wouldn't know how to judge at all, since no one understood his selection criteria.

Zhang Ye asked, "Have you already found the music arrangement teachers?"

Ha Qiqi nodded. "Director Jiang has arranged for two music arrangement teachers and a band to be transferred to our program team, but there won't be a music director or music consultants due to that day's inci..."

Zhang Ye understood. "There's no need for a music director. It will only be more troublesome with them around. We only need the music arrangers. Regarding the already qualified contestants, inform the music arrangement teachers to start helping them with their song arrangements today. Otherwise, once the number of qualified contestants increase, they will become too busy. For those seeded contestants I mentioned, I want to spare no effort when it comes to their arrangements. They must be done to perfection. As for the non-seeded contestants, of course we will still do our best for them, but make the appropriate adjustments."

Ha Qiqi said, "I understand."

Zhang Zuo came over from the other side. "Director Zhang, all the new equipment has been delivered."

Zhang Ye immediately brought everyone to the recording studio and had a look around. Then he said to Zhang Zuo, "Has the design for the custom chairs been confirmed yet?"

Zhang Zuo replied, "We've already placed an order. I've also hounded the workshop for progress. They are currently rushing the job, but because this design has a certain degree of difficulty to make, they told us it would take half a month at the quickest."

"How about the stage?" Zhang Ye looked to the stage which was piled with construction materials.

Zhang Zuo answered, "We are setting it up according to your request. We started working on it yesterday. As for the contestants' waiting area and the second studio, the workers have also started work on it."

Zhang Ye urged, "Hurry up. Try to get it done as soon as possible."

Zhang Zuo said, "I understand, I'll get them to hurry."

"How about the website?" Zhang Ye asked.

The staff member who was in charge of the website details immediately answered, "Director Zhang, the website has been completed after we worked on it overnight, The latest news, promotional news, and other related information can be added onto the website at anytime."

"Well done." Zhang Ye said, "Have we contacted the Publicity Department yet?"

A female editor responded, "I've already contacted them. Central TV Department 1 will allocate a total of 75 seconds of promotional airtime to us. How we use this 75 seconds is up to us, but other than the weekend primetime slots, we are free to choose whichever time we want to air it."

Zhang Ye nodded. "Then we will make them 15 seconds each. Each of the four coaches will record a video clip. We'll also do a group promo with them."

Every aspect of the program's production was progressing very quickly and already put into motion.

As of now, the countdown to the recording had already began!

Chapter 654: Arrival of The Voice's Theme Song!

On this morning.

The freshly published morning newspapers went on sale.

"The Voice's Nanjing auditions overwhelmed by applications!"

"A 100 million title sponsorship: Is it worth the money?"

"Results of a public survey: Less than 50% of the public thinks that The Voice will do well, with more than half of industry insiders and the public still doubtful!"

"Zhang Ye appears at Shanghai's audition venue yesterday for a promotional campaign of The Voice!"

"Can The Voice possibly overcome the industry downturn of talent shows?"

"The singing show industry faces a crisis, plagued by signs of fatigue! Overcrowded market for singing talent shows attracts strict control from overseeing authorities!"

"The Voice to become final straw in an overcrowded singing talent show market?"

The entertainment headlines of various newspapers and online news were all giving continued coverage and tracking of news concerning The Voice of China. Even though many people did not think that The Voice would achieve much in the viewership ratings, since it was a mega-scale production costing a large sum of money to produce, along with the addition of the Heavenly Queen to the coaches list, the 100 million RMB title sponsorship fee, and being Zhang Ye's reputed production, this topic was naturally more widely discussed. The media was certainly more than willing to report about it. There was no lack of news in the entertainment industry but a sustainable, news-generating program like The Voice was missing. With the appearance of The Voice, it could be said that it helped thousands of journalists keep their jobs—no longer would their mothers have to worry about them lacking news to write about!

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Past 7 AM.

Shortly after Zhang Ye sent Chenchen past the school gates, he received a call.

It was Zhang Yuanqi. "Where's my song?"

"What song?" Zhang Ye replied instinctively.

Old Zhang said: "You're asking me what song? The song you owe me. Didn't you say that you would write a theme song for The Voice? Well, give the copyright to me and we'll be even."

Only then did Zhang Ye remember that he made such a promise some days ago. Since he still owed Old Zhang a song, and The Voice was in need of a theme song too, he decided to simply just write a song for Old Zhang that could also be used as the theme song. But he had been too busy recently, flying to Shanghai for the preliminary auditions and a promotional campaign, then flying back on the same afternoon, and rushing to pick up the child from school. With so many things to handle, he had already long since forgotten about this matter. He immediately said: "Oh, oh, oh, about that, how would I forget. I've been writing the song for the past few days and even stayed up for a few nights over it." He bluffed his way through.

Old Zhang said: "Is that so?"

Zhang Ye replied: "Of course, I definitely keep your matters in mind."

Old Zhang said: "Then have you finished writing the song?"

Zhang Ye said: "Yes, I've finished writing it."

Old Zhang said: "OK."

Zhang Ye said: "When you're here at Central TV, I'll pass you the score and then the four of you coaches will have some rehearsals to sing it. After the recording is done, we'll then use it for the intro theme song of the program."

After hanging up, he drove toward Central TV.

When he reached the recording studio, he started another busy day of work. With one hand, he was remotely controlling several auditions being held at other provinces while with the other hand, he was giving instruction for the stage layout and planning the progress for the presentation of the promotional

clips. The recording of the promotional clips for the four coaches were done in succession. The edited clips of Zhang Xia, Chen Guang, and Fan Wenli were thus the earliest to be put out and broadcast to the public on Central TV Department 1, with each clip lasting 15 seconds. Due to Zhang Yuanqi's busy schedule, her recording had only been completed yesterday. As Old Zhang had the biggest reputation among the coaches, her clip certainly had to be broadcast with the best timing. All of these matters had to be arranged and planned by the executive director, Zhang Ye, just like everything else here that also needed his attention.

As for the executive producer, Fu Sihong?

Except for the beginning when Fu Sihong objected several times to Zhang Ye's proposed plan for The Voice, there were no signs of Fu Sihong appearing around here after that. Central TV Department 1 had sent Fu Sihong to supervise the team. As long as production was on track with no issues, Fu Sihong would not need to meddle in anything. It did not matter to Zhang Ye whether Fu Sihong was here or not, but without him here, Zhang Ye could afford to do his own job even better without any apprehension.

"Liu'er."

"Director Zhang, you're looking for me?"

"Is the voting system ready?"¹

"We haven't ordered it yet. It's not needed yet, right?"

"Even though it will be only used in the finals, don't delay! Get it done quickly!"

"Understood, I will contact them and order immediately!"

"We can borrow it from the other Central TV program teams if they have prepared systems. Little Zhou, Little Zhou, come over here for a while."

"Ai, Director Zhang, I'm here, I'm here!"

"The 75 seconds of promotional airtime that Central TV allocated to us will certainly not be enough. Get in touch with other media, such as those large video hosting websites, and buy some commercial airtime from them."

"Sure, I'll get it done!"

"Don't be afraid to spend money. Buy more."

"Ah? Aren't we running low on money?"

"Even if it's low, we still have more than 10 million RMB. For other talent shows, 10 million RMB might already be their entire budget for production, but this amount is just the leftovers of our budget, so there's no commercial we can't buy. Advertising is the most important activity of all. We must make sure to successfully get across the concept of voice to let the people understand and accept it. To achieve all these, it's never too much no matter how much we spend."

"I understand, Director Zhang. Please wait for my good news!"

Zhang Ye had to keep everything under control so he had to handle every detail diligently.

As he had already been appointed executive director for about ten days, he was becoming more and more like one now. Brimming with the air of an executive director, he spoke increasingly firmly, assigning tasks with greater clarity. Zhang Ye was also growing together with the production progress. This role as executive director was very important to him as it was a very valuable experience for his future success and irreplaceable with any amount of money or popularity.

One of the reasons why Zhang Ye accepted Jiang Yuan's offer to join Central TV Department 1 was because he was promised that he could be the executive director of such a big production at an important channel like Central TV Department 1. He needed this sort of life and work experience. This growth would give him a foundation for future endeavors. Compared to when Zhang Ye was the executive producer and director of Zhang Ye's Talk Show, it wasn't the same level. The talk show only had Zhang Ye himself onstage since it centered around him as the host and the main focus of his performances. His role as the executive director was just in name and would not compare to directing a large-scale talent show on Central TV.

Time passed quickly. It was already noon.

Zhang Ye had a quick and simple lunch before returning to continue instructing the production.

Suddenly, Assistant Director Zhang Zuo walked hurriedly into the recording studio to where the stage of The Voice was. "Director Zhang? Eh? Where's Director Zhang?"

Little Wang pointed somewhere not far away. "He's installing the chairs with the workers."

Zhang Zuo exclaimed and ran over in a hurry. "Aiyo, Director Zhang. Why do you have to handle this yourself, just leave it to the workers."

Only then did Zhang Ye reluctantly put down the chair and tell the workers with a worried voice, "Don't place the four chairs too far from each other. Put them slightly nearer so the coaches can hear each other without the microphone...a bit closer...yes, OK, that's good now." This guy was a perfectionist. The word "adequate" didn't exist in his dictionary, so it developed into a bad habit of his. Zhang Ye was never comfortable if he only left it to others to do the work.

Zhang Zuo said, "Director Zhang, they've arrived over there."

Zhang Ye turned around. He panted, "Who have arrived?" He dusted off his hands.

Zhang Zuo blinked and replied, "Sister Zhang and the rest of the coaches have arrived. Should I bring them over or will you be going to the television station tower?"

Zhang Ye was taken aback. "The coaches? What are they here for?"

Zhang Zuo helplessly expressed, "You were the one who arranged it. Didn't you say a few days ago that you were writing a song and wanted the four coaches to come in this afternoon and do a simple rehearsal of the intro theme song? Have you forgotten about it?"

Ah?

Was it today!?

Holy shit, I was too caught up in work! No wonder Old Zhang called me so early in the morning to ask me about the song!

Zhang Ye nearly fainted before he recovered, "They're already here?"

Zhang Zuo said, "Yes, they've already arrived."

"Let's do it this way, don't let them come over here first. Try to stall them and make them wait awhile," Zhang Ye immediately stated.

Zhang Zuo became confused. "Why? What should I say to them?"

Zhang Ye answered, "Just tell them that I'm not around and then bring them over after half an hour!" Having said that, Zhang Ye quickly walked away. "Where's the music arrangement teacher? Where's the music arrangement teacher?"

Little Wang said, "He's helping the contestants with the arrangements."

Zhang Ye hastily ordered, "Tell him to put that on hold for now and to come look for me."

"Ah? OK." Seeing Zhang Ye so anxious, Little Wang double-timed and went to get the music arranger.

.....

In a recording studio.

Zhang Ye went inside with a youthful music arrangement teacher.

"Director Zhang, why are you in such a hurry to find me?" The music arrangement teacher wondered, "Are we going to do the music arrangement for the theme song? I'll arrange the music first and then let the four teachers sing it?"

Zhang Ye did not say a word.

The music arrangement teacher said, "Then can you give me the score? Let me have a look at the song first?"

Zhang Ye remained silent.

At this moment, the music arrangement teacher finally realized something and was shocked.

"You...could it be that you have not written it yet? Weren't we supposed to have the rehearsal today?"

Zhang Ye coughed, "We can still make it if I write it now."

The music arrangement teacher nearly fainted at this response. Holy shit, you really didn't write it?

"What kind of song do you think will be most suitable as a theme song?" Zhang Ye made a hasty last-minute effort to do something about it.

The music arrangement teacher didn't know what to say. "But haven't the four coaches already arrived? It's too late to write the song now. Actually, there are all kinds of theme songs for these types of talent shows. But I personally think it's best to be in line with the theme of the competition, like how to express one's dream—something inspirational, so that it can easily blend into the talent show's

atmosphere and highlight the contestants and stage. Besides, such songs have to reflect positive energy and have a sunshiny feel, so it shouldn't have any lyrics that talk about a reflection on life or words like that. That would complicate things and make it less outstanding. I guess that would be suitable as a theme song."

Dreams?

The stage?

Positive energy?

Contestants? Talent show?

After hearing that, Zhang Ye nodded. "Do you have a pen and paper?"

The music arrangement teacher was stunned, then looked around for a bit before handing one to him.

Zhang Ye immediately picked up the fountain pen and started to write the lyrics on the paper. As he wrote it, he spoke, "I'll sing it once for you now, so help me write the score and arrange the music as well."

The music arrangement teacher said dumbfounded, "Y-you have already thought of a song?"

F**k!

It's only been a few seconds!

I had just finished describing what kind of song was suitable for the show. At most around ten seconds after that you have already finished writing it? That's impossible! The fastest lyrics writer in the industry would not have a speed like yours, even if you multiplied their speed by a hundred times. No one could be this fast!

He did not believe it, but he grabbed an empty score and got ready to record it.

The next second, Zhang Ye started to sing with his terrible singing,

"I wanna fly to the sky, walk beside the Sun.

"The world waits for me to change it.

"Never been afraid of others seeing my dreams.

"Here, I can make it happen.

"Laughing loudly, let's walk side by side.

"Isn't happiness everywhere.

"Casting off all worry, I stride forward bravely.

"Now I am taking center stage!!"

The music arrangement teacher was dumbfounded. You really could write it out in a little more than ten seconds? What the f**k! Are you on stimulants!?

Chapter 655 The speed of Zhang Ye's songwriting!

Zhang Ye sang.

And the music arrangement teacher wrote out the simplified notation¹ on the fly.

Once...

Again...

A long time passed. After singing and going through the song several times, the notation was finished and the lyrics were added in, completing the song.

"Perfect." Zhang Ye hands trembled as he held the score.

The music arrangement teacher was also fatigued and profusely sweat. He wiped the sweat off his forehead and asked, "Teacher Zhang, can we do this ahead of time in the future? Rushing like this is really scary. Our program team has spent a lot of money to invite the four coaches to join us with figures that even the public might not know about. If they find out, it will surely cause an uproar. The four coaches are big shot celebrities in the music industry and we were the ones who arranged for them to come over today. If we were unable to produce a song for them to rehearse with, it would have become very embarrassing for us and make it look like we thought they were fools."

They were not ordinary celebrities. If they turned hostile and threatened to not record the program or rehearse the song, their program team would be in big trouble.

Zhang Ye pretended it was nothing, then just smiled and said, "But we managed to finish it, didn't we?"

The music arrangement teacher had no words in response. Indeed, this song only took twenty minutes to finish, but excluding the time taken to compose the simplified notation, Zhang Ye had only taken less than a minute to write it. It felt like he finished as he was writing and singing. The music arrangement teacher could swear that—in all these years he had worked in this industry, he had known countless lyricists and singer-songwriters—when it came down to songwriting speed, Zhang Ye was absolutely ranked number one among all the people he had ever met. At this moment, he looked at Zhang Ye full of admiration! He only started writing the song when the coaches were already at the doorstep, yet he still managed to finish writing the song! In the entire industry, only Zhang Ye would risk doing it this way. Other than him, no other person could achieve it! No one would believe this even if it were revealed, but whoever did would surely have to bow down to him!

As for the quality of the song, the music arrangement teacher had not really listened to it carefully yet. First, he was in too much of a rush trying to fill in the simplified notations and his mind was not focused on the melody and lyrics. Second, Zhang Ye's singing ability was just average, nothing special. Third, it would be difficult to judge just from hearing him sing without music and instrumental accompaniment.

Outside, someone was knocking on the door. Dong dong dong.

Before Zhang Ye could say anything, the person had already pushed open the door and come inside.

It was Deputy Director Zhang Zuo who said anxiously, "Director Zhang, I can't hold them back anymore. The four teachers can't wait any longer and are already making their way here to look for you."

Zhang Ye nodded. "It's been hard on you, Brother Zhang."

Zhang Zuo had really put in a lot of effort to make up lies and find excuses to delay them, but the four coaches were all big shots and extremely famous, and even the least popular among them was a national bel canto singer. Every one of them possessed a great aura, so it was considerably stressful for him to deal with them tactfully.

At this moment, some voices came from outside the corridor.

"Little Zhang?" It was the voice of Grandma Zhang Xia.

And then he seemingly heard Zhang Yuanqi asking someone, "Miss, where is your executive director?"

That female staff exclaimed and then muttered, "I don't know either."

Zhang Xia said, "I know he must be here, ask him to come out. He scheduled us to be here for the recording and we're already here, yet he's avoiding us. It's almost been half an hour, so why has he still not shown himself?"

Zhang Ye hurriedly walked out the door while holding the score. He looked to the end of the corridor and walked up to them, laughing. "Grandma Zhang, Sister Zhang, Brother Chen, Sister Fan, you're all here already?"

Chen Guang said in a speechless manner, "We arrived long ago."

Zhang Yuanqi looked toward where he came out, then smiled and said, "So you were hiding in there?"

Zhang Ye said, "No, I wasn't hiding. It was just that something had cropped up suddenly over here, so I couldn't get away." Turning to Zhang Zuo, he pretended to be angry and scolded, "Brother Zhang, why didn't you inform me that the teachers had already arrived. If I knew they were here, I would have dropped everything and gone to receive them. What can be more important than the teachers?"

Zhang Zuo could only think to himself how he was told by Zhang Ye to delay them, but he just said, "...I'll pay attention to this next time."

Zhang Ye reminded him, "Next time if the teachers come and look for me, make sure to inform me immediately. Look, I very nearly got misunderstood by the teachers this time."

Zhang Yuanqi looked at him. "But I don't think it's a misunderstanding."

Zhang Ye coughed.

Zhang Xia criticized, "You were too much. How could you let us sit around and wait for more than twenty minutes? At least you should have given us the score to take a look at first."

Zhang Ye also felt a little embarrassed, since he was the one who arranged the meeting yet he totally forgot about it. It was unacceptable. "Grandma Zhang, you're right. This time, it's my fault, so you can just blame me."

Fan Wenli blinked. Becoming sharper, she asked, "Is there some problem with the theme song?"

Zhang Ye immediately let out an uncontrolled laugh and started lying without any guilt, “How could there be any problems? Actually, I’ve already finished writing it, and it took me a whole week to perfect it. The lyrics and melody were carefully deliberated and meticulously scrutinized upon. I’ve already made it into absolutely, the most exquisite song among songs. Here, see? The score is right here. I’ve been waiting for all of you to arrive since long ago.”

Spent a whole week?

Meticulous? Scrutiny? Carefully deliberated?

The music arrangement teacher stared in silence at the ceiling.

Zhang Xia and the rest of them walked up to him. “Is that so?”

“Let me take a look.” Zhang Yuanqi took the score from him.

Chen Guang and Fan Wenli also stood beside her and looked at the score. They started humming along to the lyrics, “I wanna fly...to the sky...walk beside...the Sun...” As they were unfamiliar with this song and had never heard it before, their humming was also intermittent. They were only reading the simplified notations as they hummed along but it didn’t sound too coherent.

At this moment, the music arrangement teacher was also seriously savoring the song for the first time, since he did not listen to it earnestly before.

Fan Wenli was a music teacher in the past and had previously taught students to sight-read music scores, so she was skilled in this area and adapted much faster than the others. She was the first person to sing the song in its completed form.

“Never been afraid of others seeing my dreams.

“Here, I can make it happen.

“Laughing loudly, let’s walk side by side.

“Isn’t happiness everywhere.

“Casting off all worry, I stride forward bravely.

“Now I am taking center stage!”

On seeing Fan Wenli singing so fluently, the other three coaches stopped their singing and listened quietly to Fan Wenli singing the entire song.

The more they listened, the more their expressions changed!

Zhang Zuo was the first person to be shocked. He did not know music, nor melody changes, nor treble and bass. He only knew this song was very nice to listen to and was the type of work that could make people excited after listening to it just once. Moreover, the lyrics were also very encouraging. The dreams people have, they can make it happen here? Wasn’t that exactly the message they wanted The Voice to portray!? Didn’t they want to provide the platform for people to realize their dreams! This song matched perfectly!

The next person to be shocked was the music arrangement teacher. Originally, he thought Zhang Ye was only messing around as he had no choice but to randomly write a song because the four teachers had already arrived at their doorstep. He felt that the quality of the song couldn't possibly be any good, because how good could a song that only took one minute to write be? To even be able to write it out was already a miracle! But when the music arrangement teacher finished listening, he knew that he was wrong right from the start! This song was too awesome! How could this be a haphazardly done piece of work!?

Honestly speaking, if the music arrangement teacher had not witnessed Zhang Ye composing on the spot, he would not have believed what was unfolding in front of him no matter what! It was written so quickly, had a high quality, a good tune, and was even in line with the concept and vision of the program. The music arrangement teacher knew that what had happened today was truly an eye-opener for him!

Fan Wenli finished singing the song.

Chen Guang had long since forgotten about the displeasure at waiting for half an hour for Zhang Ye. He even gave a thumbs up to Zhang Ye after listening to the song.

Zhang Xia nodded furiously in appreciation. "Great song!"

Fan Wenli was also very satisfied with it and commented, "This song is really tailor-made for the program. Teacher Zhang really took great effort in crafting the lyrics and melody."

Zhang Ye laughed gently while waving it off. "That's not true, though I did use eight or nine days to write it."

Chen Guang lamented, "You're already so busy with stage and preliminary auditions, yet you took the time to finish writing such a good song in just eight or nine days. Teacher Zhang Ye's talent is indeed extraordinary."

Zhang Ye smiled and said, "No matter how busy and tired I am, it's all part of my job. I'm the executive director after all."

But suddenly, Zhang Yuanqi, pinching the score, slightly rubbed the last parts and asked, "Why is the ink on this score not dry yet?"

Upon hearing that, Zhang Ye broke out in cold sweat.

Fan Wenli came up and took a look. "Oh, it's really not dry yet."

Zhang Xia also reached out to touch it and then looked at Zhang Ye. "Little Zhang, you got your people to hold us back and delayed us for more than 20 minutes. Could it be that you forgot to write the song and ended up writing it only just then?"

Chen Guang stared with eyes wide. "Ah? This song was just written?"

Zhang Zuo also jumped up in fright as he knew that Zhang Ye had asked him to hold back the four teachers for a reason, but he did not expect this to be the problem!

The music arrangement teacher also did not know where to look, so pretended to have not heard anything.

Zhang Ye immediately answered, "How is that possible? How could I have forgotten such an important matter? I had already finished writing the song long ago, but after discussing with the music arrangement teacher earlier, we found there were some problems with the notes on the score, so we got it changed. Then...then we copied it again. That's why the ink was still wet.

Chen Guang found fault with his words. "Didn't you say you had already written out the score earlier and was busy with other things just now?"

"Ah? Did I say that?" Zhang Ye said.

Fan Wenli also exclaimed, "You can't really have just written it last minute, could you? In only twenty minutes? How can that be? I got my team to write a song with a specific set of requirements, yet the quickest they could do it in was still more than half a day! The quality isn't even guaranteed to be good."

Zhang Ye made up another story. "That's why I didn't forget..."

Zhang Xia exposed Zhang Ye's secret to the husband and wife, "Little Zhang is best known for his fast songwriting speed. At the last Spring Festival Gala, the song 'Woman Flower' was written in the blink of an eye. At most, it only took a minute or two."

Zhang Yuanqi smiled and chimed in, "It's the same for 'Wishing We Last Forever.' Although the lyrics were written by him earlier, the music was composed by him on the spot. It didn't even take a few minutes."

Chen Guang: "..."

Fan Wenli: "..."

It was only then that they found out that Zhang Ye had such stories surrounding him!

Could it really be that Zhang Ye had waited until they were right at the doorstep of Central TV for the song rehearsal before he took his time to compose a song for them? If that was so, then speaking from a certain angle, he was truly a god!

Chapter 656 The "Little Leader" of the program team!

[collapse]

Afternoon.

In the music recording studio, the four coaches started familiarizing themselves with the song.

Zhang Ye got the music arrangement teacher to stay behind and found another two staff members to come over to help with setting up the equipment. Then he finally said, "You all can start rehearsing. I need to leave first as there're a lot of things to handle at the stage."

Zhang Xia put down the score. "Wait a moment, Little Zhang."

"Ai, Grandma Zhang, what is it?" Zhang Ye asked.

“Just now, when we arrived, we heard that there are contestants who’ve already qualified from the preliminary auditions and are secretly rehearsing and having their songs arranged over at the other studio?”

Zhang Ye said, “Yes, they started rehearsing a few days ago. The main issue is with the screen time. It’s impossible for every song to take up four or five minutes, so we had to make appropriate adjustments. Besides, every one of them is a talented singer, so they have higher standards for themselves. Likewise, our program has high expectations of them. That’s why the songs have to be rearranged to suit them. The workload for that is very heavy. We’ve been working on it several days now so that everyone can get a once over of the process.”

Zhang Xia requested, “After we’ve finished rehearsing this song, we want to take a look at the contestants.”

Zhang Yuanqi did not have this request, as she was standing apart from the others, taking a call which was probably work related.

Zhang Ye blinked a few times. “All of you are so busy. Why would you all want to see them? They are still in the transitional phase, so you all won’t be able to see much anyway.”

Fan Wenli smiled and replied, “What Grandma Zhang meant was that we would like to have a look at the conditions and quality of the contestants. The rumors in the media and outside world are rife with the preliminary audition process, with so many of them irrelevant and baseless. So we’d like to see for ourselves to understand the situation regarding the contestants in order to mentally prepare for the recording with them.”

Chen Guang agreed, “Yes, I’m really looking forward to seeing them for myself as well.”

Zhang Ye shook his head and rejected, “No, that’s not allowed.”

Chen Guang asked, “Even we aren’t allowed to have a look?”

Zhang Ye said, “That studio where they are rehearsing is a secure environment. Other than our own program team’s staff, no one else is permitted to enter.”

“We’ll just stand far away and watch for a while.” Zhang Xia said, “Do you think that we would leak information?”

Zhang Ye waved his hands. “I really cannot allow that, Grandma Zhang. If you saw them now, there would be no more suspense. When the program’s being recorded, there won’t be the impact of seeing the contestants for the first time either.”

They tried to argue about this matter for a little longer.

But Zhang Ye did not agree to their request. There wasn’t even room for negotiation.

Actually, at this moment, no one knew what the final presentation of The Voice was going to be like and the sort of stage setup the program was going to have. The kind of lighting? The kind of contestants? The hosting style? Nearly everyone didn’t have a clue, including the program team’s staff. The only person who knew was Zhang Ye. As the executive director and overall producer of The Voice, he knew what sort of news to release to hype up publicity and the sort of news that needed to be kept

confidential. There must be some suspense. Everything could only be revealed on the day of the program's recording and not a day earlier. They were just like important cards held in Zhang Ye's hand. If he used them up too early, it would become meaningless.

.....

Outside.

After he came out of the music recording studio, he quickly headed toward the stage of the main recording studio. As the four teachers were already veterans in the music industry, he was only responsible for providing the song and could not help in any other way.

The moment he left, text message appeared on his cell phone.

Di di.

Old Zhang: "Where did you go?"

She was probably done with her call.

Zhang Ye replied after reading: "I left. Have to help out in the main recording studio."

Old Zhang: "This song doesn't count. Write me another."

Zhang Ye was confused. "Why doesn't it count?"

Old Zhang: "It doesn't suit me."

Zhang Ye typed: "Heh, this song isn't divided between gender or age. If you don't like it, I'll give it to someone else. I noticed Chen Guang's eyes were gleaming when he listened to the song, but since he heard I had written it for you in advance, he didn't try to snatch the song away."

Old Zhang: "I'll keep this song but you have to write another for me."

Zhang Ye replied: "Impossible. I endured so much pain just giving this song to you. Are you treating my songs like they are cabbages you can get from the market for next to nothing? This is art and needs to be treated with great care. Anyway, I don't have any songs available now. We can talk in the future if there's a suitable song for you. Let's stop talking. I still have a lot to do here."

There were no more replies from her after that.

Zhang Ye exited from the messages interface and saw two missed calls. One was from an hour ago while the other call was half an hour earlier. As he just caught up with work, he hadn't heard them. Both calls were from Chenchen's physical education teacher, Luo Yu. He thought for a moment and decided to call her back.

Du du. The call connected.

Luo Yu said: "Teacher Zhang, you've finally called back."

Zhang Ye said: "What's the matter, Teacher Luo? You were looking for me?"

Luo Yu said: "There are no classes in the afternoon today at Experimental Primary School. All the parents have already picked their children up, but I saw that Chenchen was still at school, so I guessed that you probably forgot about her. When I tried calling you, you didn't pick up either. In the end, I decided to act on my own and brought Chenchen to Central TV along with me. I am rehearsing with the music arrangement teacher in the studio now, but I've handed Chenchen over to AD Ha Qiqi. They're over at the stage area."

Zhang Ye exclaimed loudly: "Aiyo, how absent-minded could I get. I forgot it was Friday today. Thank you very much, Teacher Luo. Sorry to have troubled you."

"It's nothing, I was coming to Central TV anyway," Luo Yu said.

"Then I'll go look for the kid." Zhang Ye hurried up and headed to the main recording studio.

.....

At the recording studio.

Dust filled the air.

This place was not much different from a construction site right now because Zhang Ye had requested that the stage and the audience seating undergo a major overhaul. Everyone was very busy with their tasks.

Without any effort, Zhang Ye found Chenchen immediately. He saw the little kid standing in the middle of the crowded stage, waving her small arms around like Zhang Ye and taking charge of the current work.

"Little Wang, why are you on your cell phone again?" Chenchen said in her childish voice.

Little Wang almost cried at this. "Young ancestor, I was just looking at the news."

Chenchen pointed to a place nearby. "They're moving those boxes over there. Go over and help them now."

Little Wang said helplessly, "Alright."

Chenchen swept her gaze around and found another person. She rudely addressed, "Wu Yi, go and take charge of the workers. They're not doing anything at all."

Wu Yi glanced to the corner, and sure enough, there were a few workers lounging around and smoking. He immediately went over. "Stub out your cigarettes. Smoking is not allowed here!"

But Chenchen still wasn't done. She called to a youth, "Little Li."

The youth rolled his eyes.

Chenchen said, "Have you finished compiling the statistics Zhang Ye told you to do last week?"

That youth looked like he was both crying and laughing. He replied, "I submitted it to Director Zhang on Monday."

Chenchen nodded her head like a little adult. "OK, you've done well."

A female editor in her thirties jokingly asked her, "Little Leader, I have completed all my tasks at hand. What should I do next?"

Chen Chen said, "Nothing, you may have a ten minute rest."

The female editor said, "That's great, thank you Little Leader, hehe."

During these past few days, Zhang Ye had been bringing Chenchen along to Central TV with him to work and she began to become well-acquainted with everyone on the program team. This little kid was really getting a kick out of being a leader, and from time to time, she would take charge and give some instruction. In the program team, Zhang Ye was known as the leader, while Chenchen was affectionately known as the "Little Leader."

Zhang Ye walked up to her with a straight face.

"Leader."

"Director Zhang."

"Teacher Zhang."

The people who were nearby greeted him when they saw him.

Noticing the situation, Chenchen also stopped ordering people around and slowly walked toward the audience seating. But before she could get away, Zhang Ye dragged her back.

"You little imp!" Zhang Ye glared and said, "Why are you making trouble around here again?"

Chenchen argued with reason, "I was helping you supervise them."

Zhang Ye said, "Who are you supervising? I've already warned you not to do so, yet here you are, getting a kick out of ordering people around, aren't you? Go! Go into my office and do your homework there! I'll take care of you later!"

Chenchen smirked and walked away quite carefree.

Zhang Ye barked at her as she walked off, "I'll check on your homework in the afternoon, so you better do it well!"

A female director standing off to the side laughed, "That kid is so cute."

"Oh, you think so?" Zhang Ye was tickled. "Even she can be considered cute? She drives people nuts. You might not know, but I feel my head will explode at any time. That kid's way of thinking and train of thought is completely different from normal kids. You never know what she's thinking."

Chapter 657 The unsellable advertisements

Countdown to broadcast: 20 days to the broadcast of The Voice of China.

In the early morning, upon reaching his office, Zhang Ye did some calculations regarding the production timeline and felt that they were ahead of time, since all aspects of their preparation were already underway. In the coming days, they could officially start the program's recording. Except for an equipment order that had been delayed for a week or so, generally not much time was wasted and

everything went according to plan. The construction of the stage was almost complete, the auditions held in other provinces were also wrapping up, while the contestants were busy rehearsing their performances and the coaches rehearsed their songs. The staff were also learning how to operate the new equipment. Everything was going smoothly. The only part with slow progress would probably be the case with the advertisers.

Dong dong.

There was a knock on his door.

“Come in.” Zhang Ye looked up.

Little Wang pushed the door open and entered. “Director Zhang, they’re here.”

Zhang Ye acknowledged her and then stood up to welcome them.

Four people stepped in from outside. There were men and women in the group, ranging from their thirties to forties and dressed in suits and business attire. They were all advertisers’ representatives or executives, and had come to discuss the advertising rights fee. Because a consensus could not be reached previously, Zhang Ye made an appointment with them to discuss it again.

“Teacher Zhang, we meet again.”

“Secretary Li, please come in.”

“Hello, Teacher Zhang.”

“Director Xu, have a seat.”

Zhang Ye invited the four of them to take seats and had Little Wang pour them some water. Then, he said to them, “We’re already counting down to the airing of the program. It’s only 20 days away. Since the recording will certainly be done several days in advance, we don’t have much time anymore. I urge every one of you to please reconsider.”

A woman from Plum Soy Milk Company said, “Your asking price is too high.”

Zhang Ye shook his head. “To be honest, it’s not an excessive asking price at all. An advertising rights fee of 3 million RMB is totally incomparable to the 100 million title sponsorship from the Brain Gold company. If we went by the usual ratio of the advertising rights fee to the title sponsorship fees, even if we asked for a 5 million RMB advertising rights fee, it would not be too much. But based on the market situation, we deliberately took a step back and lowered it by almost half of the original asking price. Moreover, our program allocates very good placement for our advertisers and will even repeatedly mention them immediately after we advertise for the title sponsors. For example, we promote our advertising partners in the host’s speech, after every advertisement break and also at the ending credits of the program, all of these are extremely good placements.”

The middle-aged man from Red & Blue Pharmaceuticals said, “Actually, a 100 million RMB title sponsorship fee is not reasonable at all as it is way beyond the industry standards, and is likely going to be a bubble. Let me say this, Teacher Zhang. For other similar singing talent shows in the industry, the title sponsorship for a program is only around 10 to 20 million, while the highest advertising rights fee is only around 1 million. Some programs would even settle for 700,000 to 800,000, yet here you are,

asking for an excess of 3 million and that the price is non-negotiable. We will not accept such a price. My best offer stands at 1.5 million.”

Zhang Ye looked at him and said, “If you want to compare us with the other programs, fine. We were able to invite Grandma Zhang Xia to join us, can the other programs do the same? We have the Chen Guang couple joining us as well, are the other programs able to do that? We even have the Heavenly Queen Zhang Yuanqi on board, what about the other programs? I’m not saying all this just for showing off. What I’m trying to say is we have spent a lot of money to invite four big shot coaches to join us, so we also have pressure on our expenditure. The four coaches are able to bring in a great deal of publicity and viewership ratings, so the advertising effects will be much greater. That is why our asking price for the advertising fee is also higher compared to the other programs.”

Another executive, this time from Heehee Dairy Industry, said, “It’s exactly because of this reason that we were willing to increase our offer. Teacher Zhang, let me tell you this, no matter how much the other companies offer, the highest Heehee Dairy Industry is willing to offer stands at 1.8 million RMB. I have already drawn up the contract, so if you feel it’s fine, we can sign the contract immediately.”

Zhang Ye waved it off. “No way.”

The women from Plum Soy Milk Company said, “Teacher Zhang, I heard that your program only managed to secure one advertiser to commit to the advertising rights. If you still insist on 3 million RMB and not lower it, it will be very difficult to sell the rights. In the end, it will just be a waste of resources and you will incur the losses.”

The executive for Heehee Dairy Industry followed up, “If you insist on 3 million RMB, we certainly won’t buy it. There isn’t any other company that has the resources or desire to buy the first-tier advertising rights from you anyway. At most, they can only afford the second or third tier of ads. Thus, if some of the slots for the first tier ads are left empty, won’t that be a waste? If it can be lowered to 2 million RMB or less, your program will immediately get a large amount of advertising fees injected, but if you insist on adhering to such an unreasonable price of 3 million, it will be difficult for us to continue the discussion. In the end, your program will miss out on nearly 10 million RMB of first-tier advertising rights fees for nothing. Is that worth it?”

The other advertisers were also thinking the same. They were waiting for The Voice’s program team to cave in first and lower the asking price themselves. Otherwise, without too many days left until the program started its broadcast, even if the team wanted to sell the rights then, they couldn’t do so and would end up as the biggest losers.

However, Zhang Ye did not see it that way. These people were seemingly right, but were in fact just bullshitting. “I’ll stick to what I’ve said. The minimum price I can accept is 3 million. Our production costs are clear for all of you to see as well.”

The executive of Heehee Dairy Industry frowned. “Let’s go back to the basic points and talk from there. The Voice has yet to start its broadcast, so no one knows how the viewership performance will be. Besides, from the evaluation of the public and media, it doesn’t seem too optimistic. By purchasing the advertising rights, we are also taking a risk here with our expenditure.”

“Teacher Zhang, I’ll take another step back, how about 2 million?”

“Alright, the highest offer we can make is 2 million. I’ll discuss with the company about this. They somewhat should be able to accept it.”

At this moment, the two people who did not say much finally opened their mouths.

Actually, the few of them had already communicated beforehand and discussed how they would handle this meeting. Actually, what Zhang Ye said was right. The Voice was the first variety program with a production cost of more than 100 million RMB in the industry. With the inclusion of Zhang Yuanqi, Chen Guang, and other big-time coaches, it could be said that this was a really unprecedented setup. Even if many people and industry insiders were not feeling optimistic about it, they were still willing to purchase The Voice’s advertising rights. Because of this, they were able to accept double of the industry’s average price of 1 million, offering the highest at 2 million RMB. However, they could not accept a price that was three times the industry average.

The four of them looked at Zhang Ye and waited for him to back down.

Zhang Ye also looked at them, then picked up the desk phone and spoke on the intercom to the outside office, “Hello, Little Wang, come to my office for a moment. Yes, right now.”

Dong dong.

Little Wang knocked on the door and entered his office. “Director Zhang.”

Zhang Ye bluntly said, “Please help me escort our guests out.”

The four of them were stunned. Escort us out?

Little Wang was taken aback, but then looked at the four of them and stated, “Everyone, this way, please.”

One of them said, “I advise you to reconsider.”

Another person said, “No one will buy it for three million RMB!”

Zhang Ye said, “Please leave. Our fees are all clearly priced. Even if no one purchases them, we will stick to this price.”

“Then forget it.”

“Goodbye!”

“Goodbye!”

When the four of them left, they felt a tinge of anger. How could you be so arrogant? For a lousy program like that, you might not even get 0.5% viewership ratings, so what makes you think that your advertising rights fee is worth 3 million RMB? Only an idiot would buy it! Just wait and perish together with the ads at your own hands! When that time comes, you will be the ones making a huge loss!

After they have left, Zhang Ye called Zhang Zuo and Ha Qiqi over. As the tasks they were responsible for were largely progressing well, they had managed to free up a lot of the time for themselves.

“Director Zhang, you were looking for us?” Zhang Zuo asked.

Ha Qiqi blinked. "I saw the advertisers leaving? Did we get more advertising fees already?"

Zhang Ye smiled and said, "No, we didn't manage to seal the deal. They couldn't accept the price of the first-tier advertising rights fee and are not interested in the second- and third-tier ads."

Ha Qiqi wondered, "We didn't lower our asking price? It's still three million?"

Zhang Ye retorted, "Why should we lower our price?"

Ha Qiqi: "..."

Zhang Ye said, "For any future advertising contracts, the two of you will assist me in handling and discussing with any advertisers coming to talk about the advertising rights fee. The price of the first-tier advertising fee will be 3 million yuan and not a yuan less. We'll discuss with this price in mind, so if they don't accept it, so be it." Right now, he was exasperated by these advertisers and could not be bothered to talk with them any further. As such, he simply delegated this matter to Zhang Zuo and Ha Qiqi to handle.

Ha Qiqi said, "To my knowledge, if we don't lower the price, it could become extremely difficult to sell. After all, the industry average for advertising fees...If they remained unsold, then our losses will..."

Zhang Ye said, "It's not that I don't want to sell the rights or lower the prices, but rather that they simply can't be reduced at all. We have already sold one of the first-tier advertising rights before this, and there's also the 100 million title sponsorship fee from Brain Gold company. If we reduce the fees for the other companies, how will the company that purchased the advertising rights from us think? How will Brain Gold who had supported us in our most difficult times think of it? They had given us assistance when we were down but we are going to treat them like suckers?"

Zhang Zuo nodded. "That's very true."

Ha Qiqi sighed, "But, if the ads are left empty, the losses we will incur..."

Zhang Ye said, "We'll only lose two ads at most, so this is not a big deal at all. Moreover, I will tell you this. The ones who will suffer the loss is not us, it will be those four companies that'll regret later on. However, this is something that will only be revealed at a later time."

Chapter 658: The broadcast of the program moved up ahead of time!

On the same morning.

One after another, several people tried persuading Zhang Ye.

The first person to approach Zhang Ye was a staff member from a related department who was probably responsible for advertising sponsorship in Central TV. He said, "Little Zhang, your asking price for the advertising fee has a serious problem and deviates far beyond what the market can bear. Many people have already come to us to reflect on the situation. Although the advertising sponsorship for your program is handled by you guys in the program team and not my department's responsibility, I still have to advise you. If those advertisers were already willing to settle for a higher than average amount, what more do you want? Right? Let's just secure those sponsorships first. It's better than ending up with nothing."

“No way.”

“Little Zhang!”

“The price is already fixed.”

“You! Why can’t you be more flexible? Besides, even if your program team is not lacking any money, Central TV Department 1 lacks it.”

“The Voice will certainly make money but the way to make money is not just limited to the sales of a few advertising rights. That is only a small amount of money while the big bucks will be earned in the future. If we make those previous advertisers who have already signed with us feel disappointed because of this small amount of money, then we will lose our reputation and a lot of chances at money. Wouldn’t that end up making us lose more than we gain?”

“Please give it some consideration.”

“There’s no need to consider it further, Chief Zhou. Please return.”

One after another, people came to persuade Zhang Ye. Nobody knew who told them to come. Maybe it was Central TV Department 1’s Deputy Director Jiang Yuan? Or the other leaders from Central TV Department 1? Could it even be the station head of Central TV?

Finally, the executive producer of the program team, Fu Sihong also came to Zhang Ye’s office. He pushed the door open and entered. “Little Zhang, the boss of Heehee Dairy Industry has worked with Central TV before. I also know him personally. Why don’t you just reduce the asking price to 2 million and sell them the advertising rights they want. As for the other company that have already signed, they won’t know our agreed upon price with the other companies. We can keep the information confidential within our internal department and the details of the contract won’t be made public. If that doesn’t work, we can also give them a slight compensation, by placing that company which spent 3 million ahead of the other companies or handle it some other way.”

Zhang Ye retorted, “Just a slight difference with the appearance order and it can have a difference of a third of the advertising fee?”

Fu Sihong said, “Let me tell you this, every program does it like that. It’s not possible that every advertiser will buy an advertising spot for the same price. There are definitely going to be some fluctuations.”

Zhang Ye replied, “I don’t care how others do it, I only care about what I do. Since I have already set a uniform asking fee for everyone, then that is the fixed price.”

“Little Zhang!” Fu Sihong became slightly angry.

Zhang Ye gave a wave of his hand. “Don’t say any more, Brother Fu. I will not agree with this way of handling the issue.”

In the end, even Fu Sihong was rejected as he left with a blackened face!

Fu Sihong was just the executive producer of The Voice in name and was sent by Central TV Department 1 to supervise this program and had very high authority. If Zhang Ye was still the newcomer at the

beginning, it would be uncertain who would be the final decision maker for the asking price of the advertising rights fee. After all Zhang Ye was still a newcomer when it came to Central TV.

But in all these days of the pre-production work for The Voice, from the program planning to the setting up of the stage to the invitation of the coaches to the securing of the title sponsor and even to the picking of contestants, all of these were handled by Zhang Ye alone. Fu Sihong did not even help much and could not be seen around at the program team office either. Perhaps he had other, more important work at the other departments, but because of that, faced with the current advertising rights fee issue, it could be said that Zhang Ye was already in full control of the situation. Of course he did not need to give in to anyone over this. Regarding how the pricing was set or what rules to enforce, he had the final say. As this was a program he had poured his blood and sweat into to create, people who were outsiders or did not help out much in the production usually, even disappearing when they were facing difficult times, were not going to have any influence over the decisions. Now that they heard that there was a lot of money involved, did they think they could just come here and dictate right and wrong?

Bullshit!

They only knew how to make trouble!

Zhang Ye was not in the mood to argue over such pointless issues with them. To be honest, he was not concerned about such a small amount of money. To him, if he had the time, he would rather go out onto the streets to canvas for some contestants with nice voices than waste time arguing with Fu Sihong over those advertisers. To get some peace, he decided it would be better for him to go downstairs to the recording studio. After supervising the work for a while, he found a quiet place to write down delegations for the next tasks. For example, the template of the recording for the contestants' video clips and The Voice's program logo, etc.

Some of the tasks progressed smoothly.

On the matter of the advertising rights fee, it was really just a small bump and essentially harmless.

But then, just when everyone in The Voice's program team was busily making preparations for the program to be broadcast 20 days later, bad news arrived without any warning!

Zhang Ye was the first person in the program team to learn of the news!

Then, one after another, Ha Qiqi, Zhang Zuo, Wu Yi, Little Wang, and the rest also received this stunning notice: The Voice's broadcast schedule was going to be moved up ahead of time! The new time for broadcast had been set for next Thursday!

Upon hearing that, everyone was dumbfounded!

By next Thursday??

Our studio's layout has not even been fully completed yet!

.....

At a floor of Central TV Department 1's offices.

In the deputy director's office.

Zhang Ye was a little shocked. "Director Jiang, what's the meaning of all this?"

Jiang Yuan was looking very depressed as this matter had also caught him off guard. "Can you start the recording of the program by this week? We must broadcast the program on time by next Thursday."

Zhang Ye didn't know what to say but still replied, "When I took over this program, the production time was set for one and half months to around two months. But now, after only half a month, you're telling me we have to start broadcasting? If it was brought forward by three days, I wouldn't have said anything. If it was a week, I would also accept it. But moving it forward by nearly a month? We haven't even finish preparing much yet, so how are we going to be able to broadcast anything?"

Jiang Yuan said, "We've also just received the news. The program you were supposed to replace still had about a month before they would finish initially. Counting everything, there were still going to be four or five episodes of recording for that program and the plan was for you guys to take over the slot when their program ended. But right now, there are some problems that have surfaced. The host of that program, Zhao Yuzhuang, has had something happen in his private life. You will understand once you check the internet, but for now, Central TV has decided to temporarily suspend him and take him off television for at least a year."

News?

Private life?

Zhang Ye took out his cell phone and browsed through several pages before he found it. A selfie showed a woman dressed in a bathrobe and laying in bed. Beside her, Central TV host Zhao Yuzhuang was sound asleep and did not know anything about his picture being taken. His lower body was covered with a blanket but his upper body was naked and the woman was obviously not Zhao Yuzhuang's wife. Zhang Ye immediately understood. Although these photos could not fully depict what was going on and could have been real or a setup, but as a host of Central TV, with such unglamorous pictures exposed in the media, there would usually be adverse effects. If it were other television stations, they might have tolerated this, but Central TV was definitely less forgiving. No matter how much money a host earned or how high their viewership ratings were, it was all secondary in Central TV. What Central TV emphasized most was political effects.

Zhang Ye put down his cell phone. "Can you schedule another program to fill the vacancy?"

"There's no other choice." Jiang Yuan said, "Recently in Department 1, only The Voice is slated to replace another program's time slot, so there's no one else who can take over. It will be too late even if we made a last-minute effort to produce a program to try to gloss over this situation!"

Zhang Ye said, "But we also can't make it in time!"

Well-meaning, Jiang Yuan said, "You all have already been preparing for half a month now and I know that time is very tight. I also know that no one has ever managed to prepare and produce such a large-scale singing talent show in half a month, but there is no other choice. Whether the program is fully prepared or half prepared, even if it has an incomplete stage or no contestants, we have no choice but to put it out and give it a try!"

“The time is too tight. Our stage, the contestants’ rehearsals, the video clips, the program’s publicity shorts, and a series of other things all aren’t completed yet.” Zhang Ye said.

Half a month?

Even a month’s time was insufficient!

Like The Voice from Zhang Ye’s previous world, from the preparations to production to finally getting broadcast, all of that would take about 6 months or even longer. Zhang Ye had directly pulled The Voice in its entirety from his previous world and that helped him save the time for planning and conceptualization and allowed him to speed up the production timeline for the program. But that was as far as it went, since the time needed for stage setup, production of the publicity shorts, and selection of contestants couldn’t be skimmed on at all! There was no way it could be saved!

Jiang Yuan said, “I know all about your difficulties, but this is the situation we’re in right now, so no matter what, you all have to do it. Little Zhang, what others can’t do, I believe you can. You are a legend in the industry and anyone would give you the thumbs up if you get mentioned. You certainly can do it! I have faith in you and confidence in your team!”

Whoa! Don’t try to suck up to me when there’s a situation like this.

Previously, didn’t you mention that my temper was bad? Yet you’re now giving me the thumbs up?

Zhang Ye repeatedly emphasized, “It’s too difficult, this is too difficult!”

Jiang Yuan stared at him and said, “Right now, all the station and I want is one word from you. Can The Voice’s program team fill the vacancy?”

Zhang Ye kept quiet.

Jiang Yuan said, “We will provide anything you need, including equipment, manpower, even Central TV Department 1’s and other channels’ resources. As long as you ask, I will help you to get it even if it means that I have to plead with the others! Oh right, about the advertising resources that we previously allocated 75 seconds of free publicity airtime to you all, after the meeting regarding Zhao Yuzhuang just now, the station also mentioned that if necessary, we can still allocate another 75 seconds of airtime to you all as compensation. You don’t need to worry about where we will get this advertising airtime from; we’ll arrange it for you. You only need to submit the publicity clips and give us a time and date for when you want them to be aired. What do you think?”

Zhang Ye: “...”

Jiang Yuan said, “Regarding the station’s request for your program’s viewership ratings, they are also willing to lower their expectations. So long as it hits 0.7%, that will be enough. When we broadcast a hastily made production, we understand that the viewership ratings will certainly be affected as well. We have already considered such situations knowing that we have no choice but to rush it out for broadcast!”

Zhang Ye realized that Central TV had no other way out. They couldn’t even give his team another day for preparations. No one could have expected such a situation to happen all of a sudden, so matter how

he considered what was happening, there really wasn't anything Zhang Ye could say to this, could he? He could only clench his teeth and agree, "OK, but I can only say that I will try my best!"

However, Jiang Yuan said, "I don't want to hear that, what I want to hear is a firm answer. Can you do it or not?"

Zhang Ye contemplated for a long time before finally committing. "—Yes!"

Although he hesitated for a long time, the moment he said "yes," he did so with determination!

Jiang Yuan said loudly, "Good, that was what I wanted to hear from you!"

When he left Jiang Yuan's office, Zhang Ye knew that this truly was an unforeseen disaster. The preparations were making good progress and all aspects of the production were going smoothly as well, but somehow, an incident like this happened. But Zhang Ye was not planning to give up yet, otherwise he would not have agreed. Since he agreed, he would certainly have to do it!

By next Thursday?

Only six days left?

Zhang Ye was counting the time he had left, going through every detail in his mind and thinking which part of the production could be sped up or which tasks would need more manpower and overtime.

As for cutting corners?

Zhang Ye never even gave this a thought!

The Voice must never have any "discounts"—this was Zhang Ye's principle and also his bottom line!

Chapter 659 A bold decision!

At another place.

In the program team office of The Voice.

Executive Producer Fu Sihong was not around but everyone else had already returned to the office from the main recording studio. Without definitive knowledge of the current situation, some were anxious, some were angry and some were feeling depressed. Everyone was talking about the news they heard about from the station as they waited for Zhang Ye to return from the leader's office.

"Is the rumor true?"

"I'm afraid it is!"

"Yeah, the news has already reported on it. Old Zhao's photos have also been released."

"So what are we going to do now? How are we supposed to handle this!"

"It's impossible to bring the broadcast up to next Thursday!"

"Yeah, we won't even be able to get it ready in time for broadcast in two weeks, let alone next week!"

"Ai, Director Zhang is back, he's back!"

With that heads up, everyone did not wait for Zhang Ye to step into the office and headed straight for the door instead, surrounding Zhang Ye as he was about to come into the office.

Ha Qiqi anxiously asked, "Director Zhang, what did the leader say?"

Zhang Zuo, who was sweating in anxiety, asked, "They can't really be asking us to rush the broadcast out by next week, can they?"

"Director Zhang, you have to speak with the leader." Little Wang was also getting very anxious.

Zhang Ye looked at everyone. "Let me go inside first. And close the door, we'll discuss this among ourselves."

Outside, there were already quite a number of staff from the other program teams of Central TV Department 1 looking at them, clearly having heard about the news of The Voice being brought forward for an early broadcast.

Inside.

The office door closed.

Zhang Ye caught his breath before telling everyone, "I've just returned from Director Jiang's office. The station's meaning is for us to bring our broadcast forward to next Thursday and they have already decided. There's no chance of changing their decision at all, but there's a reason for this of course. Right now, we're the only ones who can fill the slot. We have no choice other than to do as we're told!"

'Ha Qiqi said, "But..."

Zhang Ye interrupted, "The station will also compensate us with an additional 75 seconds of promotional airtime, together with additional personnel to make up for the manpower our team lacks. We will also get a free pass to do anything we want and everything will be given the green light, giving us the advantage of convenience now. I understand that everyone is quite opposed to this, me included. I also wish that they would give us another month or two to work on this program that we have been preparing for half a month to perfection, but there's no one or two months anymore. Right now, time is not on our side and the circumstances are placed before us, so no matter how opposed to it we are, it won't help the situation at all!"

Everyone was silent. Ai, yes, the situation has been set in stone, so what else could they do about it? Could they possibly refuse to adhere to the orders? That was surely out of the question!

Zhang Ye said, "Just now, I expressed my stand to the boss. Regarding this situation and the mission we've been given, we must complete it. Not only that, we must also complete it beautifully! Doesn't everyone else think we can't do it? Then we must surely do it to prove to them what we're capable of! Show them the fighting spirit of The Voice's program team!"

Zhang Zuo asked, "But how should we do it?"

Wu Yi said, "There's definitely no enough time."

Zhang Ye spat out two words, "...Work overtime!"

Everyone looked at each other.

Only to hear Zhang Ye add, "I will take the lead on this. From today until next Thursday, I will live in the office. No matter what happens on set, I will be the first to get there to give instructions. I will also share a load of the work that everyone of you have on hand, so please look for me at any time!"

Ah?

You want to live here? For six days?

Everyone was stunned.

Seeing this, Ha Qiqi also bit the bullet and expressed her stand as well. If the executive director was willing to go this far, then what reason did she have to grumble? She said, "Since Director Zhang has already put it this way, then I have no reason to not fight alongside with him. I don't know whether the program will be produced and made ready for broadcast on time, but at least I'll know that I tried my best to make it work. Since I don't have much to do at home for the next few days, I don't mind going home late. I will come to the office early and work until 11 PM at night. Other than sleep, I will be spending most my time in the office! Everyone, let's do this together!"

Seeing the situation, Zhang Zuo also said, "I have no problems with that, even if I have to work till midnight, I should be able to take it."

Little Wang said, "I—I can work until 9 PM."

Wu Yi said, "I am fine with working until 11 PM!"

A female editor said, "I won't be able to work overtime at night, but I can come in early at 5 AM every day. It's only for six days anyway, so let's do this!"

"Count me in!"

"And me too!"

"Me three! It's just overtime anyway!"

"We've already poured so much sweat and blood into this program, we can't just let it go to waste like that!"

"Right, it's not like we've never worked overtime before in the past. Let's do it!"

With someone leading the way, everyone responded!

Seeing that, Zhang Ye felt very pleased. He said, "Thank you, everyone. I promise all of you that our efforts will not go to waste. When the program starts broadcasting, the market and the audience will certainly give us their approval. Our difficult situation now is the last hurdle as we sprint towards success; it's the final obstacle between us and the fruits of victory. As soon as we can get over it, victory will belong to us! By that time, the harvest we'll reap and our growth of experience will definitely be many more times than before! But right now, we need to finish this task that looks insurmountable to everyone else! We mustn't lose faith before we even begin giving our all!"

"Right!"

“Director Zhang is correct! We will surely get it done!”

“That’s right! Who says that we won’t be able to do it?”

“We have Director Zhang leading us! So we’ll surely be able to create a miracle!”

“Well said!”

Everyone responded loudly in turn, their morale boosted by Zhang Ye’s words!

Zhang Ye did not let up and said, “Beginning now, I will start with the stage setup job. Sister Qi, you’ll have to arrange for the clips of the contestants to be recorded today. Shoot a few more angles and interviews, especially for those seeded contestants. Keep me updated on this as we go along. I will also be following up with you on the progress and helping out as necessary. The deadline for that will be two days later. As for the contestants, I want to go through every one of them once more. If there’s not enough manpower, tell me. Let me know what people and how many you need, then I will go and request them from the station!”

Ha Qiqi replied immediately, “Understood!”

Zhang Ye said, “Brother Zhang.”

Zhang Zuo said, “Please give me your instructions.”

Zhang Ye looked at him and said, “We cannot afford to delay anymore on the stage construction. Get them to work on it through the night. Give the workers more money, but I want it done before Monday! The equipment testing also has to be completed before Tuesday!”

Zhang Zuo drew in a deep breath. “The stage can be finished if we work overtime on it, but for the equipment, as they are all the highest end available in the industry and many of our staff are using it for just the first time, we’re still learning about it. There’s even two sets of equipment that we have not finished adjusting and are getting outside advice on how to deal with them. Regarding that, I really am unable to do much or guarantee anything. If it’s fast, maybe we need just three to four days, but if there’s a delay, it might even take up to a week without getting fixed, that...”

Zhang Ye said, “I want it settled Wednesday by the latest!”

When Ha Qiqi heard that, she asked in surprise, “Then when will we start studio recording? The broadcast is slated for Thursday night, don’t you know!”

Everyone did not expect that Zhang Ye would push for everything to be ready by Wednesday, because then, how would the studio recording be done?

Actually, Zhang Ye had already thought of it. This was also one of the boldest decisions he had ever made. To give them all the longest duration to finish with their preparation work, he surprised everyone when he explained, “The program...we will record it on Thursday itself! We will finish the recording before 6 PM, then edit and do the post production, adding captions and getting it approved. Then at 9 PM sharp, we will go ahead with our broadcast! We can definitely meet that deadline!”

That caused an uproar!

Record it on the day of?

Broadcasting almost immediately after recording?

That was way too hasty. If they did it that way, then wasn't it basically no different from a live broadcast? What if a situation occurred during the recording? What if a problem happened during the editing and post-production stage? If anything even went wrong at any stage, they would not be able to meet the evening deadline for the broadcast! This was as good as tempting fate!

At this moment, they all knew just how bold Zhang Ye could get!

Everyone was at a loss of words at this, yet they had no choice but to admit that having been forced into a corner, if they wanted to rush the program out for broadcast, this was the only way left!

Chapter 660 Blue-collar worker Zhang Ye!

At night.

Around 9 PM.

Other than those working overtime or those doing night recording, everyone in the television tower had already gone home. The offices on the different floors had already turned off their lights, as more than half of the tower was empty. However, The Voice's program team office and recording studio were still brightly lighted, with many people streaming in and out. There were sounds of construction and equipment being moved, while some people were also discussing work with urgency. There were even the loud shouts of some managers, repeating their orders to the workers.

"Put that here."

"OK, Sister Qi!"

"Over there, hurry up!"

"We have to get the lights installed before 11 PM!"

"Director Zhang, we will definitely get the lights up before tomorrow afterno—"

"We still have other tasks to handle tomorrow afternoon. If we can save some time here today, we must do so. I want it done by 11 PM at the latest. At 11 PM, I will come and check the results!"

"OK, we'll try our best!"

"It's hard on you all, I know that. After we're done with tonight's tasks, supper's on me!"

At this moment, a female editor came over looking very tired. She waved her cell phone at Zhang Ye and said, "Director Zhang, um...my husband is nagging at me again, so for today...?"

Zhang Ye replied, "Go home quickly then."

The female editor said, "OK, I will be here early tomorrow!"

"Be careful going back," Zhang Ye said with concern.

The female editor turned around and saw Little Chenchen sitting sleepily in the audience seating in the recording studio and said to Zhang Ye, "I drove here today, why don't I help you send Chenchen back?"

Only then did Zhang Ye remember Chenchen. "Oh. It won't inconvenience you?"

"It's fine," The female editor replied.

So Zhang Ye asked Chenchen, "Shall I get Auntie Yi to send you home?"

Chenchen looked at him. "Are you going back too?"

Zhang Ye said, "I can't leave yet. I have to live here in the office for the next few days."

Chenchen grunted. "Then I will also stay."

Zhang Ye said, "What are you saying? There's no suitable place here for you to sleep at all. I'll get someone to take you back. If you're afraid of being at home alone, why don't I call my parents and inform them? You can go over to stay for today or I can get them to take care of you for the next two days."

Chenchen did not say a word.

"Chenchen, I'm talking to you," Zhang Ye said.

Chenchen ignored him and continued doing her own thing.

Zhang Ye was helpless at this and could only say to the female editor, "You go home first. Since she doesn't want to leave, I'll have to let her stay here with me. There's no other way around it."

The female editor suggested, "There's a big sofa behind the makeup and rest area. There are also pillows and blankets upstairs. Although the conditions are not too good, it's still fine to sleep in."

"OK, thanks," Zhang Ye said.

Turning around, Zhang Ye reverted his attention back to his work. Not only was he taking control of the overall situation by giving out instructions to everyone, he also involved himself in the details of the tasks. He was helping out wherever he could, even to the point of climbing up the ladder to handle the lighting setup. He was even oblivious to the fact that he had dirtied himself from head to toe while doing so.

When an executive director like Zhang Ye got down to this state, seeing this, the workers also spared no effort and put more strength into their work. No one lazed around and some of the workers who had initially intended to leave at 10 PM did not feel it was right to simply leave now. They just held back their tiredness and worked on. If the leader did not complain about being tired, how could they have anything to complain about?

At around 10:30 PM.

Chenchen could not stay awake any longer. Her eyelids drooped down heavily as her body swayed left and right as she walked toward Zhang Ye's side. "Zhang Ye, I'm sleepy, take me to bed."

Zhang Ye did not even turn around. "Little Zhao, help me bring Chenchen to the rest area."

“Ai, coming!” Little Zhao set down what he was working on and hurried over. He said kindly, “Chenchen, let’s go.”

Chenchen glanced at Little Zhao and then laid her eyes back on Zhang Ye and pushed him on the back. “Zhang Ye, you take me, you have to sleep too.”

Zhang Ye said, “How can I sleep? It’s almost the deadline and I’m already planning to work continuously for the next few days. Just be good and let Uncle Little Zhao get you a blanket, then go to sleep.”

Chenchen yelled, “Zhang Ye, Zhang Ye!”

Zhang Ye ignored her as the installed lighting seemed to have a problem. He rushed up and asked, “What happened? Wasn’t it checked before the installation was done?”

Chenchen got angry.

Little Zhao looked at her and said, “There have been some changes recently and Director Zhang is the most anxious out of everyone on the program team. He’s has the most pressure on him and all he is thinking of now is how to get The Voice broadcast smoothly without any incident. So why don’t we not give Director Zhang any trouble, otherwise he’ll be even more tired.”

Though he was unsure if Chenchen understood that, she still slowly walked away with Little Zhao. Just before she left the recording studio, she turned her head suddenly and said loudly, “Zhang Ye, you come and sleep soon as well.”

Zhang Ye acknowledged, “Alright, alright.”

Only then did Chenchen finally leave the recording studio.

However, once he became busy again, he worked until 12 AM.

After they ordered and finished their supper, all the workers left. More than half of the staff also returned home. Only three to five members of the program team staff stayed with Zhang Ye to continue working. They were all the younger male staff members and physically fitter, while another female staff member did not want to leave either, saying that she wanted to stay and continue working. However, seeing that it was already very late, he still made her go back, thinking that it wouldn’t be safe if she went back any later than that.

“Director Zhang, let’s continue.”

“Can you all still take it?”

“Yes!”

“I can still take it!”

“I’m fine too, I don’t usually sleep until much later than this.”

“OK, we only have a little more to finish up for today’s tasks. Let’s get it done quickly so that you all can go home and rest well.”

Another round of work began once more for them.

Moreover, the effort needed to work after midnight was much greater compared to normal working hours in the daytime. Even though the workload was more or less the same, during daytime they were in a better state of mind and had plenty of rest beforehand, so they could easily complete their tasks. However, after midnight, they were in an entirely different state of mind and fatigued after working more than 10 hours. Coupled with the feeling of sleepiness, their efficiency rapidly declined as well. They only managed to stay awake with great perseverance and physical strength!

Ten minutes!

Half an hour!

Suddenly, a small figure appeared from the rear, swaying unsteadily and walking toward them. It was Chenchen. She was wrapped in a thin blanket and found Zhang Ye in her half-asleep state. Her eyes could barely stay open and it was only through the slits of her eyes that she saw him. She then plopped herself heavily onto the coach's chair closest to her. She adjusted herself in the seat a little and covered herself with the blanket before dozing off again, breathing quietly through her mouth.

Zhang Ye did not notice her.

But a few of the staff members discovered her in the chair a moment later.

"Uhh."

"Director Zhang, Chenchen is here."

Zhang Ye turned his head around and saw her. "Huh, why did you come out here? The place is such a mess and you're sleeping here? Hurry up and go back into the rest area to sleep."

Chenchen was woken by this and opened her eyes, only to glance at him for a moment before shutting them and falling back asleep.

Zhang Ye quickly went over and tugged at her. "Go, go, go. Be good and listen. If you're disobedient, I will get angry."

Chenchen lay sprawled out on the chair and mumbled a few sleepy words. But as to what she was saying, no one could make out a word.

Zhang Ye was left with no choice and could only tell the staff, "I guess that's it for today. We're almost done anyway, thank you for the hard work. Now go back home and sleep well."

"All-alright then."

"Then we'll be going."

"Director Zhang, you rest early too."

The several of them were indeed feeling dead tired and knew that it was time for them to go home as well.

Zhang Ye poked Chenchen. "Come, let's go to sleep."

Chenchen whined but did not move.

Zhang Ye could only helplessly bend over to pick her up. A child seven or eight years old was already considered somewhat heavy. Zhang Ye could not single-handedly carry her like the landlady did and could only hold her with two hands, carrying her to the rest area and putting her back onto the big sofa.

“Go to sleep,” Zhang Ye whispered.

Without needing him to say so, Chenchen was already fast asleep.

Zhang Ye pulled the blanket over her but did not leave. He knew that Chenchen could not sleep well if she was alone and needed someone beside her. He was afraid that if Chenchen didn't fall into a deep sleep, she would go out looking for him again. So he laid down beside her and closed his eyes for a nap, but not fully falling asleep. After about 20 minutes, he sat up and studied Chenchen before carefully getting off the sofa and returning to the recording studio to work.

Come.

It's time to continue!

He was the only person left in the huge recording studio, so Zhang Ye went over to the control room to test out some of the equipment he had knowledge on, for instance the hanging ceiling microphones he had requested. Then, item by item, he finally got to testing the lighting rig, tinkering with the movement controls. Next, he began to fiddle around on the computer and printed several hundred audience admission passes as well as making the contestant passes. Then he created a short publicity video explaining the competition's rules for the program. Due to his experience from making advertisements, such tasks were not difficult at all for him and he could do it by himself even if no one was helping him, although it took much more time doing it alone. On top of that, he also did the voice-over for the video explaining the competition's rules.

Time was ticking away.

Zhang Ye was so absorbed in his work that he had long since forgotten all about the time. He now regarded himself as a blue-collar worker and ordered himself around as such. Titles of program executive director or famous host were all useless at this point in time. All he wanted to do right now was ensure that the quality of The Voice would still be retained even if he had to rush it out before the deadline. Other than that, everything else was pointless and in vain!

He went all out!

It was a race against time!