

Superstar 981

Chapter 981: Mask: The Clown!

During the weekend.

The promotions for King of Masked Singers were already progressing as planned.

News of heavyweight big shots joining the show, being called a new variety show that would subvert all other singing shows, and all sorts of topics related to the show were constantly generated as the netizens grew more and more hyped!

"Who's joined the show already?"

"When does it begin broadcasting?"

"Quickly begin recording the show!"

"I can't wait any longer!"

"Is Zhang Ye really not going to be the host?"

"Will there be any A-list celebrities joining?"

"Don't leave us hanging!"

"King of Masked Singers? This title leaves everything to the imagination!"

"They're really going to let established singers compete against each other on the same stage? To see who is better?"

"Damn, that's so ruthless!"

"Isn't Beijing TV taking things too far this time?"

"Yeah, they might really have taken it a bit too far! But I'm still looking forward to it!"

"That's right, I really want to watch it! Chen Guang versus Fan Wenli? A Heavenly King versus a Heavenly Queen? Will such a situation really happen? I can't bear it just thinking about it! Hurry up and start broadcasting already!"

"The most interesting thing is that everyone will be wearing a mask, so no one will know who the person behind it is!"

King of Masked Singers' format and title gradually surfaced. Even before the show got broadcast, while it was still in the production stage, the popularity of this show was already greater than the numerous television variety shows that were currently broadcasting! There was more discussion about it than all the others combined! A situation like this was typically not seen in the industry! When many of the industry peers saw this, they could only shake their heads and smile bitterly, or stare in amazement at the happenings.

Envy?

They had nothing to be envious about!

Because Zhang Ye's production was just too creative to begin with!

...

Dragon Television.

"We should have invited him to join us if we knew it would be like this!"

"Yeah, this show is truly going to be spectacular!"

"Just from hearing of it, I know it will become famous!"

"Did you think that Zhang Ye would be so easy to recruit?"

"That's right. He only went over to help them produce the show because he has friends at Beijing TV and past ties with the station."

...

Zhejiang Television.

"Zhang Ye is content to just work behind the scenes?"

"Who knows!"

"He couldn't possibly come up with such a good show and just give it up to Beijing TV so easily, can he?"

"He can't host even if he wants to, since the higher-ups' attitude toward him is still uncertain. That air pollution documentary brought him a great deal of popularity and reputation, but it has also disrupted his career."

"Hai, if only we had gotten this show instead!"

"King of Masked Singers? Only a daring person like Zhang Ye would come up with such a show!"

...

Heated discussions regarding this topic started appearing online.

It was widely discussed within the industry as well.

At home, Zhang Ye was practically doing nothing. He had already finished his detailed pre-production work for the show and was essentially not involved with the rest of the production. Yesterday, Hu Fei had wanted to inform Zhang Ye about the identities of the masked singers who'd joined, but was turned down. Zhang Ye didn't even want to hear or know about them. This was because he did not want too much pressure and distractions for himself. If he knew who the other competitors were, he would probably start overthinking things, so it was better to know nothing at all.

Later that morning.

Old Rao called.

"Little Zhang, come over and babysit the kid."

"Where are you going?"

"To get a filling, tsk."

"Do you have a toothache?"

"It's been hurting for two days now. Cut the crap and get over here on the double."

"I'm still busy with my work."

"You've been staying home every day with nothing to do. What are you busy with?"

"Can't I watch a movie? Get my junior marital sister to take care of her instead."

"You talking 'bout that hothead? For only two smashed window panes, she risked her life by jumping down from this high a height. How can I be at ease letting her babysit my kid?"

"True, she is a little hotheaded."

"Get over here."

"Fine, fine. I understand. You just go on ahead."

After informing his parents, Zhang Ye headed straight to Old Rao's place.

When he arrived, Rao Aimin was already gone. For some reason, Yang Shu was at Rao Aimin's house as well. She was practicing her martial arts in the first story living room by herself, going "hoo ha, hoo ha," enraptured in her training!

When she saw Zhang Ye, Yang Shu quickly cooled down with an ending stance. She took a deep breath and respectfully greeted, "Senior Bro."

Zhang Ye smiled wryly. "You don't have to be so polite. I've already said that you can just call me by my name."

Yang Shu nodded. "OK, Senior Bro. Then can you lend me some money?"

Ah?

Asking to borrow money again?

Zhang Ye said in exasperation, "I think it's better for you to be more polite."

Yang Shu said nothing.

Zhang Ye asked, "You've run out of money again?"

Yang Shu made a noise of acknowledgment. "I haven't found a job yet."

Annoyed, Zhang Ye said, "You can't just keep staying at home doing nothing. What do you wish to do? Tell me."

"I would like to spread the art of the Taiji Fist so that it may flourish and bring glory to my ancestors."

"How will you spread it?"

"I don't know. I will listen to Senior Bro's teachings."

Why would you listen to me!

This bro does not have such aspirations!

However, Zhang Ye had only one junior marital sister, so he couldn't just ignore her. He pulled out all of the cash in his wallet, totaling over 3,000 RMB, and gave it to her.

Yang Shu didn't treat Zhang Ye as a stranger, but rather as family. She took it and pocketed it. "Thank you, Senior Bro."

At this moment, Chenchen came down from upstairs.

Zhang Ye looked up. "What were you doing upstairs?"

Chenchen gave him a look. "Zhang Ye, help me do my homework."

Zhang Ye sneered. "I refuse."

When Yang Shu heard this exchange, she said, "Senior Bro, teach me Taiji Fist."

Zhang Ye said in a speechless manner, "We'll talk about that another time."

Chenchen said, "Zhang Ye, do my homework for me!"

Yang Shu said, "Senior Bro, teach me some unarmed fighting techniques!"

The two of them kept it up one after the other, giving Zhang Ye a terrible headache.

The phone suddenly rang.

It was his other cell phone that was ringing!

"Alright, that's enough! Be quiet!" Zhang Ye said impatiently, "I need to answer this call before I can listen to the two of you again. Do you think things are easy for me?!"

Zhang Ye walked a distance away from them before answering the call.

It was the same woman's voice from a few days back on the other end of the line.

Han Qi carefully said: "Hello, Teacher. I'm Han Qi from the King of Masked Singers' program team. You can just call me Little Han. From now on, I'm your main liaison with the program team. If you require anything, you can find me anytime."

Zhang Ye pinched his throat and said: "OK."

Han Qi said: "Welcome aboard. Then...the rules of our show state that every participant must fashion a mask, so do you have any kind of designs in mind that you would like? And what about your stage name? We will construct a mask according to your specifications."

Zhang Ye blinked a few times. "I need to think about it."

Han Qi said: "Understood. You may call me anytime when you've thought of it."

"OK."

After hanging up, Zhang Ye fell into deep thought.

A mask?

A stage name?

He had to make sure to get it right as it was incredibly important.

What should he use?

What should he be called?

Zhang Ye couldn't think of one no matter how he tried, so he waved Yang Shu and Chenchen over.

"Here's a task for the two of you. Help me think of something. If you had to label me as something, what would your impression of me be?"

Chenchen chuckled. "A dummy!"

Zhang Ye stared at her. "I'm gonna spank you."

Chenchen looked at him. "But you really are a dummy."

Zhang Ye harrumphed. "Answer me properly and I'll help you do your homework!"

Chenchen immediately changed her tune and replied, "A hero!"

Dummy?

Hero?

Isn't your turnabout too damn fast?!

Why are you so fake!

Zhang Ye rolled his eyes and looked to Yang Shu. "Junior Sis?"

Yang Shu thought for a long time before saying, "I think that you have a chivalrous spirit for the country and its people."

These words from his junior martial sister had actually embarrassed Zhang Ye some!

Chivalrous?

He was not worthy of the description.

In truth, Zhang Ye had never had a high appraisal of himself. He did not feel that he was a hero, nor did he have anything to do with the word "chivalrous." He was just a celebrity who made people laugh, earned some money with a clear conscience along the way, stepped in whenever he saw injustice, and scolded people if he was forced into a corner by them. He would make trouble from one industry to another, so he was actually a disliked personality who offended and angered many people wherever he went.

Then why not this?

His stage name would be "The Clown."

If this world did not wish to let him say anything!

If this world was unwilling to let him appear!

If this world could not accommodate his pride!

If that is the case, then I shall transform into "The Clown." Donning my war robes, putting on my mask, changing my identity, I will turn everything upside down once more!

Chapter 982: You want another song?

On this day.

Zhang Ye's mask and costume had arrived. It wasn't sent to his house because he didn't give his home address to the station. Otherwise, they might spot it and easily identify him as a result. The address he gave to the King of Masked Singers program team was his eldest younger sister's home address. The courier from Beijing Television had already reached her place.

His eldest younger sister's call came in.

"Brother, your package has arrived."

"Thanks."

"What's in it?"

"It's a secret, hur hur."

"You're acting so mysterious. Shall I send it over to your place?"

"There's no need. I'll go there in a bit to collect it."

By the afternoon, he had the package in his hands.

When he reached home, Zhang Ye shut his bedroom door before opening the package. Then he took the items out one by one. There were actually quite a few, as all the gear from head to toe was placed inside.

The mask.

The clothes.

The pants.

The shoes.

And a pair of gloves.

Zhang Ye lifted the mask and placed it over his face to check if it fit. He looked in the mirror and was immediately quite satisfied with it. Zhang Ye had had a fair number of specifications for the mask, and gave Han Qi a list of design details to pass to the costume designer. This mask was not exactly made to

look like the stereotypical clown with a red nose and sharp facial features. It had only one color. White, pure white. It did not have any special edges or fanciful stylings. It was the simplest and plainest, pure white mask, but did not look plain at all when put on. Instead, it represented a return to innocence and appeared elegant and refined.

The Clown: this was how other people saw him.

White: this was how Zhang Ye saw himself.

A "clown" wearing a white mask. This was the inspiration behind Zhang Ye's design.

He also put on the costume. He was wrapped up from head to toe, and if he were to go outside now, absolutely no one would recognize him. Even he was unable to recognize himself, as all of the features and traits that distinguished him were covered up!

Fantastic!

This would do!

He took off the costume and placed everything back into the package. Then a call came in.

It was his other cell phone.

"Hello, Teacher. It's Han Qi."

"Hello."

"Have you received the mask and costume yet?"

"Yes."

"Does it fit? If not, I'll get the designer to alter it."

"It fits great."

"Great. So it's like this. Construction on the set has almost finished. We'll be doing some simple mic and sound tests tomorrow here in the studio. We would also like to have a look at all the participating teachers in their costumes. This is, after all, meant to be televised, so we need to do a check beforehand. There might also be an audition. The station has placed a lot of emphasis on the show this time and the execs are coming to inspect the production. If, if you're free, sir, could you please come and attend?"

"What time?"

"Tomorrow afternoon."

"OK."

"Th-Then please call me when you arrive, sir. I'll be waiting for you."

"OK."

An audition?

This was not unexpected.

Due to the special nature of this show, a lot of processes could not follow the standard operating procedures of previous shows. Especially for someone like him who would not even divulge his identity, how could he expect them to rest easy? He couldn't possibly assure them with just a recorded sample clip of his a cappella singing. They would have to at least listen to a live performance of his. While he was at it, he could familiarize himself with the stage and meet the program team staff. That was what it was all about.

Let's do it then.

He had been ready for a while now anyway.

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The next day.

At 9 in the morning.

King of Masked Singers' program team staff were in full anticipation mode. Those who knew which celebrities were coming all felt excited, while those who didn't know the identities of the contestants were all curious and looking forward to it.

"Are they here yet?"

"Five of them have already arrived!"

"Where'd you arrange for them to go?"

"They've all been put into different waiting rooms so that they wouldn't bump into each other."

"Good."

"Brother Hu, when do we start?"

"We can start now. Make them come out one at a time."

"OK, I'll go and arrange it!"

"Be alert, the station heads might be coming to have a look."

"Understood!"

Everyone got down to business.

They adjusted the audio as the band did their sound checks.

After that, the first masked singer came onstage. He gave himself the stage name "Sunflower in the Starlight," and in accordance, his mask was designed to look like a cute sunflower. Other than Hu Fei and Dong Shanshan, basically no one else on the program team knew who this person was. In an instant, everyone's gaze fell curiously upon him. He did not bring his agent or assistant along today, because it could have inadvertently revealed his identity. He came alone and walked to the band that the program team had invited. After communicating a few simple words with them, he stood onstage.

Although his face could not be seen through the mask, the moment he gripped the microphone, Teacher Sunflower in the Starlight's stage presence immediately changed!

The moment he opened his mouth, his voice shocked the entire studio!

This song was titled "Hope," and was a very famous song in this world!

The band members were under no pressure even though they did not have a prior discussion about the song with this masked teacher. They managed to sync up seamlessly to the meter and beat in no time at all!

They were all professionals, so it was no sweat.

Even though they were not familiar with the song, they could still easily play the accompaniment to the vocals. This was because they were the "Miracle Wheels," a very famous band in the industry. Most television shows would find it very difficult to invite them onto their show, so it could be seen how much effort Beijing Television had put into the production of this show!

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Backstage.

In a waiting room.

Han Qi was waiting outside the room, restless and tense, unsure of what she was really feeling, though she mostly felt perturbed.

Why is he not here yet?

Where is he?

She made another call. "Hello, Teacher. Have you arrived yet?"

A voice came from the phone. "I have."

Han Qi said: "Ah? Where are you?"

That person said: "Turn around."

She suddenly heard the voice coming from behind her.

Han Qi turned around in consternation. "D-Did you come here wearing that?"

The Clown said, "Yes."

Han Qi had thought that she could finally see the man's real face today and find out who he was. But she didn't expect that he would make his way here while wearing his mask. "Uh, are you ready, sir?"

"I'm ready anytime."

Han Qi coughed. "Teacher Clown, are you a senior of the music industry?" She began trying to sound him out.

"Guess."

"Uh, you must surely be quite the big shot."

"Not necessarily."

"What's your actual occupation, sir?"

"I'm a worker."

Han Qi was speechless.

You're still saying you're a worker?

Can you stop pretending, please?

She knew that it was impossible to find out anything. This person was much too evasive and obviously did not want to disclose any information. He clearly did not want anyone to find out his identity!

But, but you still shouldn't say that you are a worker just because of that!

The two of them went into the waiting room and sat facing each other. The atmosphere was extremely awkward.

The Clown did not say a word. It seemed like he did not enjoy talking much.

Meanwhile, Han Qi did not know what to say. But as she didn't want things to be so awkward, she attempted to make conversation.

"Your mask is really beautiful."

"Thank you."

"You're not too old, right?"

"I'm not young."

"Ah, last time you said you weren't old, sir."

"Really?"

"Yes."

"Oh, then I'm not old."

Han Qi was on the verge of tears. Talking to this guy was nothing but a goddamn exercise in smoke and mirrors. She couldn't tell which of the things The Clown said were true and which were false. Most importantly, he was still speaking in a gravelly voice, so how could she possibly guess who it was? She simply could not make out who he was!

This deadlock went on for a good half hour.

Suddenly, someone knocked gingerly on the door.

Dong dong. They heard an employee say, "Han Qi, it's time for the teacher to go onstage."

"Alright!" Han Qi felt a great sense of relief. "Teacher Clown, it's your turn."

The Clown nodded. "Let's go."

In the corridor.

Zhang Ye was walking out as someone came in.

Coming in the opposite direction was someone wearing a mask. The figure appeared to be a woman's.

As Zhang Ye and she passed each other, the two of them gave each other a curious glance. There was a hint of scrutiny in their eyes. Those eyes, that figure. Zhang Ye felt a hint of familiarity. He believed he had probably seen this young woman before, and may even know her. But as for who she was, he could not tell. Upon further consideration, he realized that the stars he knew in the industry were not small-timers. It looked like this competition was truly going to be a tough battle. In his first foray into the music industry, it had better not end up with him getting crushed within the first two rounds! That would be really embarrassing!

The two of them stopped in their tracks with unspoken agreement, and then looked at one another.

Han Qi wiped her sweat away and introduced them to each other. "This is Teacher Clown. And this is Teacher Sunset Glow."

Wasn't she pretty young?

So why did she call herself Sunset Glow?

Zhang Ye nodded his head in greeting.

Sunset Glow looked at him. "Do we know each other?"

Zhang Ye spoke in a gravelly voice, "I don't know."

Sunset Glow smiled. "How old are you?"

Zhang Ye lied without blinking. "Fifty, and you?"

Sunset Glow said, "I'm fifteen."

Zhang Ye blinked. "Your occupation?"

Sunset Glow said, "I'm a student, and you?"

Zhang Ye replied, "I'm a worker."

Sunset Glow had no response.

Though they tried to sound each other out with all those questions, neither managed to identify the other.

Both Han Qi and Sunset Glow's Beijing Television assistant didn't know whether to laugh or cry. Why were all modern celebrities like this?

A worker?

A student?

Fifty?

Fifteen?

Would you two die if you ever stopped bullshitting?!

Chapter 983: As a fifty-year-old pro driver, I am all smiles!

On the King of Masked Singers stage.

The set was not fully constructed yet, but it was enough to accommodate the sound checks.

There were many people seated in the audience, such as the station heads, channel directors, and Hu Fei, together with most of his program team. They had already auditioned five masked singers, and it was time for the sixth contestant. They had to take into consideration the live performances as well as other various factors to determine the order of appearances, to know which contestant would start in the first round or act as a replacement in the second round. All of this were not yet decided, so it was particularly important today as they needed to understand each of the contestant's strengths and characteristics in order to make a decision.

Hu Fei lowered his head and jotted a few things down on his notepad.

Contestant #1: Recommended as opener, has explosive high notes.

Contestant #2: Recommended as opener, a big name celebrity.

"How amazing!"

"Yeah, these singers are way too impressive!"

"I've got the goosebumps!"

"This wasn't even rehearsed. If it were the day of recording, how much more shocking would it get?"

"Our show is gonna get super popular!"

"Who's the next contestant? Are they here yet?"

"Yup."

"The next one is 'The Clown.'"

"Who's The Clown?"

"It's that oil worker!"

As soon as those words were spoken, the program team staff all snickered!

"Pfft!"

"So it's him!"

"Why did he come up with that name?"

"Now I'm even more interested in him!"

"Me too. I can finally see him in person!"

"Observe him, everyone. See if you can identify who he is! Figure out just which industry seasoned pro he is!"

During the past few days, "I Offer Oil To My Homeland" had spread throughout the station. The program team staff would laugh until their stomachs hurt every time they listened to it. Even a few of the station heads didn't know whether to laugh or cry after hearing it.

In the meantime, a few of the station heads started conversing.

A deputy station head asked, "Is this the celebrity who claims to be a worker?"

Hu Fei laughed and said, "Yes, that's him.

Another station executive said, "He sings really well, but that song..."

Dong Shanshan was also seated with them. She smiled and said, "That was just an audition demo. He was just ribbing us. I'm sure he'll sing a proper song for us today."

The executive nodded. "Yeah, I'm quite looking forward to it."

Suddenly, everyone's gaze fell on a side door next to the stage.

The door swung open and a white mask appeared before everyone's eyes!

He had arrived!

The Clown had arrived!

Some people even stopped blinking and tried to guess who he was from his shape, but drew a blank. Who could this be? He had a figure that was very common and could match too many celebrities!

When Han Qi saw that so many executives were present, she got a little nervous. "Teacher Clown is here."

However, The Clown did not seem to be the slightest bit nervous. He took to the stage very gracefully and stood there while looking at everyone in the audience. He gave them a slight nod, but did not say anything.

The station heads, Hu Fei, and Dong Shanshan scrutinized him.

He walked in with great confidence!

He stood there with great confidence!

The first thought that they had was: This is definitely not a newcomer!

As Dong Shanshan was the host, she took charge of this segment. She raised the microphone in her hands and said with a smile, "Hello, Teacher. Out of all the contestants, you're the only one we have zero information about. You don't need to tell us your name, but could you please briefly introduce yourself?"

Zhang Ye felt very happy at seeing his old classmate speak to him in such a serious manner without recognizing him.

Zhang Ye was smiling to himself. He purposely spoke in a gravelly voice, "I am The Clown."

He was especially cautious when speaking to Dong Shanshan. After all, they had been classmates for a long time and knew each other very well. If he accidentally revealed anything, Dong Shanshan might begin to suspect who he really was. However, Zhang Ye was still rather confident in his acting chops as he had previously received quite a few skill experience books related to acting.

Dong Shanshan asked, "That's all?"

Hu Fei asked, "How old are you?"

Zhang Ye didn't even blink. "Fifty."

Hu Fei felt his legs give. "Are you also a worker then?"

Zhang Ye said, "Eh, how did you know?"

Dafei wiped his sweat away. "Teacher, can you please stop teasing us?"

Zhang Ye replied, "But I'm really a worker."

The program team staff rolled their eyes in unison!

Pretend!

Go on and keep pretending!

A station head said with a wry smile, "Since he does not wish to tell us, let's not force him."

A chairman looked at him, then commented, "He must be a big shot in the industry. Otherwise, why would he be so cautious as to not even reveal his age?"

The channel's director nodded. "Makes sense."

Dong Shanshan looked at Zhang Ye. "Then why don't we begin?"

The band was ready.

The Miracle Wheels' keyboardist asked, "Teacher Clown, what song do you intend to perform? We need to do some tuning."

Zhang Ye looked at him. "An original."

"An original?" That keyboardist was taken aback, but nodded and said, "That's fine too."

The drummer said, "Go ahead and sing. We can improvise."

Zhang Ye said, "Are you sure?"

The drummer smiled. "Of course, it's no problem. We're all professionals."

There had just been two masked singers who had arranged their songs. Whether they'd sustained high notes or slowed down the song, even when it was performed differently from the original, the Miracle Wheels could still accompany the performers. They were one of the best bands around, so how could they not do that? It was just improvisation. What was so difficult about that?

The guitarist said, "Let's hit it, Teacher."

In the audience, everyone was engrossed by the happenings onstage!

Hu Fei's ears perked up.

Dong Shanshan did not blink.

Han Qi was also eyeing the stage, hoping to catch a glimpse of something that would reveal The Clown's identity.

A worker?

You've been acting since the start!

This time, I want to see how you can keep pretending!

A love song? Or a rock song? Once you start singing, there will surely be something that gives you away. At that time, I will definitely be able to guess your true identity!

A lot of people were thinking the same thing as Han Qi, as everyone wanted to guess the identity of this man. They couldn't have it such that not even their internal staff knew who this guy was, could they?

However, when The Clown starting singing, they realized that they were too naïve in their thinking! They finally realized just how much of a seasoned pro they had encountered!

Zhang Ye lifted the microphone in his hands and started singing with enthusiasm.

"We workers have the strength and pow'r!

"We workers have the strength and pow'r!

"Working hard every single day!

"Building all these high-rise buildings!

"Laying railways for coal mining!

"Reforming the world, we've changed it!"

Two of Beijing Television's heads were floored!

The program team staff in the audience were all bowled over!

"Machines are started: rumbling loud!

"Raising our hammers: clink clank clunk!

"Making plows: the production's good!

"Forging guns: to send to the front!

"Heave ho, heave ho!

"A red glow shines on our faces!

"Our sweat drips down off our faces!

"For what? For the revolution!

"For what? For the revolution!"

The Miracle Wheels' band members' jaws all dropped. Throughout, they could not even accompany him with a beat. They just stared in astonishment at the masked singer onstage, feeling as though 10,000 grass mud horses were galloping past!

Improvisation?

I'll improvise your sister!

What the fuck is this song! How the fuck can we possibly improvise to that!

But listening to that Teacher Clown's voice, they couldn't help but admit one thing—his singing was so fucking good! That voice was marvelous!

The music stopped.

Well alright, there wasn't actually any music to begin with. The entire time, Zhang Ye had been singing a cappella. The Miracle Wheels, who had just bragged about their professionalism, ended up not even playing a melody.

Zhang Ye finished performing.

Everyone in the audience smiling wryly.

It was another workers' song?

Yesterday was oil workers!

And today? Railroad workers? Coal miners?

Geez, friend, can you stop being so inspirational?!

Can you please sing properly! How do you expect us to guess who you are this way?

Hu Fei cleared his throat, looked at The Clown, and said, "Teacher, you sing great and very professionally. We all recognize your singing and strength, but about that, um, can you please switch to a different song? Can you sing something that is closer to your actual job? Are you a professional singer? Or an actor? Why don't you do another song?"

Zhang Ye nodded. "Sure."

Hu Fei said, "Thank you."

Everyone was once again in full anticipation as they believed he would finally sing something proper.

Something related to my job?

Alright, then I have no choice but to reveal my real occupation to all of you!

Without even skipping a beat, Zhang Ye sang the next song loudly. The moment he belted out the first line, he made the 50 to 60 people present in the studio so angry they wanted to vomit blood!

"As a fifty-year-old pro driver, I am all smiles!

"I tend to get long-winded when talkin' 'bout trucks!"

Pfft!

Dong Shanshan had her face in her hands and was laughing uncontrollably!

Han Qi was floored!

Hu Fei stared blankly!

You've become a pro driver this time? And you're even a fucking fifty-year-old pro driver? You even fucking all smiles about it?

I'll smile at your second granny!

However, Zhang Ye was very into the song and painted a vivid picture.

"Thinkin' o' when I was 18 'n' learned how to drive, oh.

"Fid'ling with that foreign truck, I b'came an old hand.

"Since, of course, I have yet to see a Chinese truck.

"Praying to the moon and stars, praying for that truck to come! And, it did! Yo-o-o ho hey!

"Our working class wins glory for our country, hey!"

Everyone felt numb and watched him in stupefaction.

But the more Zhang Ye sang, the more enjoyment and excitement he got out of it.

"Full of pride, I have the power!

"Hey-hey-hey, hey-hey-hey.

"Heh-heh-heya.

"My-y-y country's la-a-and spans far and wide.

"I drive my domestic truck merrily along.

"In the blink of an eye, I've traveled all across China.

"Load up all the construction material onto my truck, oh.

"Night and day, no stops, hey!

"Shipping grain, lugging steel,

"Climbing mountains, crossing rivers,

"I will take it into my own hands to build our China! Yo-o-o ho hey! Hey!

"Even with 50 or 60 more years, I shall never come to a stop!"

"Hey-hey-hey!

"Hey-hey-hey-hey!

"Heh-heh-heh-heh-heh-heh-heh-heyo!"

With one last deep breath, Zhang Ye sang in a sustained line in his head voice, "I shall never come to a stop!"

He finished singing.

The song ended.

In the audience, very few people were left "standing" as everyone had been bowled over!

Stop the truck!

Hurry up and stop the truck, bro!

Hats off to him!

They truly commended him!

Almost nobody could play dumb to his extent!

Oil workers? Coal miners? Railroad workers? And this time, it was a truck driver? Even if you live for another 50-60 years, you shall never come to a stop? Aren't you going to drive yourself to death then!

Truly, everybody was defeated by this masked singer who went by the name of The Clown!

" I Offer Oil to My Homeland 1 "?

" We Workers Have the Strength and Pow'r 2 "?

" Pro Driver 3 "?

What the fuck are all these songs!

Did you have to go that far to hide your identity? Just who on earth are you!?

Chapter 984: You have the cheek to call others weird?

Teacher Clown's audition was over.

Every employee in the studio found it both funny and annoying!

A lovely King of Masked Singers.

A lovely variety show.

A lovely stage meant for the performance of pop music.

But good god! It was fucking turned into a retirees' concert for old cadres of the working class, with songs talking about events before and after the revolution. Even if you sang a song from 10 to 20 years ago, we would still have considered it pop! But which era were your songs from? They were all songs from 50 to 60 years ago, perhaps even 60 to 70 years ago!

Han Qi thought to herself how her dad had probably just been born when these songs hit the airwaves!

How did you even come up with songs like that?

You're too good at making things up!

The performance had knocked most of the audience dead. The previous five masked singers had also purposely tried to hide and disguise their real voices. One of them even sang their song entirely in a falsetto. But even so, compared to those before him, the way that this masked singer named "The Clown" had concealed his identity made the other five people's methods not even worth mentioning! In order to hide his identity, he went as far as composing these three revolutionary style songs himself or with the help of someone else!

He pretended to be a coal miner after pretending to be an oil worker!

He pretended to be a trucker after pretending to be a coal miner!

Would you be convinced by that?

Would you?

In any case, Hu Fei, Hou Ge, Hou Di, and the rest of the program team were all prostrating!

They were convinced!

A lot of them were actually kneeling in worship on the inside as they listened to the end of the song!

Hu Fei looked behind him. "Sirs, what about him?"

A deputy station head who was neither laughing nor crying said, "Why are there even such people?"

A station chief coughed and said, "People involved in the performing arts are probably a little bit different, you know?"

"There's a lot of people in the performing arts," the deputy station head said, "but I've never seen one that takes it as far as him. In order to protect his identity, he pretended to be some retired old worker? And belt out revolutionary song after revolutionary song? Coming up with all sorts of tricks? He acted like he was a worker until it became a drama! He turned these working class songs into a series! When he gets onto the actual stage, he better not turn into a textile or subway worker! Who could bear that?"

Hu Fei was entertained. "Sir, that definitely won't happen. When the day of recording arrives, he will definitely sing properly. I'm just curious as to who he really is."

Another station head suddenly said, "Did you all forget? The contract."

When everyone heard that, their eyes lit up!

Right!

The contract had yet to be signed!

They still required him to sign it in person in order to participate!

The Clown had already gone offstage.

Hu Fei asked, "Are there any more contestants lined up?"

Dafei quickly answered, "There are two more teachers who have just arrived, but they're both still getting ready."

"Alright, let them wait a bit." Hu Fei immediately called out to Zhang Ye, "Teacher Clown, a word, please."

The Clown looked at him.

Hu Fei held up the contract. "You must be an industry insider, so you must surely know that there is a requirement to sign a contract before you can appear on the show. Please look over it."

The Clown acknowledged and walked over to them. He held the contract in his gloved hand and swept his eyes several times across the contract.

Hu Fei said, "It just outlines the duties of the artist, such as attending the show's recording on time—it's the same as any other contract. The contract period runs until the end of the show's broadcast. If you've verified that there are no problems, please sign your name here. Oh, by the way, it has to be your real name, else there's no legality, and that wouldn't do."

Everyone was thinking that he would reject it.

But this man wearing a clown mask did not even hesitate. He picked up a pen and signed his name in a few quick strokes.

Hu Fei was taken aback.

A few of the station heads were also taken aback.

They grabbed the contract and squeezed together to look at it. Their jaws dropped.

"This is?"

"What name is this?"

"I can't read it?"

"Th-This is your real name?"

Although he did sign his real name, it was so flamboyant none of them could read it.

The Clown said, "It's 100% my real name."

He was not lying. He did indeed sign it as "Zhang Ye," which was his real name. But of course, Zhang Ye was a calligrapher too. Regular script? Clerical script? Semi-cursive script? Cursive script? He knew all of those. As long as he didn't wish for anyone to read his handwriting, most ordinary folk would not be able to read it. And even if they wanted Zhang Ye to explain the characters he wrote down, he could easily tell them about the strokes that were written. His name and his signature would definitely match up!

A deputy station head was flabbergasted. "Teacher, you're making things very difficult for us by doing this. If we don't even know who you are, how can we pay you your appearance fees?"

Zhang Ye shook his head. "Just take care of my meals."

Take care of his meals?

No need for any appearance fees?

Damn, aren't you too easy to fool? But it was true; the working class had always had low requirements.

They had no other ideas left anyway. Having encountered such a stubborn veteran, what else could they do? They couldn't possibly deny him an appearance on the show, could they? With such good vocals, it would be a real pity not to have him! Besides, the man beneath the mask might really be some big name celebrity, and that would mean viewership ratings! Who would willingly give that up?

The Clown walked off.

Leaving only the program team staff whispering to one another.

"Could he have really been a worker?"

"The hell, you really believe that?"

"Uh, how else could he have sung those songs with such enthusiasm?"

"Who knows."

"I still can't figure it out!"

"Yeah, those three songs have me befuddled!"

"He's way too good at faking it!"

"We might really have to wait until the start of the competition to find out what he's truly capable of."

"He hides himself really well. But is it worth it?"

"He doesn't even want the appearance fees? Perhaps he's not actually a big name celebrity?"

"God only knows!"

However, when writing their evaluations, everyone still gave him very good reviews.

Hu Fei wrote: Bel canto maestro.

Dafei wrote: Recommended as opener.

Dong Shanshan wrote: Able to sing old songs well, very unique.

...

Backstage.

In The Clown's waiting room.

Han Qi followed him back.

"Teacher."

"Hm?"

"There are a few more masked singer auditions taking place later. When everything is over, there will be an internal meeting."

"Meeting the other contestants?"

"No, no, it's just showing everyone's singing to each other so that everyone can have a listen. Of course, it will only be a small portion of the actual singing, just a few lines. That's to allow the contestants to 'greet' to each other with their vocals. Of course, if you don't wish to make yourself known to them in advance, you may decline to partake in this internal meeting. We are more lenient about that. But out of respect for everyone else, if you do not wish to take part, you won't be allowed to listen to their singing from the auditions."

"OK."

"So your decision is?"

"I'm fine with that."

"OK."

Zhang Ye was fine with the arrangement. He had already done so much to conceal his identity. If someone could still recognize him, he would have to hand it to them. In truth, even if he did not hide himself this way, people were not likely to identify him. That was because Zhang Ye had only sung officially in public once before, during Beijing Television's Spring Festival Gala where he performed "A Letter to Home." His singing then was done in a more "recitative" style and was considered casual, so the industry insiders all knew that he couldn't really sing and would therefore not likely associate him to this current identity. As such, Zhang Ye was not afraid to let others hear his singing. In fact, he wanted to listen to the other masked singers to find out their strengths!

Half an hour...

One hour...

Finally, the auditions for the masked singers who came over today were finished!

Shortly after, Han Qi knocked on the door and came in. "Teacher, we're ready!"

Zhang Ye said, "OK."

There was a television in the waiting room.

Han Qi turned it on and changed some settings before an image appeared on the screen. This was clearly not a broadcast signal, but an internal one.

Zhang Ye, with mask on, looked over.

The first singer's voice came from the TV.

"The ni-i-ight's cooled down.

"The wi-i-ind's died down.

"But where, oh where, are you?"

It was a woman's voice!

All the notes were sung in a falsetto!

It might look like very easy to sing in a falsetto, but it was particularly difficult to control. It required a lot of skill, yet this woman's falsetto was flawless and would make anyone who heard it shiver!

Zhang Ye looked at her name.

Stage name: Petal Shower.

Who was it?

He could not figure out who she was just from listening!

Following her, the next voice sounded!

"The sun is my name.

"Heaven is my faith.

"The Earth is my refuge

"Humanity is my enemy."

It was a woman's voice again!

It was a very gentle and soothing female voice!

Upon hearing it for the first time, it didn't sound too special. But this voice was the type that became more pleasant the more you listened to it. It was the kind of voice that would slowly and lightly creep into your soul!

It was wonderful!

And who might this be?

Looking at her stage name, it was Sunset Glow!

So it was her! She had bumped into Zhang Ye earlier in the corridor. He felt that she should be someone he had come across before, although he could not recognize her.

Next, a man's voice rang out!

This was the voice of that man called "Sunflower in the Starlight."

"Oh!

"Yiya, oh!

"I don't believe that my life is worse than others!

"I don't believe that I have no talent!

"I don't believe that I'm destined to be a lowly person!

"I don't believe that my songs will be left unanswered forever!"

This was a song from this world, Zhang Yuanqi's old song, "I Don't Believe," although he made several arrangements to the score. His voice had very strong carrying power, and his high notes were very powerful!

He was certainly going to be a formidable adversary!

Moreover, Zhang Ye was positive that this man was a professional singer. This was because if he were an actor or a host, even with great talent and singing, he couldn't possibly belt like that. This guy's voice was like a well-tempered and highly polished blade!

Then the fourth contestant.

Followed by the fifth.

And the sixth.

Zhang Ye was looking more and more helpless, thinking about how these contestants were much too fearsome!

It wasn't until he heard the seventh person's voice that he felt a little relieved.

This man's stage name was "The Yak."

Although he sang well, there were some flaws that could be heard in his singing. There were some articulation issues and other details of his singing that lacked quite a fair bit compared to the others, so he likely wasn't a professional singer. Or perhaps it was a newcomer to the music industry? Hai, but when it came down to the real competition, nothing was certain. The live studio atmosphere, the audience demographics, the choice of song, the order of appearances, the actual performance, all of these would affect the final results. Zhang Ye would not venture say that this guy would definitely get eliminated until the outcome was announced. Who knew? If he picked well and chose a song that resonated with the audience, then they might very well just vote for him.

As a result, he knew not to disregard any of them!

None of the competitors would be easy to deal with!

Zhang Ye memorized all of their names by heart. He also knew they were not the only contestants. They were just the tip of the iceberg!

After the clips were played.

Han Qi looked at him with her beady eyes and blinked several times. "Teacher Clown, what do you think?"

Zhang Ye stopped up his throat and commented in a gravelly voice, "They're alright. The Yak is average at singing, but for Petal Shower to sing entirely in falsetto, she's a little weird."

Han Qi's vision swam!

Weird?

You have the cheek to call others weird?

Damn! Out of the entire group, you're the weirdest one, OK?!

...

Waiting Room #1.

The voice of The Clown was reverberating through the room.

"How glorious it is to be an oil worker!

"Wearin' a hard hat and trav'lin' the world!"

The masked man with the stage name, "Sunflower in the Starlight," was staring, slack-jawed!

...

Waiting Room #2.

"We workers have the strength and pow'r!

"We workers have the strength and pow'r!"

Petal Shower nearly fell off the sofa!

...

Waiting Room #4.

"As a fifty-year-old pro driver, I am all smiles!

"I tend to get long-winded when talkin' 'bout trucks!

"Thinkin' o' when I was 18 'n' learned how to drive, oh."

"Fid'ling with that foreign truck, I b'came an old hand."

Sunset Glow was wide-eyed and tongue-tied!

...

The people in the other waiting rooms were also reacting similarly!

All these masked singers were dumbfounded by what they heard!

Fuck!

What the fuck are these songs?

Who the fuck is this guy?

Did you come here to hold a union meeting or what?!

Could it be a veteran singer? Or an old performing artist who sang? But that voice did not sound like it! It didn't feel that old! Damn, just what kind of a person did King of Masked Singers invite this time?

"What a weirdo!" This was the evaluation of The Clown by all the other masked singers!

They were also speculating about the identity of "The Clown."

A bel canto singer?

Did he sing opera?

Just like how Zhang Ye was curious about who they were!

They were also extremely curious as to who "The Clown" was, as well as the identities of the other contestants!

For this unprecedented variety show, no one knew their competitors, so maybe this was where the real fun lay!

Chapter 985: A female celebrity in trouble

The next day.

Early in the morning, his parents had gone out to buy groceries.

After washing up, Zhang Ye closed his bedroom door and stayed inside to make a list of songs. Although it was still some days away until the official recording of King of Masked Singers, he definitely had to make some preparations beforehand. Frankly, with so many songs in his head, he did not know which song he'd pick to sing when he got on stage.

This song?

No, it was too normal.

That song?

That wouldn't do either as it was unsuitable for him.

Or that song?

Mhm, that song was alright, so he shortlisted it as a backup.

After working at it for one full hour, Zhang Ye was still not finished with the song list and was forced to lay the thought to rest for the time being. Since he did not have any inspiration today, he would stop thinking about it for now. He would decide on which song to sing at a later time. As such, he chose to practice his singing, as it was going to be his prime weapon. If his voice was not good and he did not sing well, it would be pointless even if he chose the best songs, since he wouldn't be able to move the hearts of the audience. Together with his stage presence, the musical arrangement, and the control of the live studio atmosphere, all of those might affect the audience's auditory and visual perception, which would then be reflected in the final score.

He still had many things that he needed to practice in the coming days.

So it was better to take it slow.

"Ah, woooo.

"Ah, haaaah.

"Ah, yi, yaaaah."

He began doing vocal cord warmups to train himself. This was the same as martial arts. Just learning wasn't enough. One would still have to practice diligently. Otherwise, though Zhang Ye had eaten 500 Fruits of Charm (Voice) and 500 Singing Skill Experience Books, he could not wield them effectively.

Coupled with the audition at Beijing Television yesterday, he realized that there were many other masked singers with astonishing voices. The pressure on him was great, so naturally he would have to do more prep work. Zhang Ye knew that if he went onstage in his current shape, he would definitely not win. Those singers were the country's cream of the crop, surely consisting of some professional singers who might already have been singing for ten or twenty years. This was something that Zhang Ye could not compare with.

One day.

Three days.

Five days.

He did not do anything other than practicing and refining his vocals every day during this period of time.

The octave his high notes reached.

How long his falsetto could last.

What the auditory feedback of his low notes were.

How to control his breathing and whether his modulations were mellow.

He had to understand everything. Through experimentation, Zhang Ye gained a deeper understanding of his voice and singing techniques during these several days. Only by knowing his true skill could he exert his strength to the fullest. That would allow him to capitalize on his strong points and minimize his shortcomings.

...

The promotions for King of Masked Singers were in full swing.

On this day, a call from Hu Fei arrived.

"Zhang'er, we're going to film the promo soon."

"OK."

"Do you have any suggestions?"

"Since you're the director, I shouldn't be making any suggestions. But if you need me to come up with a tagline or something, that's not a problem. As for how you want to film it, I'll leave it entirely to you."

"Are you really planning not to participate?"

"Hur hur, didn't I tell you already? I'd only be responsible for the pre-production. Brother Hu, I've been banned at long last, so why don't you let me rest a couple days."

"That won't do. Let's go together. You can give some advice while we're there."

"Where are you filming?"

"Not too far away. Just around the Beijing area."

"Well, OK."

"This will only be a concept-based promo, so there's no need for the contestants to personally take part. We plan on creating an atmosphere like a martial arts conference, with masked experts from all walks of life facing off against each other in a battle to the death. We need the feel of experts fighting each other, so we've booked a training hall for the setting. The view over there is not bad, and the atmosphere is also suitable for what we want. We'll head there first to get a feel for the place and see if we can create the effect we want."

"A training hall?"

"Yeah, that land is owned by the 'Lian Family Style School.' They're a martial sect with a real martial arts lineage, unlike some training halls that hold deceptive recruitment drives and demand joining fees. They don't usually welcome outsiders. There's an old film called Death Battle, have you watched it before? The latter half of the movie was filmed there, so it's quite a famous place. The two houses that appeared in the movie became quite popular later on. Some tourists were even attracted by its fame to the point it nearly became a minor tourism spot. I heard that a film Ning Lan will be starring in will also be going there to do some on-location shooting in the next couple days."

The Lian Family Style School?

He didn't know about them as he was not very familiar with the martial sects and schools of the Chinese martial arts world.

"Forget it, Brother Hu. I think it's better that I don't go."

"Ah? What's the matter?"

"If you're going to a training hall, I won't be joining you guys."

"But why? We're setting off tomorrow morning and can be back by evening at the earliest, so it wouldn't really delay anything for you. Hey, you're unemployed. What can be keeping you busy?"

"It's better that I don't go."

"Didn't you just say that you would go?"

"Man."

Would he have to tell him that it was because he was a notorious figure in the Chinese martial arts world?

Even if he told him that, Hu Fei wouldn't believe it!

Zhang Ye briefly discussed the concept for the promotional clip with Hu Fei and brought up some of his ideas before hanging up. Regarding the Chinese martial arts world, Zhang Ye's current stand was: "If you people do not provoke me, I will not provoke any of you. Let's just stay far away from each other so that we can save the trouble of finding each other an eyesore." He would not worry about the promotional video. Since the promo was getting produced, it meant the broadcast of the show was approaching. Zhang Ye had to make the best of it and practice his singing.

He practiced his singing for yet another day.

As well as wrote down a few concepts regarding some musical arrangements.

He was certain he wanted to go onstage with original songs, so his workload was much greater than everyone else. He had to arrange many of the songs himself, or at least come up with some ideas so that he could communicate them to the band members and music director who were invited to King of Masked Singers.

...

The next day.

Between 8 and 9 o'clock in the morning.

Zhang Ye was still under the covers, sleeping, when he heard his cell phone beep nonstop. They were notifications from the chat app, with messages coming in one after another, waking him up.

Who was it?

Why would anyone send so many messages in a row?

Groggy, Zhang Ye checked his cell phone. Oh, so the message notifications came from the Celebrity Goof Group, where almost all of the Heavenly Kings, Heavenly Queens, and A-list celebrities were members.

Since he was already awake, he casually browsed through the messages.

With over a hundred messages, Zhang Ye became more startled the more he browsed.

The first morning message was actually sent by Ning Lan around ten minutes ago.

Ning Lan: "Please help."

Huo Dongfang: "What happened?"

Xiaodong: "What happened, Sister Ning?"

Fan Wenli: "What's the matter?"

A lot of people appeared and responded.

Ning Lan sent a bitter smile emote and said: "We came to Lian Jia Gou for filming this morning. Due to a minor misunderstanding, someone in our filming team offended the Lian Family Style School. It blew up into a rather big affair and now our equipment has been withheld by them and they refuse to let us leave!"

Huo Dongfang: "Lian Jia Gou?"

Chen Guang said: "Old Ning, are you alright?"

Ning Lan: "I'm alright for now."

At this moment, Zhang Yuanqi appeared. "Have you called the police yet?"

Ning Lan: "Already done. The police are here and are talking with them. But it looks like it's gonna be pointless. We suggested compensating them monetarily but they wouldn't accept, so is there anyone here who can help us out? Please contact me, thanks."

Zhang Yuanqi: "I'll help you ask around."

Ning Lan: "Hurry up!"

Zhang Yuanqi: "Don't rush me. I'm already making some calls."

Everyone in the entertainment industry knew that Zhang Yuanqi and Ning Lan were close friends with a very good relationship. Although Zhang Ye had never met Ning Lan—who was an A-list celebrity in the film industry—in person before, they had chatted together in the group quite often.

Zhang Ye was still reading the chat history at the moment.

Zhang Yuanqi: "I've checked with a few people for you, but they can't do anything about it. The Lian Family Style School is a martial sect of the martial arts community whose unarmed fighting techniques are an intangible cultural asset. They don't have much interaction with the outside world, and the martial arts teachers that I approached were unqualified to talk to them. Old Jiang is in their circle, right? I'll help you @ him. He's a member of the martial arts community, so he should be able to help out. @JiangHanwei." Then Zhang Yuanqi said: "If he's not here, you can just call him."

Xiaodong, who was on extremely good terms with Jiang Hanwei, added: "@JiangHanwei Uncle Jiang, Sis Ning has met with some trouble."

Jiang Hanwei was also one of the chat members in the group, though Zhang Ye had not seen him say anything yet. Of course, this was partly due to the fact that Zhang Ye had recently joined the group.

After seven or eight messages.

Jiang Hanwei's name finally came up. "I just saw this. I don't really have any connections with the Lian Family Style and have not had any dealings with them before either. But I'll make a call to help you ask around and see if they're willing to give me some face."

Ning Lan: "Thank you so much, Brother Jiang."

Jiang Hanwei: "Don't mention it. Let me try making a call."

Jiang Hanwei was extremely skilled in martial arts, though his status was a little bit more aloof in the entertainment industry due to his big brother status. But he knew many people and was highly respected by them. But in the Chinese martial arts world, Jiang Hanwei's reputation was not really that great as he did not belong to any martial sect or school. He was previously a disciple of the Huashan Sect, but was later expelled for reasons unknown. At most, he could be considered a former disciple of the Huashan Sect, although that wasn't exactly much of a good reputation either. In the Chinese martial arts world, seniority and pedigree were emphasized with even more importance than in the entertainment industry. Even if the Jiang Hanwei Stunt Team had a sparkling reputation in the entertainment industry and around the country, many people in the real "martial arts community" refused to acknowledge him.

A few minutes later, sure enough.

Jiang Hanwei said: "I called them, but they aren't willing to give any face to me."

Xiaodong was a warm-hearted girl. "Uncle Jiang, you have such a high status, yet they won't even give you any face? What gives them the right to do that!"

Jiang Hanwei said helplessly: "The Chinese martial arts world is different from the entertainment industry. The 'martial arts community' is a more sealed off place. There are more rules as well. Once you've violated their taboos, they might really take it to the bitter end with you. Ning Lan, I heard about your people stepping on their Heavenly Rock that was passed down by their ancestral founder. No wonder they risked their lives."

Ning Lan sighed and said: "It was because one of our cameramen wanted to find a better angle to shoot from. But he didn't know that the rock held significance, so he crossed the fence and stepped onto it. We apologized, but it was no use! Everyone is trapped here now! We can't even retrieve our equipment!"

Jiang Hanwei advised: "Try to think of another way. I have no means to handle this. I really can't do much to help you."

Fan Wenli said: "Even reporting it to the police doesn't work?"

Chen Guang: "But still, they can't detain you like this!"

Xiaodong: "Then what can we do?"

Ning Lan: "The police is afraid to lock horns with them too. More and more of their sect members are gathering around now! Things look bad! Brother Jiang, you used to be part of the martial arts community. What do you think we should do?"

Jiang Hanwei: "Even monetary compensation didn't work?"

Ning Lan: "It didn't work, they wouldn't accept!"

Jiang Hanwei: "Such a problem is not easy to handle."

Xiaodong: "@Everyone Does anyone have a solution? Please rescue Sister Ning!"

This was the latest message in the group chat.

Chapter 986: Zhang Ye steps in!

The Goof Group.

This should be the coolest chat group that ever existed in the entertainment industry. Almost all of the big shot celebrities were in it, and any one of them could shake up the entertainment industry with just a stomp of their foot. This group was usually just a place for shooting the breeze, but if anyone encountered trouble, they could seek help from the group. Those who could help would definitely try their best as they were always looking out for one another. After all, who wouldn't have times of trouble themselves? These celebrities always seemed like they were doing well on the outside, but there were still times they were vulnerable and needed to band together.

"Does anyone have a solution?"

"Old Ning, you guys must control yourselves, you can't clash with them. Those people from the martial arts world are not to be trifled with. Every single one of them is very skilled."

"Who here can speak with the Lian Family?"

"Is there anyone else online?"

Ning Lan's social ties within the industry were very good. Whenever her friends approached her for a guest role as a supporting character, she would always agree without hesitation and help out wherever she could. So as she ran into today's problem, everyone was very concerned for her.

Reading this, Zhang Ye could no longer "play dead."

He sat up in bed and typed: "Are Beijing TV's people there yet?"

It was Zhang Ye?

The people in the chat group were taken aback by his appearance.

Everyone already knew about the conflict between Zhang Ye and Jiang Hanwei. But no one expected that the two of them would appear in the group chat at the same time.

Ning Lan immediately said: "Are you referring to the program team of King of Masked Singers? They're here too. They arrived shortly after us and got detained as well."

Zhang Ye frowned. "They were detained too?"

Ning Lan said: "The Lian Family Style's people probably thought that they were also part of our group."

Zhang Ye made a noise in understanding. "Then I'll make a trip there."

Ning Lan: "You're coming over right now?"

Zhang Ye: "I'll head over straight away!"

Chen Guang asked: "Zhang'er, why are you going over there?"

Xiaodong said in surprise: "You can help them out, Teacher Zhang?"

Zhang Ye said: "We'll see when I get there." Then he said to Ning Lan: "If that group of people tries to do anything to you guys, just mention my name!"

Ning Lan was stunned. "Mentioning your name will work?"

Zhang Ye said: "Probably."

Ning Lan: "OK, I'll wait for you. Thank you so much."

Zhang Yuanqi reappeared and asked Zhang Ye: "You can resolve things?"

Zhang Ye said: "More or less. I'm certain I can bring everyone and the equipment back safely."

In truth, no one understood how Zhang Ye could have any influence over Lian Jia Gou. Even for a martial artist like Jiang Hanwei, the Lian Family Style was not willing to give him any face at all! And you're talking about mentioning your name?

Xiaodong was still quite worried, so she sent Jiang Hanwei a private message.

Xiaodong: "Uncle Jiang, is there really no other way?"

There was a moment of silence from the other side.

Then Jiang Hanwei replied: "Didn't that Zhang guy say he was going?"

Xiaodong: "What use would it be even if Teacher Zhang goes? With that bad temper of his, what if he ends up fighting with them when he gets there? That would blow things up even more. All of those people know martial arts, and if they really beat up Teacher Zhang to a pulp, then..."

Jiang Hanwei said: "Beat him to a pulp? That would be so wonderful."

Xiaodong didn't know how to react. "Uncle Jiang."

Jiang Hanwei pondered for a moment. "Hur, the problem is that they'd have to be willing to act."

Xiaodong didn't understand. "Eh? What do you mean?"

Jiang Hanwei did not bother explaining. "Nothing."

At home.

Zhang Ye immediately rose out of bed and got dressed.

His mother asked, "You're up? Do you want breakfast?"

"I can't eat now." Zhang Ye said helplessly, "My coworkers ran into some trouble, so I have to go take care of it."

At this moment, a call from Beijing Television arrived.

It was Hou Ge. "Teacher Zhang, we ran into some trouble at Lian Jia Gou."

Zhang Ye grunted. "I heard about it."

"You've already heard about it?" Hou Ge was surprised.

Zhang Ye asked: "Is Brother Hu there too?"

Hou Ge said: "Yeah, all of us have been detained here."

Zhang Ye said: "Tell everyone to wait for me to get there."

Hu Fei had asked him yesterday to go with them to film the promotional video for the show, but when Zhang Ye heard that they were going to one of the martial sect's training halls, he turned him down. He didn't expect that he would still have to make a trip there in the end.

Zhang Ye went out, got in his car, and drove straight for Lian Jia Gou.

...

Later that morning.

10:30 AM.

Zhang Ye drove very fast at a high speed all the way and reached the location in no time at all. He got out of his car and asked for directions before striding off.

Before he even got there, he could hear bickering.

At the grounds.

A film crew and a program team were surrounded by a group of people. Ning Lan's film crew consisted of around 18 people, while there were less people from the Beijing Television team, numbering only around 12 people. Actually, the Lian Family Style's people who had surrounded them numbered between 20 and 30 people and were roughly equal in numbers to them. They were all wielding club-type weapons. But Ning Lan, Hu Fei, and the others did not risk leading everyone else to break through because they knew their opponents were all martial artists.

The Lian Family Style was absolutely not a small sect in the Chinese martial arts world. Their master had appeared on a Central TV science show several years ago, during which he performed his kung fu in the presence of an audience, and was recognized as a genuine martial arts master. Although their grounds and some of its facilities were made available for lease to the public in recent years to supplement their income, the Lian Family Style School was still the same old illustrious but reclusive sect of the Chinese martial arts world. Even if their opponents amounted to just ten people, Ning Lan and the others would still be unable to overpower them in a fight, much less force their way out!

A person on the film crew said, "Return our equipment to us!"

Furious, a Lian Family Style unarmed specialist said, "In your dreams!"

That person on the film crew fumed, "We've apologized to you guys already. We understand that we were in the wrong as we did not know about the history of the Heavenly Rock, so how can you guys handle things this way? Just what do you people want?"

Ning Lan tugged at that person on the film crew. "Director Wang, let's refrain from saying too much."

Director Wang said angrily, "But they're really taking this too far!"

The Lian Family Style disciples shouted, "We'll talk about this when our master gets here!"

One of the Lian Family Style disciples said, "Before our master gets here, no one is to leave!"

Hu Fei was also getting irked. "Do you people know how to act reasonably?"

Hou Ge said in frustration, "What does any of this have to do with us? Why are you surrounding us as well?"

The Beijing Television team had really gotten themselves embroiled in an unfortunate series of events today. They had only just arrived and bumped into the film crew that was filming a movie here. As some of them knew each other, they went over to greet the film crew and chatted happily for a while. After all, they were by and large from the same industry, and it was only polite to greet each other when they met. But who could have known that something would happen right at the next moment? Hu Fei, Xiao Lu, Dafei, and the others had all been surrounded from morning until now, deadlocked for the past few hours!

The police were also here.

Several of the local police officers were trying to smooth things over. "Forget about it and just let it slide, Master Chen. They've apologized to you all and even offered compensation. You can't keep them here forever, right? There has to be an end to all this."

There was an unarmed specialist surnamed Chen who practiced the Lian Family Style.

Master Chen seethed, "The Heavenly Rock was handed down by our Lian Family Style's ancestral founder. It's the symbol of our sect! It's just as important as our name! They should have just stuck to their filming. We leased the place to them, so we wouldn't have kicked up a fuss as long as they did not damage anything. Besides, we even fenced the area around the Heavenly Rock! There was also a warning sign in place! Yet they had to step on it! That's the same as stepping on our heads! Can we take that lying down? Huh?"

"Senior Bro, let's not wait for Master to get here!"

"Right, let's beat them up before talking!"

"This is so infuriating!"

"Beat them up!"

"Smash their equipment!"

The Lian Family Style disciples were whipped into a frenzy!

When the film crew heard that the disciples were going to smash the equipment, they got worried.
"Don't you dare!"

The digital film was inside the cameras!

If they got smashed?

That would be a huge problem!

Meanwhile, the Beijing Television team was also having none of it as their equipment was also being confiscated!

Hu Fei said, "What are you people trying to do? What are you doing?"

Hou Ge and Hou Di each rushed to stand in front of a female colleague to protect them!

The police officers started to look uneasy. "Calm down, everyone, calm down! Don't fight! Let's talk about this without resorting to violence!"

The Lian Family Style's people said angrily:

"What's there to talk about!"

"There's nothing to say!"

They tightened their grips on their weapons!

When Ning Lan realized that things were going badly, and was getting out hand, she remembered Zhang Ye's words. She had no choice but to use this as a last resort. She immediately shouted, "Zhang Ye is my friend!"

Zhang Ye?

Why was Zhang Ye's name brought up?

The film crew was shocked.

The people from Beijing Television were also staring at her in shock!

However, they were made even more slack-jawed by what happened next. When the Lian Family Style disciples heard those two words—Zhang Ye—they looked shaken and were instantly silenced!

Huh?

What was going on?

Ning Lan also didn't expect for those two words to be so effective. She immediately pointed behind her. "These friends are from Beijing TV and are all Zhang Ye's coworkers. He'll be here shortly too!"

Some of the Lian Family Style disciples looked at each other.

Someone stuck their neck out suddenly and gritted their teeth. "So what if Zhang Ye is coming!?"

"It doesn't matter who comes!"

"Right!"

"Don't you people even think about leaving this place today!"

"Even if Zhang Ye comes here in person, he'd still have to..."

Ning Lan sighed.

In the end, it didn't work!

But the next second, a voice abruptly came from behind everyone.

"Even if I come here in person, I'd still have to what?"

Zhang Ye was here!

Ning Lan turned around and said, "Little Zhang!"

Xiao Lu said in surprise, "Teacher Zhang!"

When the Lian Family Style disciples saw him, they all looked like they had just seen a ghost!

Chapter 987: Why are they showing so much respect to Zhang Ye?

Zhang Ye arrived.

The Lian Family Style disciples were cursing on the inside!

Fuck!

What is this Plague God doing here!

Shit!

This is going to be bad!

They were all in a subconscious state of panic. Although they had not participated in the recent Tianshan Martial Arts Conference, how could they not have heard of Zhang Ye's notoriety!

Hou Ge, Hou Di, and the others immediately ran up to him.

"Teacher Zhang!"

"You're here?"

"They've confiscated all of our station's equipment!"

"What is this! Tell me what this is!"

Han Qi and Xiao Lu stamped their feet angrily.

Hu Fei also looked over. "Zhang'er."

Zhang Ye asked, "Is everyone alright?"

Hu Fei furrowed his brows as he looked at the martial artists. He said, "We're alright for now, but they were planning to beat us up because of the argument we had. Even the police couldn't do anything when they got here!"

Zhang Ye said, "I'll handle it."

Hu Fei said, "Be careful."

Zhang Ye nodded.

Ning Lan also came up to him.

Zhang Ye locked eyes with her. As this was their first time meeting in person, they took the opportunity to size each other up.

Ning Lan was worthy of being an A-list movie star. She was elegant and looked very pretty as well. But at present, her clothing was a bit odd. She was wearing robes in the ancient style. Her sleeve was torn apart at the shoulder, and was even smeared with mud and some "blood." This look was probably required for a scene in the movie.

Ning Lan stretched out her hand. "Teacher Zhang."

Zhang Ye shook her hand. "Sister Ning."

Ning Lan had gone through all kinds of difficulties in the industry. Even though she and the film crew were trapped here and their equipment had been taken away, she did not make a fuss. Instead, she laughed. "As per your instructions, I mentioned your name but it didn't seem to have worked."

She turned around and looked at the Lian Family Style disciples.

Zhang Ye also looked at them. "The Lian Family Style?"

Master Chen, who was the group's leader, wiped the sweat off his forehead and said, "That's us."

Zhang Ye said calmly, "I think I heard someone say that even if I came here in person, I'd still have to do something? That thought wasn't finished, so please go on and finish it."

When they heard that, the disciples immediately fell silent!

The Lian Family Style disciples were instantly dumbstruck and started sputtering!

Zhang Ye stared at them. "You don't even have that tiny ounce of respect for me, do you?"

Respect?

What respect did Zhang Ye command here?

The Lian Family Style disciples had even ignored the police, while the calls from Jiang Hanwei and other people in the industry trying clear up the misunderstanding went ignored as well!

The Beijing Television team could not understand!

The film crew could not understand either!

To them, Zhang Ye was just an A-list celebrity. But then again, Ning Lan was an A-list celebrity too. She was even much more popular than him, yet what use was that? In the martial arts community, they did not care about how famous you were as the two fields were in different domains with basically nothing in common!

However, the Lian Family Style disciples' reaction confused everyone!

There was a moment of silence from them.

Eventually, Master Chen braced himself and stepped forward. He apologized, "My deepest apologies, Master Zhang. My junior martial brothers don't know how to be polite. We didn't mean in that way."

Zhang Ye regarded him. "But it sounded to me like you really meant it that way."

Master Chen gave him a nervous fist and palm salute. "We wouldn't dare."

Ning Lan was stunned.

Hu Fei was wide-eyed and tongue-tied.

Dafei, Xiao Lu, Han Qi, and the film crew were all dumbfounded!

Damn! What was that supposed to mean? What was going on? The Lian Family Style disciples had just been furiously calling to rough them up. But when Zhang Ye arrived, why did they suddenly turn into different people? Why was their attitude toward Zhang Ye completely different from their attitude toward them?!

Zhang Ye pointed to the people behind him and said, "These are my coworkers; Ning Lan's my friend. Before I came over, I told Sister Ning that I would be arriving very soon. I told her that if there was any trouble, she could just mention my name to you. Oh, but now I've realized that I don't even command that tiny ounce of respect. And you people were even planning to beat them up after they brought up my name? Alright then." He stepped aside to vacate the area, revealing the people behind him. Then he swept his arm toward the film crews. "Make your move. Do whatever you wanted to do."

Master Chen was sweating profusely, and was truly trembling. "You must be kidding. Please don't joke around like this."

Zhang Ye solemnly replied, "I'm not kidding."

Master Chen wiped at his sweat again.

None of the Lian Family Style disciples ventured out!

Make our move?

Rough them up while you're standing right here?

Fuck, we haven't lived long enough yet!

Before Zhang Ye's arrival, they could have done anything they wanted, such as scolding or beating them up, and no one could have said anything against that. That was because the Lian Family Style had the right to do as they wished since it was the film crew who offended them first. Even the police would not

be able to interfere. This was similar to how the ethnic minorities had their own rules, culture, and traditions. You couldn't just go about doing whatever you wanted and not respect their rules while in their territory. But now that Zhang Ye had come personally, they knew that they couldn't back up their bluster. With Zhang Ye's status in the martial arts community, if they did not show him this basic respect, then it would be their Lian Family Style who did not observe the rules. Of course, the crux of the matter was that even if a few dozen of them combined their strength, they still wouldn't be a fucking match for him! Beat them up? That would be as good as digging their own graves!

Zhang Ye said calmly, "I already know the issue. Whatever my friends here were in the wrong about, they've apologized and offered compensation. Or maybe you people could request something you need since they were at fault. There would be no argument against that!" Zhang Ye had always been a reasonable man. "But wouldn't beating them up be going overboard? A bunch of martial artists bullying a group of powerless people? There are even women among them! Are you not ashamed of yourselves?"

The Lian Family Style disciples were afraid to utter a word, but neither did they have an excuse!

Zhang Ye immediately said, "If you feel that their apology was not good enough, I will apologize to you all on their behalf since they are my friends." He then cupped his fists and bowed.

Master Chen went to stop him, flustered. "Please don't, please don't!"

Another Lian Family Style unarmed specialist hurriedly said, "There's no need to do that!"

"This isn't your fault," a female unarmed specialist also said hurriedly. "Master Zhang, there's really no need for you to do that!"

They could not accept Zhang Ye's apology, nor did they deserve it!

But with Zhang Ye showing his sincerity, much of their anger had dissipated. They suddenly felt that Zhang Ye was not as unreasonable as the rumors going around the martial arts community made him out to be.

All of a sudden, they heard footfalls coming from behind them.

Another person had arrived!

It was a middle-aged man who was bald. He looked very tough but had quite a tender air about him.

The Lian Family Style disciples instantly extricated themselves!

"Master!"

"Master!"

"Master!"

The man of the hour had arrived!

It was the Lian Family Style's master of the current generation!

The film crew and the Beijing Television team were subconsciously nervous. When the master arrived, they thought there would be another twist of events. If the other party decided to be unreasonable, they would still be unable to leave this place. Yet somehow, the next development made them once again unable to react!

Zhang Ye looked at him and gave him a fist and palm salute. "Master Lian."

The master of the Lian Family Style also looked at Zhang Ye. he gave a fist and palm and salute and said, "Master Zhang. A rare guest."

Zhang Ye said, "I'm here to resolve things for my friends and coworkers. They are just common folk and do not know your rules. If they did anything wrong, let me apologize on their behalf."

The master of the Lian Family Style refused to accept his apology as well and replied, "There's no need, Master Zhang. I've already been informed about the matter. The Heavenly Rock was handed down by our Lian Family Style's ancestral founder, and holds a great deal of significance to our Lian Family. But you are right; we cannot blame the ignorant. In reality, it's no big deal. Besides, how can we not show you respect, Master Zhang?"

Zhang Ye said, "Then allow me to thank you on behalf of my friends."

They could refuse to give face to Jiang Hanwei.

But they could not afford to snub Zhang Ye!

In the martial arts community, Jiang Hanwei's status was on a completely different plane from Zhang Ye's. Jiang Hanwei was a former disciple of the Huashan Sect, so even if he were an expert martial arts master, a former disciple was still a former disciple. His background was already tainted by that fact. Furthermore, some things that happened back at the Huashan Sect all those years ago had given some people in the Chinese martial arts world a bad impression of Jiang Hanwei.

But Zhang Ye was different. First, his kung fu skills were out in the open for all to see. He was someone who had previously forced a draw against a grandmaster. In the entire Chinese martial arts world, Zhang Ye was without doubt the strongest person below the grandmaster level. With his superb kung fu, even if those present today and the master of the Lian Family style were to gang up on him, the few dozen of them would still not be a match for Zhang Ye. Second, Zhang Ye's identity as the successor to the Taiji Fist that had been lost for over a hundred years was held in very high esteem within the martial arts community. It had a whole other meaning altogether. Third, Zhang Ye had recently barged into the grounds of over a dozen large sects in succession and took them all down with astounding ease. Almost all of the sects of the Chinese martial arts world that could be counted as large had their plaques smashed by him. Even the Shaolin Monastery and Huashan Sect had suffered Zhang Ye's violent wrath. Other than him, there was no one in the martial arts community with such a reputation. Even today, his legend was spreading throughout the martial arts community! However, even though there were many people denouncing him, as long as they did not have a blood feud with Zhang Ye, they would still prefer to avoid someone like him as much as possible.

Afterwards.

The master of the Lian Family Style glanced at his disciples and reprimanded, "Master Zhang is a guest, but you're all holding clubs. Is this the way we treat our guests?"

When the Lian Family Style disciples heard this, they hurriedly put down their weapons.

"We're sorry, Master."

"Uh-huh."

"Our apologies, Master Zhang."

Since they were being courteous with him, Zhang Ye also behaved politely.

Zhang Ye said, "We should be the ones apologizing instead."

An employee from the film crew was also quite enthusiastic to smooth things over. He came forward and said, "I'm sorry, Master Lian. We really didn't know the story behind the Heavenly Rock. We'll be sure to take note of it from now on. Tell us if you require anything for the training hall, or we could also fork out some money to help you renovate the place? It looks like quite a few of the structures are getting worn down."

The master of the Lian Family Style waved it off and said, "There's no need for that. Since your side has apologized, consider things resolved. There's no need to bring it up again. Besides, Master Zhang has come all the way here, so how could I ask you all for compensation?" Then he turned around and said to his disciples, "What are you doing still standing there? Return their equipment!"

"Yes!"

"Yes, Master!"

Master Lian beckoned to Zhang Ye and said, "Shall we have some tea inside, Master Zhang? This way, please."

Zhang Ye also gesticulated. "You first."

The two of them went inside to the innermost room.

They left behind a group of dumbfounded people who were unable to accept what had just happened before their very eyes!

Master Zhang?

When did Zhang Ye become a master?

What the fuck was that salutation?

In addition, why was the Lian Family Style's people willing to show this much respect to Zhang Ye?!

Chapter 988: Martial Arts Master vs. Martial Arts Master!

In the compound.

Inside the room, the tea had been brewed.

Master Lian swept out his arm. "Please have a seat, Master Zhang."

Zhang Ye said politely, "You first, Master Lian."

"You are the guest, so you first," Master Lian said.

Zhang Ye nodded and dispensed with the niceties. He sat down.

Around them, a few of the Lian Family Style disciples were also present. But they looked quite nervous, or maybe they were being cautious, as they kept their eyes on Zhang Ye.

Zhang Ye said helplessly, "Don't be so nervous. I'm just here to resolve things for my friends and coworkers. After I have my tea and finish filming the promo, I'll leave immediately." He knew what sort of reputation he had, so he made clear his intentions to put them at ease. And it was true—he was not planning on causing any trouble today.

The Lian Family Style disciples looked embarrassed.

"It's not that."

"We aren't nervous."

"Yeah, we're not."

"You're an honored guest, so we must show you hospitality."

In truth, what they had just said was totally different from they were thinking!

Not nervous?

How can we not be fucking nervous?!

Over a dozen large sects—such as the Shaolin Monastery, Wudang Sect, Huashan Sect, Kunlun Sect, Emei Sect, Iron Palm Sect, and the rest—with a few centuries of history were all taken down by you. In the entire martial arts community, who would not be on tenterhooks around you? Whose hearts wouldn't tremble if they saw you! For you to appear at our Lian Family Style's grounds today, how can we not be nervous? How big-hearted would we have to be?! Just hurry up and leave already! Leave once you're finished with your business! We are terrified into panic just at the sight of you!

When a junior martial brother of the Lian Family Style was given a signal to leave by his senior brother, he stole a glance at Zhang Ye before quietly withdrawing from the room and going outside into the training hall.

There were still several fellow disciples inside the training hall who did not know about the events that had occurred outside.

"Eh?"

"Little Junior Bro?"

"How're things outside?"

"Have those people been taught a lesson yet?"

"Where's Master?"

Those disciples all asked about it.

Instead, they witnessed their junior martial brother wildly gesticulate while panting, "Quick, quick, quick! Don't say anything! Just hide our training hall's plaque!"

A senior brother was taken aback. "What for?"

A senior sister said with wide eyes, "Why hide the plaque?"

The junior martial brother gave a bitter smile and said something shocking. "Zhang Ye is here!"

Everyone in the training hall suddenly looked horrified!

"Holy fuck!"

"Why is he here?"

"Heavens!"

"Quickly! Hide the plaque!"

"Hide it! Hurry up and hide it!"

All hell broke loose as every one of them started panicking!

This was what Zhang Ye represented.

His name was dreaded in the martial arts community!

Meanwhile, the people inside the room did not know what was going on outside. Actually, Zhang Ye's attitude was very clear and the issue was considered resolved. Both parties were very courteous to each other. There wasn't much conflict either. However, due to Zhang Ye's notoriety, several of those disciples took things into their own hands by hiding the plaque for safety's sake. Honestly, though, they couldn't be blamed for being overly cautious as it was always better to be safe than sorry. Zhang Ye's reputation was simply too notorious. As someone who could take the Huashan Sect's plaque and make it into beaded bracelets to give away, they couldn't be blamed no matter how nervous they got!

After three cups of tea.

Master Lian suddenly said, "Master Zhang, I've long heard of your great name."

Zhang Ye smiled and said, "My name isn't all that great. It's just infamous."

The Lian Family Style disciples started sweating. Oh, so you know that yourself too, eh?

Master Lian also smiled. "I've long admired the martial arts style of the Taiji Fist. We've heard a lot about the Taiji Fist since my master's generation, but we've never had the opportunity to see it for ourselves. Since you have graced us with your presence today, Master Zhang, and this is a rare opportunity, I wonder if we could exchange a few blows and learn from each other?"

Zhang Ye said, "You're too polite, Master Lian. Of course I don't mind exchanging a few blows with you."

Master Lian was delighted and rose to his feet. "Then, Master Zhang, I look forward to it."

Zhang Ye also stood up. "As do I, Master Lian."

Master Lian instructed, "Clear the room."

They did not go outside as there were too many people out there. Instead, his disciples quickly shifted the teapot, tea table, and assorted aside, then left the room in understanding. They knew full well that they were not allowed to stay behind to view this exchange between the two martial arts masters.

They withdrew.

Inside the room, the cleared space was about five or six square meters. It wasn't big, but it was more than enough.

Master Lian gave him a fist and palm salute. "Please, Master Zhang."

"Please, Master Lian," Zhang Ye said.

...

Outside.

A lot of the Lian Family Style disciples were getting very curious.

Thud. Thump. They had started fighting, and sounds of their exchange constantly came from inside.

"Who do you guys think will win?"

"Our master will win, of course!"

"You really think so?"

"Ahem, I guess our master will probably—"

"There's nothing to guess. It's an 80% chance that our master won't be a match for Zhang Ye."

"It's not an 80% chance, it's a 100% that he won't be a match for Zhang Ye."

"Sixth Junior Bro, why are you praising the enemy and putting down our master?"

"Do you guys really think that other than grandmasters, there's someone who's a match for Zhang Ye?"

Five minutes later.

The sounds of fighting stopped.

When the door opened, Zhang Ye and Master Lian walked out one after the other.

"Master!"

"Master!"

The Lian Family Style disciples looked at them anxiously, wanting to know how it'd turned out.

Zhang Ye said, "I must take my leave and go to my coworkers, Master Lian."

Master Lian said, "If there's any trouble, you can come look for me anytime."

"Thank you."

"Take care, Master Zhang."

"No need to see me out, Master Lian. Goodbye."

Zhang Ye left.

Immediately, many of the Lian Family Style disciples gathered around their master.

"Master!"

"How was it?"

"Who won?"

"Who was the victor?"

Master Lian looked over them. "We drew."

They were shocked when they heard that.

"A draw?"

"Master, you're that powerful?"

"Even Zhang Ye was not your match?"

However, Master Lian shook his head as he looked out at Zhang Ye's retreating, distant figure. He smiled and said, "He did not even use 20% of his strength, while I'd given it my all. He was just giving me face and being polite." He then sighed and said, "Taiji Fist is indeed worthy of its reputation!"

The Lian Family Style disciples fell silent at once!

20% of his strength?

Their master was not even a match for 20% of Zhang Ye's strength?

It was no wonder that he could single-handedly challenge over a dozen large sects in succession!

There were differences between the various grandmasters too. Rao Aimin, for example. She could face two grandmasters by herself for a short period of time without being disadvantaged. Naturally, there were differences between individual martial arts masters as well. Zhang Ye, Yang Shu and Master Lian were both martial arts masters. But even if Yang Shu and Master Lian were to team up to take on Zhang Ye, they might not be able to take more than 30 attacks from him. Whether it was their moves, physical attributes, or their concealed power, the gap was simply too great!

All of a sudden, Master Lian spoke, "Master Zhang's associates are filming a promo today. Help them however you can. Sometimes, we only get to know certain people after we've met them. There's no

need to believe the rumors floating around out there. At the very least, I dare say that Master Zhang is not that unreasonable man he was rumored to be."

Was that so?

Was he really?

The Lian Family Style disciples were still skeptical!

Chapter 989: Why are you guys so afraid of him?

Outside.

The people from Beijing Television and the film crew were all busy working.

Their equipment had been returned. Actually, there were not many scenes left for the film crew to shoot. After getting a few more takes, they were finished filming for the day.

"Cut!"

"It's a wrap!"

"Great work, Director Wang."

"You too, Sister Ning."

The film crew started to pack up their equipment.

Not too far away, Zhang Ye was strolling past at this moment.

When the film crew saw him, the director and a few of the managers rushed up to him.

"Teacher Zhang."

"Thank you so much."

"It was all thanks to you."

"Thank you!"

Zhang Ye smiled and said, "Not at all. I had to answer Sister Ning's call for help. Besides, my coworkers were also trapped here. In the name of reason, I had to make a trip here today."

Ning Lan also smiled and said, "If you hadn't come here today, Teacher Zhang, we really wouldn't have known what we to do. It seems like only you can earn their respect. Others couldn't do a thing."

Zhang Ye waved it off. "The key is that they were willing to give me face. The truth is that we were in the wrong this time."

The director said, "It was due our crew's negligence. I'm quite sorry about that. We even caused trouble for you and your friends from Beijing Television."

Zhang Ye said, "Think nothing of it. Everything is fine now."

The film crew shouldered their equipment and left one by one.

Ning Lan was the last person to leave. She looked at Zhang Ye. "So it really did help to mention your name."

Zhang Ye smiled and said, "I just happen to have some influence here. They were also willing to give me face."

"Sure." Ning Lan smiled a beautiful smile, "When I encounter something like this in the future, I'll know what to do. Mentioning your name, Zhang Ye, will be sure to help."

Zhang Ye started and quickly said, "Don't do that. You absolutely must not."

Ning Lan was curious. "What's wrong?"

Zhang Ye said nervously, "In any case, just don't mention my name. I don't have that great an influence."

Mention my name?

You need to know where you are first of all!

It might be alright if it's at the Lian Family Style School or some of the other small sects in the martial arts community. Those places are more than likely willing to give me face. But if you went to the Shaolin Monastery, Huashan Sect, or Kunlun Sect and mentioned my name? Then you'd be trying to die! The issue might have started small, but if you mention my name, the small issue will most assuredly get blown out of proportion!

After a while, Ning Lan and the film crew left in a hurry to get to their next location.

Zhang Ye then went to the Beijing Television team.

They had already begun filming the promotional video and were currently blocking out the scene.

When Hu Fei saw that Zhang Ye had come over, he asked, "You even have influence at this place?"

Zhang Ye gave a wry smile. "More or less."

Xiao Lu grinned and shouted, "Teacher Zhang, you're so cool!"

"Yeah!" Dafei said, "You didn't see what happened just then. It was so dangerous. But after you arrived, the Lian Family Style disciples just stayed silent. What the hell happened?"

"What sort of title is Master Zhang?" Hou Ge was extremely curious.

Zhang Ye smiled and said, "It's just a form of address, nothing more."

Since Zhang Ye did not elaborate, no one could puzzle it out. Whatever it was, today's incident had astounded all of them. How could Zhang Ye have more influence than Jiang Hanwei in the domain of the Chinese martial arts world?

When the police officers standing a distance away were finally certain that there wouldn't be any more trouble, they gave each other a look and had a quick word with the people from Beijing Television before turning to leave. They didn't even greet Zhang Ye. Certainly, they knew who Zhang Ye was. But

his reputation with the police was the same as it was in the Chinese martial arts world: It was very notorious! Those two verses of "Shut are the doors for humans, / Open is the entrance of a dog cage" and "No matter how heavy the iron shackles clang at my feet, / No matter how high you raise the whip" had pushed the police into the public eye a couple years ago. They had nearly drowned in the people's vitriol. Zhang Ye had gone in and out of the police station a few times himself, so he had dealt with the Public Security Bureau on many occasions. As such, whenever the cops saw Zhang Ye, their first reaction would be to stay as far away as possible, since they knew how awful this guy could be!

The shooting for the promotional video began.

Hu Fei asked, "Zhang'er, what do you think about this?"

"It's fine," Zhang Ye said.

Hu Fei asked, "Do you have any suggestions?"

Zhang Ye smiled and said, "I'm just a bystander, don't ask me."

Hu Fei laughed and said, "With you, the director of the number 1 rated TV show in the country, standing here beside me, who else would I ask if not you?"

In the end, Zhang Ye had no choice but to offer some advice. He made a few filming suggestions, but did not say more than necessary. Zhang Ye had high expectations for the King of Masked Singers. After all, it was a show he would be competing in. But that was also why Zhang Ye did not want to get involved in the production too much. He wanted to give it some novelty since his upcoming battlefield wasn't going to be behind the scenes.

Half an hour.

An hour.

The filming followed a packed schedule.

Zhang Ye was observing things from a distance with folded arms.

Some Lian Family Style disciples were also nearby, stealing glances at Zhang Ye from time to time. Some of them looked at him curiously, while some of them glanced at him cautiously. But regardless of what their expressions were, there was always some fear in their eyes. Each one stayed as far away as they could. No one dared to get too near to him.

Many of those from Beijing Television noticed this, and it made them wonder even more!

Xiao Lu could no longer hold it in. When she saw one of the Lian Family Style disciples, she suddenly went up to him and said, "Bro."

"Ah?" The unarmed specialist was startled.

Xiao Lu pointed in Zhang Ye's direction. "Can I ask you something? Why are you guys so afraid of Teacher Zhang?"

The unarmed specialist said in embarrassment, "We're not."

Xiao Lu asked, "Really?"

The unarmed specialist wiped at his sweat. "We're not afraid of him."

Xiao Lu said suspiciously, "Oh, is that so? Then I must have been wrong."

The Lian Family Style's unarmed specialists could only smile bitterly in their minds. Not afraid? How could they not be afraid of him! In the Chinese martial arts world, who wouldn't tremble at the mere mention of Zhang Ye's name? Only people like you who did not know powerful Zhang Ye would dare to speak to Zhang Ye in such a manner. If it were the Chinese martial arts world's people, how many would dare to act rashly in front of him? Even those large sects with a deep-seated hatred for Zhang Ye might not necessarily dare to do so. They were constantly saying they wanted to denounce Zhang Ye, but how long had it been? Had any of the large sects taken action yet? They only dared to talk big!

...

Heading to the metropolitan area.

On the road.

In the bus, the director was cursing at the cameraman who had stepped on the Lian Family Style's Heavenly Rock. He had been scolding him the entire way back. "What the hell were you thinking?! Didn't you see that they'd fenced it?"

That cameraman looked down at the floor without speaking. He had been quite frightened.

The director snapped, "If Sister Ning had not asked Zhang Ye for help, all of our equipment would've been written off! Someone might've even gotten hurt!"

The cameraman said, "It, it was my fault."

Ning Lan said, "It's over, so let's forget about it, Director Wang."

The director said, "Frankly, however, although Teacher Zhang Ye's reputation in the industry is not too good, but his influence is quite wide."

Ning Lan owed Zhang Ye a rather big favor this time, so she wanted to help him out. She smiled and said, "Why don't we add another character to our movie? And then invite Zhang Ye to play the part?"

The director gave her a wry smile. "Do you think I don't want to? If Zhang Ye had joined the film awhile back, the male lead's role would've belonged to him for certain. But ever since the air pollution documentary scandal, who has the courage invite him aboard? He has offended too many people and those people he offended this time are all...Forget it, there's no point in talking about it. I'm actually quite impressed with Zhang Ye, but being impressed is just that. As a director, I have to be responsible to the company and investors who entrusted me with this movie. I must guarantee that the movie will get shown. If I asked Zhang Ye to join us in his current circumstances, who would be brave enough to show our movie?" He wasn't some famous director. He was just a small-time director who hadn't debuted for too many years. He had to consider what others thought of him.

Ning Lan asked, "Is it that serious?"

The director nodded. "Why else do you think Zhang Ye still can't get any new work even though he's an A-list celebrity? It's because no one wants to risk inviting him."

Well, whatever.

It seemed like she couldn't help him out this time.

And so, Ning Lan did not say more.

Di di di. Suddenly, the chat app on her cell phone beeped with a notification.

When Ning Lan finally checked the messages, she discovered that there were quite a few new messages in the Goof Group. A lot of people had pinged her.

Xiaodong: "Sister Ning, how're things now?"

Fan Wenli: "They didn't hurt you, did they?"

Zhang Yuanqi: "Are you there?"

Huo Dongfang: "Old Ning? Why'd she go quiet? Might something have happened?"

Ning Lan quickly replied in the group: "Thanks so much for your concern, everyone. The problem has been successfully resolved. Everyone is fine, and the equipment was returned to us."

Xiaodong: "Ah? That fast?"

Ning Lan sent a smiley face. "Yep. When Zhang Ye came over, the Lian Family actually gave him face and returned our equipment to us without another word!"

A movie star asked curiously: "Zhang Ye?"

Chen Guang: "Zhang Ye really went over?"

Xiaodong: "They really gave face to Teacher Zhang?"

Ning Lan laughed and said: "Not only that. When he first arrived, those people from the training hall immediately fell silent. Even the Lian Family Style's Master Lian treated him very politely. But as for why, I'm not quite sure either. Anyway, I owe Zhang Ye a favor now and have to find a way to repay him, hur hur."

A lot of the big shot celebrities in the Goof Group had not expected this. Many of them wanted to ask Jiang Hanwei what exactly was going on. That was because, in the entertainment industry, it was Jiang Hanwei who probably had the most ties with the martial arts world, so he should know why. But when they remembered the conflict between Jiang Hanwei and Zhang Ye, they knew it wouldn't be right to ask him. Therefore, they could only assume that Zhang Ye knew someone in the Lian Family since they couldn't think of any other possible reasons.

Chapter 990: The name of Zhang Ye is worth a 150 million!

A few days later.

The promotional video for King of Masked Singers was aired.

The premiere was scheduled for broadcast on Beijing Television on Saturday at 8 PM. When the promotional video was aired, it immediately took the Internet by storm. A lot of the viewers had their appetites whetted again!

"Take off your halo.

"Put on a mask.

"Return to the battlefield newborn.

"A gathering of the strong, no need for names. Fight a fair contest through music.

"A legend needs to be witnessed.

"Perfection can only be achieved through conquest.

"Set off a musical storm with your true power.

"King of Masked Singers.

"I'm coming!"

Impressive imagery!

A surge of visuals amid literature and art!

And then there were the lines that set people's pulses racing!

This promotional video that only lasted for around 40 seconds left everyone with a deep impression!

Widespread discussions started on Weibo.

"It's finally beginning!"

"Every show Zhang Ye produces makes people champ at the bit!"

"The promo was really blood pumping! Take off your halo and put on a mask? So who will appear on the show this time!"

"No one knows. Beijing TV hasn't revealed any names this whole time!"

"I heard that they'll all be A-list celebrities!"

"Are you serious?"

"Any celebrities in the A-list or above are the top names in the country. Will they really shed their identities and put on a mask to verse other competitors? Winning is deserved, but if they lose, that would be so embarrassing! And if they lose to some newbies in the music industry? Then it would look even worse for them!"

"That's why I'm looking forward to it!"

"Do you guys think there will be any movie stars joining?"

"Yes, of course! A lot of movie stars can also sing great!"

"Hahaha, they're crossing over to perform. That's what's most exciting about the show!"

"I really can't wait for this show to start!"

"I've been waiting for a month already! Hurry up and broadcast it!"

"The only regrettable thing is that Zhang Ye is not the host! This is his show, but he ended up getting banned. He couldn't involve himself as the host and executive director! How damned maddening!"

"Dong Shanshan is also pretty good."

"Yeah, I quite like Teacher Shanshan too."

Soon after, a list was published!

King of Masked Singers' crew:

Executive Director: Hu Fei.

Executive Producer: Zhang Ye.

Music Director: Bai Yuanfei.

House Band: Miracle Wheels.

Host: Dong Shanshan.

Guessing Panel Guest Judges: Chen Guang (famous domestic singer), Zhang Xia (famous songstress), Amy (member of popular idol group Spring Garden), Chen Yidong (famous variety host), Yao Jiancai (famous crosstalk comedian), Wang Zhuishu (famous lyricist and composer).

The list was revealed.

The viewers burst into an uproar!

They already knew about some of the people on the list, such as Zhang Ye being the executive producer and Dong Shanshan being the host. But they had never heard any news of most of the other names on the list!

Bai Yuanfei?

Chen Guang?

The Miracle Wheels?

These were all famous people from the music industry!

"Even the Miracle Wheels were invited?"

"How cool is that! They're one of the best bands in the country currently!"

"The music director is Bai Yuanfei?"

"Boss Bai received an overseas music achievement award just last year!"

"Yeah, it was for his work in the development of our country's music industry. A lot of it was to the credit of Boss Bai. He also has very high artistic standards. For him to come and take the role of music director for King of Masked Singers, the show's professionalism and degree of excellence will be elevated to another level!"

"Why did Chen Guang join as a guest judge?"

"Damn, I was hoping to see Old Chen wearing a mask!"

"Hahaha, Old Chen must be scared and unwilling to take the stage!"

"C'mon! In the music industry, among the male singers, how many people can compare with Old Chen? In terms of singing and popularity, Chen Guang is top-class. Would he even need to participate?"

"Grandma Zhang Xia will be there too!"

"Yeah, there's definitely a need for the presence of a bel canto singer!"

"I like Amy!"

"The one that surprises me most is Yao Jiancai. Hahahaha, Old Yao has actually come to do a TV show too. There's no doubt he did so because of Zhang Ye. It's not like anyone has been able to get him on their shows in the past. I adore Old Yao so much! The crosstalks he did with Zhang Ye were all perfect. They're the perfect duo that appears only once in a century! With him as a guest, the studio atmosphere would surely be enlivened. Hai, if only Zhang Ye could also be on the guessing panel as a guest judge too. That would make things even more wonderful!"

"They're all big names!"

"This guest lineup is so cool!"

"Wouldn't Beijing TV have spent a lot on this?"

"I don't know, but isn't that to be expected?"

"Has the title sponsorship been finalized yet? How much are they getting for it this time?"

Subsequently, just as the netizens were discussing this, news regarding the title sponsorship of King of Masked Singers was released. This announcement once again set everyone off talking!

After several rounds of bidding, the title sponsorship of the show was won by a very large, domestic beverage corporation! The exclusive title sponsorship fee: 150 million RMB!

"What?"

"How much?"

"Holy crap, 150 million yuan?"

"This is insane!"

"This, this has broken another record!"

"Heavens!"

"It's even more than The Voice?"

"The Voice only got only 100 million for the title sponsorship fee!"

This title sponsorship fee was really too frightening!

When the industry heard about this news, it also caused quite a sensation. Domestically, there had not been any variety shows that had ever sold a title sponsorship for such a terrifying figure. However, when they found out about the details, a lot of the industry insiders could only wryly smile without saying a word. They heard that in the bidding war for the title sponsorship of King of Masked Singers, it was a knock-down, drag-out fight with more than a dozen companies taking part at the beginning. They bid until the end when the three remaining companies were unwilling to give up and nearly even came to blows!

How did it end up like this?

Why was it able to get such a high price?

Even the other variety shows had a lot of big names on their shows. Although the guest lineup could not be compared to the King of Masked Singers' guest lineup this time, they were still quite good. For example, a recent large-scale singing talent show broadcast on Dragon TV had a title sponsorship of merely 50 million RMB. And that was even with all of their invited guests being more popular than Dong Shanshan. But why was King of Masked Singers able to sell theirs for 150 million RMB? How could they do that?

Some people could not understand.

But some clearly understood.

It was probably because of one name.

Not the name of a guest.

Not the name of the host.

And not the name of a participating celebrity.

It was the name of Zhang Ye.

To many advertisers, Zhang Ye's name alone was worth the 150 million RMB! As long as Zhang Ye's name was in the executive producer's role in the crew, they would be willing to spend that much money!

Since Lecture Room started, Zhang Ye's path in the television industry officially began. Then, he moved on to make Zhang Ye's Talk Show, The Voice, and A Bite of China, proving on more than one occasion his production skills. He was currently regarded by everyone as the best producer in the industry!

The genre of show Zhang Ye worked with?

It didn't matter!

Who would be directing the show?

It didn't matter!

Who would be the host of the show?

It didn't matter!

As long as it was Zhang Ye who produced the show, that was all they needed!

Even a food documentary like A Bite of China that did not have a host could go on to top the nationwide viewership ratings. Moreover, it topped those nationwide viewership ratings over a dozen times in a row, so what else could be more important than him? Zhang Ye's name was the greatest guarantee! Having gone through the days of not being shown any interest when the idea for The Voice was hatched, and the low regard for A Bite of China before its broadcast, Zhang Ye had shattered people's expectations over and over again. He had now come to this point in time when no one would ever doubt his production skills. To put it plainly, even if this fellow produced a shit show, there would still be someone willing to pay for the title sponsorship and believe that the show would become popular. This was what you called star power.

Therefore, for them to have managed to secure this 150 million in title sponsorship money, other than the advertiser being optimistic about the show and their trust in the appointment of the celebrity guests, more of it was to the credit of Zhang Ye's name! As a show that had yet to be broadcast, it was getting hyped to a ridiculous extent and was being talked about nonstop by the viewers every single day. Together with Zhang Ye's name on it, there was almost no chance for the viewership ratings to do badly. The advertiser was not dumb. With such a channel publicizing their brands, they simply couldn't let such a good opportunity slip out of their hands without a fight. So the title sponsorship fee was naturally pushed even higher!

It had broken all records!

The record for the highest title sponsorship fee for a domestic variety show was once again broken!

Importantly, this was just the exclusive title sponsorship fee. There were still many remaining advertisement spots, so with everything added together, it might even cross 300 million RMB in total. And this was not yet taking into account the exclusive online broadcast rights fee!

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After the announcements.

At an industry dinner party.

"Did you hear about the title sponsorship fee for King of Masked Singers?"

"Yes, I did."

"It's insane!"

"This is a good thing. Zhang Ye has broken the record for the title sponsorship fee once again. With the standard raised, it will only get better for future shows, since the general title sponsorship fees across the industry should raise as well."

"Old Li, you're overthinking things."

"Ah?"

"No matter how many times the record is broken for the highest title sponsorship fee, it's got nothing to do with us."

"That's right. A show that our station just made went to lobby for title sponsors with heaps of confidence, but was only offered 10 million RMB in the end. The title sponsors even reeled off a long list of conditions."

"Yeah, it's the same for us too."

"Ai, it's not easy at all."

"Just look at King of Masked Singers. I'd be lying if I said I wasn't jealous of them!"

"There's no point in being jealous. There's only one Zhang Ye around. No one else's gonna get the same treatment as him!"