

Superstar 111

Chapter 111: The Preliminaries Begin!

Saturday.

The weather had turned chilly.

Entrance to Peking University.

Today, the school was sealed off. It only allowed the school's students and teachers, as well as the Couplet Competition staff and contestants, to enter. Hence, all of the other entrances to the school were closed, leaving only the main gate and the largest side gate open. There was even a sign erected. The side gate was for students and teachers, while the main gate was used for the admission of the Couplet Competition's relevant personnel and spectators. There wasn't a lack of security. Many of the school's security guards were gathered here, and there were more than ten people. Because there were more extreme events happening frequently in society these days, the security check was done more strictly.

Zhang Ye was also being inspected.

"Hello. Please show me your tickets," a Couplet Organization staff said.

Zhang Ye, who had come early, took advantage of not needing to line up to enter the school, but he was stopped. He said, "I'm a contestant."

The youth looked at him, "May I know what your name is?"

"I'm Zhang Ye. Please check for me. The Writers' Association should have given me a pass," Zhang Ye said.

"Alright, let me take a look." The youth immediately called out to a colleague to bring a suitcase over. Inside were the contestant passes. "Zhang Ye...Zhang Ye..." After rummaging for a while, the youth frowned, "Sorry, there's no contestant pass with your name." Then looking at the name list, "Zhang Ye, right? The contestant name list submitted by the Writers' Association doesn't have you. Sorry, but I won't be able to let you in."

"It doesn't have me?" Zhang Ye could not stifle his laughter.

The people from the Couplet Organization thought that Zhang Ye was purposely here to mess things up and enter, so they ignored him and checked the tickets of others.

Zhang Ye could smell a rat at this moment. Was it really as he had guessed? The Beijing Writers' Association inviting him was a scheme to pay him back with his own coin? They were determined to make things difficult for him and disgust him? But aren't your methods too low-class? Or could it be that he was an eyesore to a minority of people from the Writers' Association, so they had schemed against him? And the people from the upper echelons of the Writers' Association and the Couplet Organization were uninformed of this? He felt this was most likely. Anyway, no matter what, someone had definitely done something behind the scenes. They had made an error, forgetting Zhang Ye's contestant pass? This possibility was almost zero!

The official admission time came.

There were quite a lot of people lined up at the school gate. They were beginning to enter.

Hu Fei brought Hou Ge, Hou Di, Dafei and Xiao Lu with him, and they just arrived. The moment they reached, they noticed a gloomy-looking Zhang Ye nearby.

“Yo, Teacher Zhang!” Xiao Lu shouted.

Dafei also waved his hands, “Teacher Zhang, over here!”

Zhang Ye walked up, and Hu Fei and company walked over too. Hu Fei asked in surprise, “Little Zhang, why haven’t you entered? The preliminaries have already begun, right? Contestants like you should enter much earlier than us.”

Zhang Ye threw up his hands, “I can’t get in. The Beijing Writers’ Association did not prepare a contestant pass for me. Although they invited me, my name isn’t on the invitation list.”

“What? Such a thing can happen?” Hou Ge immediately turned angry.

Hou Di also understood immediately as he gritted his teeth, “F***, aren’t they being bullies?”

They had recently gotten to know of Zhang Ye’s previous matters. They knew that he had offended quite a number of people from the Beijing Writers’ Association, including its Vice President Meng Dongguo. However, in their opinion, the Writers’ Association was such a big organization that wouldn’t be so petty. Since they had invited Teacher Zhang Ye, they were probably making leeway in order to then rope Zhang Ye in. That was the reason why they had encouraged Zhang Ye to join the competition yesterday. However, who knew that they were too naive? They had invited Zhang Ye, but would not allow him entry? Were they bent on disgusting him?

On the web, many of Zhang Ye’s fans knew that he was participating in the competition. Many of them were full of anticipation, waiting in front of their computers for the live stream to begin. In the end, Zhang Ye did not even enter the gates? If someone asked, would the Beijing Writers’ Association just explain it away with, “Zhang Ye gave up on his own accord”? That would make the fans grumble at Zhang Ye and, at the same time, strike a blow to his reputation. If someone investigated, the Writers’ Association could simply say, “Oh, a subordinate made a mistake and did not process the contestant pass.” They could push the blame just like that? It was too despicable!

“Those bunch of grandsons!” Hou Ge cursed!

Hu Fei’s face was also sullen, “Little Zhang, have you called the person who contacted you?”

“Well, I was just about to call.” Zhang Ye called the woman from the Couplet Organization who had contacted him from before, “Hello, I’m Zhang Ye.”

There was a lot of noise on her side. She was probably busy. “Zhang Ye? Oh, Teacher Zhang Ye. Why haven’t you entered? Can’t you come? Our preliminaries have just begun.”

Zhang Ye said, “I’m already here, but I can’t enter.” He explained the situation.

The woman clearly did not know of the situation. She was stunned, "How can that be? The Writers' Association should have done the necessary work for you. Alright, I'll give them a call. I'll try to arrange it for you."

After hanging up, Zhang Ye said, "Why don't all of you go in first?"

"If you aren't going, what's the point of us going?" Xiao Lu said, "If we are going in, we must all go in together!"

Hu Fei reached into his bag and passed him a ticket. "Take my ticket and enter first. Take part in the preliminaries first. Since they invited you, even if they did something underhanded, your name must be on the namelist of the Couplet Organization. They just need to provide you a contestant pass."

Zhang Ye waved his hands, "There's no need. Go in first." They had all taken the pains to travel here, so how could he go in himself while leaving them outside?

Suddenly, there were a few shouts!

"Haha! Little Zhang!"

"Teacher Little Zhang! Here, here!"

"Why are you here, too? Oh, right! You are here to compete!"

The people who came were Zhang Ye's former colleagues, Big Sis Zhou, Auntie Sun and assistant Xiaofang. After greeting them, Zhao Guozhou looked to be a bit further behind them. Zhao Guozhou and a few staff and Leaders of the radio station's other channels were there. Seeing Zhang Ye, Zhao Guozhou smiled and walked over.

"Little Zhang, it's been a while." Zhao Guozhou laughed.

Zhang Ye blinked and immediately went over to say, "Brother Zhao, do you have any extra tickets?"

"Entry tickets? Too many people on your side came? You don't have enough tickets? That can't be. Your television station should have more tickets than our radio station." Zhao Guozhou was puzzled. The Beijing Radio Station and the Beijing Television Station had long merged together. The tickets were first handed out to the television station. Only the leftovers were handed over to the radio station. They were considered one, and their seats were even side by side.

Zhang Ye said helplessly, "No. I can't get in. They didn't prepare a contestant pass for me."

Upon hearing this, Zhao Guozhou understood what could have happened, "Do we have tickets?"

Big Sis Zhou said, "No, everyone has only one. This Couplet Competition is too popular. It's not easy to get tickets."

"I'll ask around for you." Zhao Guozhou went to ask the Leaders from the other departments.

Xiaofang immediately said, "Teacher Zhang, use my ticket. I happen to have something to do and didn't want to come in the first place." Everyone knew that she was lying.

Zhang Ye shook his head, adamant about not wanting it.

Just as they were looking for tickets, Tian Bin and his wife suddenly appeared, hand in hand. By now, Tian Bin was one of the hottest late-night segment anchors of the Central Radio Station. Under his hands, 'Ghost Blows Out the Light' had reached even greater heights. His ratings were even higher than when Zhang Ye was at the Beijing Radio Station. After all, the Central Radio Station could be received throughout the country, so its exposure was many times more than the Beijing Radio Station. These results were no wonder. Besides, the Central Radio Station was a huge station. It had no lack of tickets, so Tian Bin would naturally get them, which meant that he could also bring his wife.

"Zhang Ye." Tian Bin's wife waved at him with a smile.

Tian Bin had probably heard their conversation, so he pushed a ticket into Zhang Ye's hands. "I have four tickets. The two friends I invited could not come, as they had to work overtime. I'm giving it to you."

Zhang Ye asked for confirmation, "This isn't your own ticket, right?"

"No," Tian Bin was amused, "I might not give you my ticket, even if you wanted it."

"Alright then. Thanks a lot." Zhang Ye accepted it.

Tian Bin said, "Hurry and go. They thought a tiny trick or two can trample on you? Let the people from the Beijing Writers' Association know who Teacher Zhang Ye is!"

Zhang Ye laughed, "Alright!"

Following that, everyone lined up to enter.

After chatting with his former colleagues and Leader, they entered the school gates. Zhang Ye walked together with his new colleagues and Hu Fei, and went straight to a small square in the center of the school. This was where the preliminaries were being held. Only those who could pass the preliminaries had the qualification to participate in the Couplet Competition in the large hall.

It had begun some time ago.

There was not even much time left.

Xiao Lu was more worried than Zhang Ye, "Teacher Little Zhang, hurry up. The people of the Writers' Association did that, so as to deal a blow to your reputation. They might have even thought of the scenario where even if you managed to get a ticket to enter, the preliminaries would almost be over due to the delay. If you can't even pass the preliminary, they will definitely say how lacking you are. They will smear you, and then win back the reputation they lost the last time. So, we definitely cannot lose to them! We must enter the finals! Let them know how good you are! Let them recall the scene of them being hit in the face by you in the Mid Autumn Poetry Meet!"

Hu Fei recalled something, "None of you have even asked Little Zhang if he knows anything about couplets. This is a different domain than writing poems or essays. It's completely different."

Only then did Hou Ge realize, "Oh, right. Teacher Little Zhang, do you know?"

Zhang Ye sweated, "Not really. I'm not very sure either."

"What's there not to be sure about?" Xiao Lu said, "Just say if you have ever studied couplets before?"

“No.” Zhang Ye admitted honestly. In his world, couplets were popular only in ancient times. As for modern times? Other than cultural hipsters or scholars who still studied couplets, at the most, he had seen some Millennial Impossibilities left behind from ages long ago. However, he was still unsure what the couplet situation of this world was. He did not know if what he knew could be used.

“You really haven’t?” Xiao Lu lost heart.

Hou Ge also sighed, “Then there’s no other way.”

Hou Di said, “It’s alright. We can come up with a strategy to help Teacher Zhang. Let’s enter the finals first. I still know a bit about matching couplets.”

Xiao Lu said, “I also know a bit. I once did a special article about it previously in the newspaper business.”

Chapter 112: The Last Question that No One could Match!

Square in the school.

The woman from the Couplet Organization gave him a call.

“Hello, Teacher Zhang Ye. Where are you?”

“I’m already inside, in the square where the preliminaries are held.”

“Oh? Why can’t I see you? Which one are you?”

“Are you the one in a white long dress? I can see you.”

She was the only one making a phone call. Zhang Ye walked over, and she was indeed the woman from the Couplet Organization. “Hello.”

The woman lowered her cellphone and handed him a contestant pass and said, “Sorry, Teacher Zhang. The staff missed it. They just found it. Hurry up and participate. There’s no need to register. You just need to answer a question. Well, I have something else to do. I’m leaving first.”

“Thank you.” Zhang Ye watched her leave.

Not far away, Hu Fei greeted him, “You got it?”

Zhang Ye tersely acknowledged before looking at the questions asked in the preliminaries.

There were three question boards in front. They were spaced ten meters apart. There were many people crowded in front of each question board. There were contestants, as well as spectators. Of course, there were not many contestants left at this moment. Many of them had passed the preliminaries and entered the hall by answering correctly. There were less than twenty people left answering. They were pondering deeply in front of the question boards. The questions did not seem easy.

There were the preliminaries’ rules by the side.

1. Contestants, please answer the questions according to the specifications.

2. You have passed only after the judges' decision.

3. There are only 50 questions. There cannot be more than 50 people passing the preliminaries.

Xiao Lu exclaimed, "There are only 50 questions? Aren't there nearly a hundred contestants? Doesn't that mean that they are eliminating half? That's too cruel!"

Hou Ge was in a hurry, "There's not much time left!"

Hou Di pointed to the question board. "There are only two questions left on this board. Ah, that board is full and all the questions have been answered by others. The third board also only has one question left!"

There were three questions left, and about 20 contestants who had not given up on answering!

Some of the contestants felt that they would not be able to answer and had given up, so they had entered the spectator stands.

"Hurry, hurry, hurry! Let us quickly look at the questions! Grab every second!" Xiao Lu said in a rush.

The 50 questions were all couplets. There were four-word, five-word and seven-word verses. All of them were the first half of a couplet. The rules were very simple. There was no lack of ink and brushes in front of the boards. As long as a contestant wrote an answer below the first half of a couplet, and matched it properly with the proper correspondence, they would pass.

The three judges from the Couplet Organization had the authority to make the judgement. The judges were all pretty old. Two of them were old men, and one of them was an old granny. Although Zhang Ye did not know them, he could tell that they were likely authoritative figures in the industry from the way the contestants were so respectful to them. At least, they were top experts in the couplet domain.

After calming his mind, Zhang Ye began looking at the questions.

Three...

Five...

Zhang Ye scanned them once. He discovered that the couplets in this world were similar to those from his world. Heaven matched Earth, Rain matched Wind, Land matched Sky. There was no difference at all. However, he saw some that he had never seen before. Many of the couplets did not exist in Zhang Ye's former world. Maybe it was because Zhang Ye was not well-read, or perhaps he had already forgotten. After all, he did not really study much of couplet culture.

Let's eat a Memory Search Capsule first!

Zhang Ye opened his game ring and looked at his Reputation. With the help from yesterday's public service advertisement, his overall Reputation points were still slowly increasing. It wasn't fast, but after two days and one night, it had managed to reach 100,000. Zhang Ye clicked on the Merchant Shop to buy one Memory Search Capsule, before eating it.

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His memories flashed past.

Under the mental guidance of Zhang Ye, time returned to the year 2011 from his previous world.

Back then, Zhang Ye had just entered college. He was determined to become famous. Every piece of news had an objective attraction to it. One weekend, he had obtained a library card and went to the Media College's library to browse through books. In the beginning, he did not manage to find books he wanted to read. So he flipped through books like searching a needle in a haystack. In the end, he had flipped through a couplet compilation and a companion book that explained and dissected couplets.

The two books were not thick.

One page, ten pages, a hundred pages.

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The five minutes were up.

The Memory Search time was over.

Zhang Ye slowly opened his eyes. Back then, he had been flippantly browsing, but now with the Memory Search reinforcing his memory, Zhang Ye could remember every single couplet!

Immediately, he looked at the 50 questions again!

In the clouds, something, something? I don't know!

The flying snow, something, something? No idea!

Scorching vine, something, something? Never seen before!

After seeing quite a number, they were works that had not appeared in Zhang Ye's world. He could not answer them. But just as he was beginning to believe that the couplets of his world had no crossover with this world, a couplet appeared in his eyes. Following that, there was a second and a third!

They existed! There were really some that he recognized!

They were identical to the couplets from his world!

For example, the 41st question, the first half was: Two Three Four Five.

The second half had been matched by someone else. It wrote: Six Seven Eight Nine.

This couplet looked silly and a bit ridiculous, but there was a profoundness to it. Zhang Ye had previously searched his memories and there was a dissection of this particular couplet. In professional terms, it was a hidden couplet. Why did Six Seven Eight Nine match Two Three Four Five? That was because Two Three Four Five lacked (缺, Quē) One (一, Yī), and which sounded like lacking (缺) clothes (衣, Yī). And Six Seven Eight Nine was missing (少, Shǎo) Ten (十, Shí), which sounded like missing (少) food (食, Shí). Together, it formed an idiom, 缺衣少食 (Quē Yī Shǎo Shí) "have not enough clothing and very little food". This was a hidden couplet.

This discovery made Zhang Ye overjoyed. After inspecting it once, although the couplets from his world only took up about 20-30% of the 50 couplets, this was enough to make Zhang Ye relieved. This meant that he still had a chance. It meant that the two worlds had a crossover in works, and it was not to a tiny

extent. After thinking about it, they had shared a similar history. Some historical figures were still the same, even after being altered by the game ring. Therefore, the couplet culture, as a whole, shouldn't differ by too much. For the same couplets to appear in both worlds was not unusual at all.

Xiao Lu suddenly said, "Hey, I may be able to match this couplet. When I was an editor, I had seen a similar one to this before. I just need to modify it a little and it should work. Morning snow..... not right, morning dew....."

Hou Ge urged "Xiao Lu, come on, hurry!"

"Don't rush me. I am still thinking!" Xiao Lu grasped her hair.

Isn't it morning something something, won't it be better to match it with early?" Hou Di also chipped in with ideas.

It could be seen that all of them sincerely wanted Zhang Ye to qualify for the finals to prevent the lowlives from the Beijing Writers' Association from achieving their target at discounting Zhang Ye's authority within the literary circle.

Over there was a middle-aged man who suddenly smacked his own forehead. He then stepped forward with a writing brush and matched the couplet by writing on it while Xiao Lu, Hou Di and the others were thinking. After he wrote, he looked over at the 3 judges and received their acknowledgment. He laughed heartily. He had passed!

Xiao Lu was mad, "Someone got it before us!"

Hou Di said pitifully "Just a step short; we were close to an answer!"

"There are only two questions left." Dafei reminded.

However, Hu Fei sighed and pointed, "Actually, there's only one left."

When they looked over, they saw an old foe of Zhang Ye's stepping up, holding a brush and matching the couplet. His strokes were vigorous and strong, and the words were very nicely written. That person was Big Thunder, a poet from the Beijing Writers' Association. After getting the judges' acknowledgment, he laughed, "Thank you, Teachers."

The bald, old male judge looked at him and said, "Big Thunder, you were the previous couplet competition's runner up. Why did you use such a long time to match?"

The second judge, the old granny smiled. "Did you not see it? Big Thunder did not answer the simple questions, but chose one of the two most difficult questions. This is the ingrained stubbornness of the previous runner up. Hur Hur. Only Big Thunder has such a standard. If he did not answer this question, I guess that no one else would be able to."

The third judge, an old man said, "There's still one last question left? Oh, my guess wasn't bad at all. This is really the last question left. Elder Qian, this question of yours cannot be answered by just anyone. It's just the preliminary round and you are already making it so difficult? In such a short time, who can match this couplet?"

Elder Qian was the 1st judge of this year's competition. He was also the oldest and the most experienced. He touched his beard and said, "This is the Couplet Competition. How can it be interesting if it is not difficult?"

Big Thunder and the judges obviously knew each other. He said to them upon hearing that, "The 50th question was given by Elder Qian? No wonder, I was thinking about it all day but could not match it. This couplet is probably not going to be matched by anyone. Don't mention trying to match it, whether it can be read properly would also be a problem. Even a professional might not be able to read it right."

That was a given. Elder Qian was known as the Phantom Talent in the literary circle. He wasn't a part of the Beijing Couplet Organization, nor the Beijing Writers' Association, but he was a member of the National Writers' Association. His reputation was very high, and he was well-known for giving extremely difficult questions, and not only in the field of couplets. He was one of the examiners at this year's college entrance examinations, too. His questions were usually not given to grade a student, but to differentiate the good students from the bad.

A lot of contestants had now given up, including many distinguished authors and university professors. When met with such a question and hearing the conversation between Elder Qian and Big Thunder, everyone knew that they had to give up, and that there was no chance of them passing the preliminary round. They might as well be content with being the audience today.

All of them gave up, except for Zhang Ye, who was still staring at the question. His eyes were even blinking.. because this couplet was one that he had seen before!

Chapter 113: Zhang Ye's Second Half!

In the square.

The preliminary round was coming to an end.

"Time is almost up?" Elder Qian said.

The second judge said, "Well, let's wait another two more minutes."

The third judge nodded, "Okay. If no one steps forward, we will be closing up. Hur Hur."

The three judges announced the ending time, as the preliminaries could not go on without an ending. Everyone was still waiting for the opening ceremony over at the auditorium. Actually, they had not expected anyone to be able to match this couplet. There wasn't enough time either. The key couplet's second line was a very tricky one; every word had to be separated, broken down and digested before you could attempt to match the second line. There was just no other way.

Elder Qian looked at those who had given up and shook his head slightly. In his heart, he had hoped that someone could match this couplet, but he understood that there was no way anyone could.

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Not far away.

Xiao Lu was getting anxious, "Quickly match it!"

Hou Di did not know whether to laugh or to cry, “How do you match question 50?”

Dafei also looked over at the couplet that was coined as one of the two most difficult questions, “Hai shui chao chao chao chao chao chao chao chao luo*? Was this couplet matching, or was this a tongue twister? What is this crap?”

Hou Ge also stared, “The words are written incorrectly, right? Why are there so many ‘chao’?”

Xiao Lu gave an idea, “Why don’t we just bullsh*t and try our luck? Let’s match it with ‘Da feng gua gua gua gua gua gua qi’.”

Man, with so many gua (Gusting), it had to be a typhoon. Zhang Ye could only smile bitterly.

Dafei nearly fainted as he said, “Why didn’t you match it with ‘Fu ben zou zou zou zou zou zou zou’ (copy cat go go go go go go go)?”

Xiao Lu also knew it couldn’t work. She looked down in despair, “Then what should we do?”

Just as they were discussing, Big Thunder was staring at Zhang Ye and laughed. He walked up and said, “Yo. Zhang Ye is here, too? Have you not matched any yet? But there’s only this one left.” Big Thunder was good at poetry and also couplets, otherwise he wouldn’t have received the runner up position in the last competition. He stood before Zhang Ye this time as a competitor in the couplet competition. Big Thunder was very confident; he knew that in terms of poetry, he might not compare to Zhang Ye, but in couplets? He wants to compete with me in couplets? You sure are funny! Big Thunder joined this year with the target to be the champion!

Zhang Ye looked at him, “So what if there’s only one left?”

“Then you had better hurry; there’s not much time.” Big Thunder laughed, “And are you even sure that you can match this couplet? This was given by Elder Qian. Before bragging that you can match it, why not read the first part of the couplet for us first? I’m afraid that you can’t even read it correctly. If that’s the case, then you can forget about matching it.”

Xiao Lu whispered, “Teacher Zhang, just bullsh*t your way through!”

“Right. Write anything. You might even get it correct!” Hou Di said, “Why don’t you just use the one Xiao Lu suggested earlier?”

The few of them discussed in whispers.

Big Thunder shook his head, “You are even trying to match the couplet collectively? Isn’t this cheating?”

Xiao Lu stared viciously at Big Thunder. This old bald donkey! What has it to do with you? Could it be that you were the one who did not allow Teacher Zhang to compete? Were you the one playing tricks?

The first judge, Elder Qian, looked at his watch, “Okay. Let’s call it a day.”

They were preparing to go off. The school staff were coming over to move the tables away and pack up.

At this moment, Zhang Ye said loudly, “Judges, please wait. I would like to give it a try.”

Big Thunder was stunned, and he was also happy. He wondered if Zhang Ye was even serious about matching this couplet? And he hadn't even arrived for long? In such a short time, what could he match! Even if it was him, he might have had to spend an hour or two and it might not even be a good match, or he might not even be able to match it, so how could Zhang Ye?

The other contestants also stopped in their steps and paid attention.

"Eh?"

"Who is this person?"

"This couplet must be an impossibility, right? Yet, someone actually wants to try it?"

"It cannot be considered an impossibility, but it is definitely very difficult."

"Can he do it? I have never seen him before. Is he from this field?"

Big Sis Zhou, Auntie Sun and Zhao Guozhou were also observing near the square. When they saw Zhang Ye stepping up, they all cheered.

"Teacher Zhang, go for it!" Xiaofang shouted.

"Little Zhang! Show them what you've got!" Auntie Sun said

Zhang Ye turned around to look. Even Tian Bin and his wife were gesturing for him to do well. He nodded to them in acknowledgment and assured them.

With all the shouting, many of those who had given up were shocked!

"Zhang Ye?"

"He is that Zhang Ye?"

"Shuidiao Getou was very well written. So that's him."

"I heard that he slapped the faces of those in the Writers' Association the last time, yet he dares to step foot here today?"

A portion of the crowd still did not know of Zhang Ye, but there were still some who had heard of him before. They all gathered together and discussed about him, occasionally pointing at him.

At this time, the cameraman responsible for live streaming the event also pointed his camera at Zhang Ye. The preliminary round was not streamed live, but he still had to record it. There would be edits to create a highlight reel that was to be uploaded to the internet.

The three judges looked over at him, "Try it then."

Zhang Ye did not mind the discussion around him and stepped forward.

Xiao Lu suddenly asked, "Are you really going to use that 'gua gua gua gua gua gua'?"

Zhang Ye laughed. He was thinking that not even a fool would use a crappy match like yours; the words didn't even correspond. If this bro wrote it, he would have caused the professionals to die of laughter. This first verse had hidden tricks behind it, so how could it be easily solved with just luck? But Zhang Ye

felt no pressure. Coincidentally, one of the two most difficult upper verses, the 50th and the last question, fell into the 20-30% of couplets that existed in his previous world. This couplet had even been completed by the capable predecessors of his world!

The question board was nearing.

Standing in front of it, Zhang Ye stopped and lowered his head. He picked up a writing brush, dipped the ink on its tip, raised his hand and started writing the second verse without a thought.

Big Thunder had a look. At first, he did not understand.

The other contestants also inexplicably watched Zhang Ye writing the second verse. Because they did not understand the first verse at all, a large portion of them did not even know how to read it. So when Zhang Ye wrote the second verse out, they did not seem to understand it either. They were all confused.

The only thing they knew was that this man's calligraphy was very good!

Hou Ge exclaimed, "Good writing!"

Hu Fei eyes brightened, "Teacher Little Zhang, great calligraphy! The flicks are elegant, and yet doesn't lack strength!"

Xiao Lu was also lost in admiration, "These words are so beautiful! Teacher Zhang Ye is even skilled in calligraphy?"

The other contestants and audience members also had a look at Zhang Ye's writing. He was such a young man, yet his calligraphy was so good. It was not often that there was such a person!

Zhang Ye put down the brush. He had completed the verse!

Everyone then focused on the second half of the couplet Zhang Ye wrote: Fu yun zhang zhang zhang zhang zhang zhang zhang xiao*!

What second half is this?

What did it mean?

Nothing could be seen on the surface!

Big Thunder and a few accomplished couplet experts stared at the second half. They gave it some thought and tried to read it a few times, but they did not manage to.

It's not right?

Did this second half match?

They were not sure either. The first and second half were both very vague, so they could hardly tell!

Even the second and third judges did not give it much thought at first glance. They felt that this young man was likely writing it blindly, but his words were very neat and tidy. Elder Qian's first half of his couplet was definitely complicated, both in its profoundness and mood. It was impossible to match it.

Some booing was heard in the audience.

“What is this?”

“Haha, using these few words and it can be considered a second verse?”

“Right, then I can do it, too. The first verse can’t be that simple.”

“This must be blindly matched. Zhang zhang zhang zhang zhang? What and what!”

Only Elder Qian narrowed his eyes, “Lad, how do you read this second verse of yours?”

Zhang Ye smiled and responded with a question, “How do you read your first half?”

“My first half is...” Elder Qian recited, “Hǎi shuǐ cháo, zhāo zhāo cháo, zhāo cháo zhāo luò (the sea tide; it rises everyday; everyday it rises and everyday it falls).”

After reading them with the right pronunciation, these consecutive ‘chao/zhao’ made clear sense. A lot of the contestants and audience members were suddenly enlightened. So that’s how it was! That was how it was read! No wonder the previous runner up, Big Thunder, said that even professionals might not be able to read it right! The technique within was so profound! This was a couplet consisting of same characters, but different pronunciations! This kind of couplet matching was too damn difficult! Because it was very complicated! And it even required a second verse to match it neatly? Impossible!

Xiao Lu was speechless, “This first verse is too obscure!”

Hou Di sighed, “Teacher Little Zhang definitely didn’t manage to match it. Chang chang chang chang? It doesn’t correspond, right?”

Hou Ge said, “Forget it. There’s nothing to feel regretful about. After all, Teacher Zhang’s forte is not in matching couplets. He had even said before that he did not know much about couplets.”

The second judge looked at Elder Qian, “Let’s go, Elder Qian. Let’s go to the hall.”

“That’s right; we need to judge the finals.” The third judge, who was an old man, said.

But no one expected to see Elder Qian remaining motionless. He looked at Zhang Ye, “What about you?”

“Hǎi shuǐ cháo, zhāo zhāo cháo, zhāo cháo zhāo luò (the sea tide; everyday it rises; everyday it rises and everyday it falls).” Zhang Ye repeated it again, and then smiled before saying his second half, “Fú yún zhǎng, cháng cháng zhǎng, cháng zhǎng cháng xiāo (the cloud forms; it forms constantly; constantly it forms and constantly it dissolves)!”

The second and third judges, who had just turned around, halted in their steps upon hearing this. They turned their heads in shock!

Many spectators and contestants were about to leave, too. But when they heard Zhang Ye recite the second verse, one could tell with the naked eye that their expressions were that of shock!

Big Thunder was stunned!

Hou Ge, Hou Di, Xiao Lu and company stared widely!

At this moment, the entire Peking University’s small square seemed to quieten down!

Chapter 114: Miraculous Couplet Matching Miraculous Couplet!

There was silence all around!

Hǎi shuǐ cháo, zhāo zhāo cháo, zhāo cháo zhāo luò (the sea tide; it rises everyday; everyday it rises and everyday it falls)?

Fú yún zhǎng, cháng cháng zhǎng, cháng zhǎng cháng xiāo (the cloud forms; it forms constantly; constantly it forms and constantly it dissolves)?

No one expected that the simple ‘chang chang chang chang chang’ Zhang Ye had written had a similar hidden catch to it!

The old man who was the third judge cried out with a hoarse voice, “This... Someone really managed to match it?”

They could not believe it, but reality was placed right in front of them. Phantom Talent Elder Qian’s most difficult question had been matched. And it had been matched perfectly!

The video camera man for the online stream closed up on Zhang Ye’s face. He also stopped on the couplet that Zhang Ye had written for a long period of time!

Elder Qian looked at Zhang Ye. After several seconds, he burst out into laughter, “Good! A young person’s abilities must be respected! A young person’s abilities must be respected!”

After he stopped laughing, he stroked his beard. “You really exceeded my expectations. Today you have given me too great a surprise. Good. Young lad, I will barely pass you.”

Pass?

And only barely?

Everyone was puzzled. Didn’t he match it?

Zhang Ye looked at Elder Qian, but he was not angry. He laughed, “Why only barely?”

The second judge who was the old granny was also pondering over his words, “Old man Qian, didn’t he do a good job matching? There’s nothing to fault at his correspondence. The mood is also just right. What is there for you to pick on? I think it was matched perfectly!”

The third judge frowned as he gave it some thought, before suddenly saying, “Hey, does your first half of the couplet still have a hidden catch?”

Elder Qian smiled. “Yes, the first half has other ways of reading it. The meaning and mood are all different. So he can only be considered to have matched a tiny portion of it, hence I said that he barely passed.”

There were still hidden catches?

There were still tricks inside?

Everyone was stunned. Did Elder Qian come out with a miraculous couplet?

They had originally thought that the couplet was extremely difficult. Yet they had underestimated it?

It was a miraculous couplet!

Xiao Lu exclaimed, "Passing is good. Teacher Zhang is awesome!"

Hou Ge and Hou Di were also full of admiration. It was quite exaggerated to even match a portion of it. After all, they had not been able to understand the first half of the couplet just now!

Big Thunder felt his mind balance.

The other contestants also felt their minds balance upon hearing it!

Oh, so he did not completely match the first half. He still had other ways of reading the first half!

Elder Qian looked at Zhang Ye and pleasingly said, "If we follow strictly by the rules, I can't let you pass based on your answer. Because this is the the Beijing Couplet Competition, not only do we have to adhere to the rules, but it also has to fit the mood in all aspects. But because this first verse is very complex and complicated, and is a miraculous couplet, and the fact that you are still young, to be able match to this point is already a very good result. That is why I gave you a pass. I believe the other two judges won't have any objections."

The old granny said, "Of course I have no qualms. Pass him."

The third judge said, "I would have had a problem with you if you didn't pass him. Haha."

But just as Elder Qian was about to pass Zhang Ye, Zhang Ye suddenly stepped forward and said with a laugh, "All of you might have no problems with it, but I have a problem with it. Elder Qian, you said that my second half had barely managed to match the first half. I can't pretend I didn't hear that. Hur Hur."

Everyone burst into an uproar!

You still have a problem?

What problem can you have?

Elder Qian was amused, "Why? You aren't convinced? Then I'll read the other ways of reading my first half. I will let a young lad like you be utterly convinced after losing."

Losing?

I will lose?

Zhang Ye said without fear, "What a coincidence. My second half also has many ways of reading it!"

It was time for Elder Qian and the rest to be shocked. "Eh? You also have?"

Xiao Lu shouted out, "What the hell! Teacher Zhang, you really can do it?"

Zhao Guozhou, Hu Fei and company could hardly believe it.

Big Thunder scoffed. It was impossible!

He was amused in his mind at how Zhang Ye had made such an outrageous brag!

Big Thunder already understood the tricks behind the first half of the couplet. Hai shui chao chao chao chao chao chao chao lu?

In between the few 'chao' words, punctuation could be placed. And changing the pronunciation, the meaning would be completely different. Even the message expressed would be very different. There were all sorts of knowledge intertwined in it. Hur, what a joke. What knowledge was there in your chang chang chang chang?

It was just a coincidence that the first verse was matched for this interpretation of the verse!

Why are you still bragging?

You're full of yourself!

The internet streaming cameraman did not dare lose his focus. He kept the camera pointed in Zhang Ye's direction.

The commotion had attracted a lot of people. More and more of the guests who had previously gone to the auditorium had returned.

"Someone has answered the last question?"

"What's the situation? Who is that person?"

"It's not considered as answered. Elder Qian's first verse has a trick."

These contestants who had gone through to the finals apparently found out about the situation here when their friends called. Their curiosities were piqued and they proceeded back here to see who had answered the 50th question. Those who had gone through earlier had all seen that question and no one was confident in answering it, but instead they all chose to match simpler couplets. Now that someone had solved one of the two most difficult questions, everyone naturally wanted to know who it was.

Amongst them was Zheng Anbang, who was from the Beijing Writer's Association and had participated in the Mid-Autumn Poetry Meet together with Big Thunder. It seemed like he was also an expert at couplets and had already passed the preliminaries earlier. When he reached the square, he bumped into Big Thunder and asked him for the details.

Following that, Beijing Writers' Association's Vice-President Meng Dongguo also arrived.

And Zhang Ye's current Leader from the TV station's Arts Channel, Wang Shuixin, also walked over. Director Wang was not a participant. He probably had tickets to come watch the competition, "Old Hu!"

Hu Fei went over, "Director, you are here, too?"

"What's going on? Little Zhang answered it?" Wang Shuixin was very curious.

Hu Fei replied, "Not yet. Teacher Little Zhang and Elder Qian.. were just about to have a couplet duel."

"A couplet duel with Elder Qian?" Wang Shuixin laughed loudly, thinking that the young one was too overconfident!

.....

Ignoring the chattering around.

After hearing Zhang Ye's big words, Elder Qian narrowed his eyes and curiously said to Zhang Ye, "Okay, then let's give it a try? Are you sure that you have considered it properly and are ready for it? My first verse has a lot of variations!"

Zhang Ye replied, "Such a coincidence! My second verse's variations are more than a few, too."

Elder Qian accepted the challenge, "Then let's begin."

"Yes." Zhang Ye was unrelenting, "You first."

Elder Qian closed his eyes, "Hǎi shuǐ cháo, cháo zhāo zhāo, zhāo zhāo cháo luò (the sea tide; it comes daily; daily it falls)!"

Once the duel started, everyone stopped their chattering and focused towards the two of them. Everyone wanted to know how Zhang Ye could counter every move!

Elder Qian had stated that his first verse had a lot of variations and intonations. Everyone had believed this because it was Elder Qian, the man who was the college entrance examination's question setter. But Zhang Ye also said his second verse had its own tricks?

No one believed this. Not Big Thunder, not Zheng Anbang, and not Meng Dongguo!

Let's see Elder Qian's first verse!

This time, the usage of words and intonation of the first verse were different!

Compared to the previous couplet, this one had inclinations towards a big rise and a big fall. This modified first verse was now something closer to nature, so it was different. Even though the words were still 'hai shui zhao zhao zhao zhao zhao zhao zhao luò', in fact this had become another version of a first verse!

This was definitely the showstopper!

Everyone knew that Zhang Ye's second verse could not match this!

But then, Zhang Ye just gave a smile, "Fú yún zhǎng, zhǎng cháng cháng, cháng cháng zhǎng xiāo (the cloud forms; it expands often; often it shrinks)!"*

What?

This second half...

What the heck!

He matched it?

Your freaking second half also has variations?

Upon hearing Zhang Ye's second match, everyone still had not come around to!

Elder Qian was also stunned. He came up with the third variation, “Hǎi shuǐ cháo, zhāo zhāo zhāo cháo, zhāo zhāo luò (The sea tide; daily it rises; daily it falls)!” This time, not only the pronunciation and words had been changed, even the punctuation had been changed. It was a 3-4-3 punctuation.

Zhang Ye immediately answered, “Fú yún zhǎng, cháng cháng zhǎng zhǎng, cháng cháng xiāo (The cloud forms; often it expands; often it dissipates)!”

Elder Qian immediately came up with the fourth couplet, “Hǎi shuǐ cháo, zhāo cháo zhāo cháo, zhāo cháo luò (The sea tide; it rises and rises; daily it falls)!”

Zhang Ye said, “Fú yún zhǎng, cháng zhǎng cháng zhǎng, cháng zhǎng xiāo (The cloud forms; it expands and expands; often it shrinks)!”

Elder Qian’s eyes narrowed even more, “Hǎi shuǐ zhāo cháo, zhāo zhāo cháo, zhāo zhāo luò (The tide comes in the morning; daily it rises, daily it falls)!”

Zhang Ye said coolly, “Fú yún cháng zhǎng, cháng cháng zhǎng, cháng cháng xiāo (The cloud often spreads; often it spreads; often it dissipates)!”

Everyone turned dumbfounded while hearing this. All of them were like stone statues while hearing the two in their couplet duel!

They felt that this was in the realm of another planet. No one could interfere, nor could anyone interrupt them. They could only listen to it, as they got more and more astonished with every variation of the miraculous couplet!

Elder Qian could not believe it, “Hǎi shuǐ zhāo cháo, zhāo zhāo zhāo cháo zhāo luò (The tide comes in the morning; daily it rises and falls)!”

Zhang Ye brushed his hair, “Fú yún cháng zhǎng, cháng cháng cháng zhǎng cháng xiāo (The cloud often spreads; often it expands and dissipates)!”

Elder Qian gave him a look, “Hǎi shuǐ zhāo cháo, zhāo cháo zhāo zhāo cháo luò (The tide comes in the morning; its rise daily falls)!”

Zhang Ye returned the look, “Fú yún cháng zhǎng, cháng zhǎng cháng cháng zhǎng xiāo (The cloud often spreads; its expansion often shrinks)!”

He could even do that?

He could even match that?

Noticing that he was on the brink, Elder Qian used his ultimate move, “Hǎi shuǐ zhāo zhāo cháo, zhāo cháo zhāo zhāo luò (The seawater daily forms tides; the daily tide daily falls)!” This time it was a “5-5 punctuation”

Who knew that Zhang Ye was not pressured at all as he answered easily, “Fú yún cháng cháng zhǎng, cháng zhǎng cháng cháng xiāo (The cloud often grows long, the often expansion often dissipates)!”

Elder Qian did not stop, “Hǎi shuǐ cháo zhāo zhāo, zhāo zhāo zhāo cháo luò (The tide comes daily, daily the tide falls)!”

Zhang Ye's answer was also extremely fast, as if he did not need to think before answering, "Fú yún zhǎng cháng cháng, cháng cháng cháng zhǎng xiāo (The cloud expands often; often the expansion shrinks)!"

Finally, Elder Qian gave his last couplet, "This is the final variation, Hǎi shuǐ zhāo zhāo zhāo cháo, zhāo zhāo cháo luò (The seawater daily forms morning tides, daily it falls)!" This was an irregular 6-4 punctuation.

Zhang Ye replied with a smile, "This is also my last variation, Fú yún cháng cháng cháng zhǎng, cháng cháng zhǎng xiāo (The clouds often makes expansions; often it shrinks)!"

When the last verse was finished, the square turned into chaos!

"What the heck!"

"Your sister!"

"What did I hear?"

"God! He can even match that?"

Zhang Ye actually managed to match that!

He matched them all!

Every variation of the couplet was matched!

And it was not as simple as barely matching!

Every match was flawless!

It was completely harmonious!

Elder Qian, "..."

Big Thunder, "..."

The rest of the contestants and spectators, "..."

What the f**k to your second granny!

You could even do that!?

Zheng Anbang gasped, "This Zhang Ye's accomplishment in couplets is so deep?"

"How would I know!?" Big Thunder's face wasn't very good. "He can even match such a miraculous couplet? To manage to fight back in a couplet duel with Elder Qian? This kid must be on stimulants!"

Everyone was curious and astonished!

No one had witnessed such an exciting couplet duel before!

Chapter 115: The Buzz from the Live Webcast!

It was silent for a few seconds!

Many people's emotions were stirred!

"Teacher Zhang, I love you!" ex-assistant Xiaofang screamed.

Xiao Lu also waved her arms excitedly, "Teacher Zhang, I love you, too!"

Hou Ge and Hou Di cried with excitement, "Teacher Zhang, you are so godly! So godly!"

Too awesome, too merciless, too strong, scaring the heavens, making spirits cry! So a couplet duel can be so earth-shattering?

Other than Big Sis Zhou, Zhao Guozhou and the others who knew Zhang Ye personally, once the couplet duel was over, those that were present couldn't hold back from applauding loudly!

A miraculous couplet had amazed the whole audience!

Especially the second verse; it was simply the ultimate!

The first and second verses had matched so perfectly!

Of course it was perfect. Because not only did Zhang Ye know about this couplet, he even knew about its origins. In Zhang Ye's previous world, on Qinhuang Island, there was a Temple of Lady Meng Jiang. In the front of the temple were two pillars, which the couplets had been inscribed upon. It described the scenery around Shanghai Pass and the Temple of Lady Meng Jiang, as well as the expression of nature, the expression of the universe, describing the world of everything using the sea tide and floating clouds as figures of speech, rising and falling, expanding and dissolving, without a state of normalization. This pair of couplets could be read in over ten ways, and was considered a wonder of the world. And in the examples in the textbooks, these couplets had been used as an examination question, as well as an example. Hence, even if Zhang Ye did not use a Memory Search Capsule, he still had a deep impression of it!

As for whose creation this pair of verses belonged to, Zhang Ye did not know. But since this was basically a pair of couplets, then of course it was perfect and without blemish; otherwise, why would the future generations label it as the Millennial Miraculous Couplet? However, Elder Qian was considered to be quite a genius. This world might not have a Temple of Lady Meng Jiang, yet he had come up with the upper half of such a miraculous couplet. Seeing Elder Qian's expression and his reaction from just now, he must have not thought of a corresponding second half, or the second half he had thought up wasn't the one that Zhang Ye had used.

It was alright. Zhang Ye had helped him complete the couplet, and had found a good home for the Millennial Miraculous Couplet in this world!

Elder Qian was speechless for quite a while.

The second judge, the old granny, asked him in aghast, "Young lad, what's your name?"

Zhang Ye said, neither superciliously nor obsequiously, "My name is Zhang Ye."

The old granny was taken aback, "That 'Shuidiao Getou' was written by you?"

"Yes, it is mine. Sorry for incurring your ridicule," Zhang Ye said humbly.

The third judge, who was the old man, praised, "What a marvelous 'Fu yun chang chang chang chang chang chang chang xiao'! Well-matched! A miraculous couplet matching a miraculous couplet! Haha!"

The old granny glanced at Elder Qian, "Old man Qian, you sure met your match this time around!"

Elder Qian gave Zhang Ye a few long stares, and in the end, ridiculed himself, "When I wrote the first half, I had also matched it with another second half. But now, compared to your second half, my second half... Forget it; let's not talk about it. Be it the corresponding neatness or the mood, your second half is one level higher than mine. Thank you, young lad, for giving this miraculous couplet's first half a perfect match!" Saying that, Elder Qian returned to his seat to pick up a pen to write Zhang Ye's name, "I declare that the preliminary round has officially ended. Zhang Ye, you passed!"

Zhang Ye said, "Thank you, Teacher."

.....

The preliminaries had ended.

Everyone left as they discussed.

"Bravo!" Hou Ge hugged Zhang Ye's shoulders!

Hu Fei gave a relieved and contented pat on Zhang Ye's back, "Good lad! You really are the best! This is what you call not knowing how to match couplets? This is what you call not studying couplets before? Who are you bluffing! Haha!"

Zhang Ye immediately tried to stay low-key, "It was just sheer luck."

"Come on, Teacher Zhang!" Hou Di said delightedly, "You have tricks up your sleeve at every turn!"

Amongst the people, Tian Bin gave Zhang Ye a big thumbs up. His wife also smiled, happy for Zhang Ye from her heart.

Big Sis Zhou craved nothing short of nationwide chaos. Seeing how Big Thunder had challenged Zhang Ye, but Zhang Ye had managed to match the couplet the next moment, she was tickled amused, "Little Zhang, bring the championship title back!"

Zhang Ye said at a loss, "Big Sis Zhou, you think too highly of me. I only came for the bustle. What do you mean, 'champion'..." He really did not think that he could become the champion, and might not even be able to be placed. After all, even if this world's couplets had a portion of those from his world, they were just a tiny minority. He had happened to run into the last couplet that he knew of from before for the preliminary round, allowing him to pass. If not, he would have been eliminated.

Big Thunder was livid. He glanced at Zheng Anbang, before rushing straight to the hall with Zheng Anbang. He had never expected Zhang Ye to successfully match such a miraculous couplet. And he had done it so quickly, without any thought? Back then, he thought that Zhang Ye did not know couplets at all. But who knew that not only was he good at writing poems, essays, novels, fairy tales and advertisements, he was also good at couplets? Big Thunder no longer dared to despise Zhang Ye. He had to hurry to prepare for the finals!

.....

A while later.

In the men's bathroom outside the hall.

Zhang Ye had abdominal pains, so he did not enter together with Hu Fei and company. He found a stall in the bathroom and locked himself in to do his business. As he had time, Zhang Ye took out his cellphone to surf the net. Although he did not much of his data balance left, he still opened the Beijing Couplet Competition's video website!

The video for the preliminary round was already out!

Zhang Ye immediately watched it!

In the beginning, the scenes were of the contestants who were answering from before. The scene of Big Thunder matching a couplet and passing the preliminary round also appeared. Nearing the end, Zhang Ye's scene finally appeared!

"My first verse has a lot of variations!"

"Such a coincidence! My second verse's variations are more than a few, too."

"Hǎi shuǐ cháo, cháo zhāo zhāo, zhāo zhāo cháo luò (the sea tide; it comes daily; daily it falls)!"

"Fú yún zhǎng, zhǎng cháng cháng, cháng cháng zhǎng xiǎo (the cloud forms; it expands often; often it shrinks)!"

The scene of the couplet duel between Zhang Ye and Elder Qian had been completely recorded!

Seeing his mighty self in the video, Zhang Ye was also very satisfied. It was well-filmed, but the only regret was that he was not given a clear frontal shot. Most of it had scenes with side shots or back shots. Throughout the entire process, Elder Qian was facing the camera. There was nothing he could do, for Elder Qian was a famous senior.

The video ended.

Taking another look, the discussions and comments below were boiling!

"That 50th question is too exaggerated!"

"That's right! And someone actually managed to match it?"

"It's Teacher Zhang Ye! Haha! I knew it was him!"

"Everyone come and see! The Face Smacking Specialist has made a comeback!"

"Pfft. I'm having stitches from laughing. What sort of nickname is that?"

"Who is Zhang Ye? This name sounds familiar."

"Search on the web yourself. It's full of his data and there's plenty of information on the web. Hehe, seeing Teacher Zhang Ye revealing his invincible might sure feels good! The second half was matched too brilliantly!"

"Teacher Zhang's literary skill remains the same!"

“Indeed, I even thought that Zhang Ye did not know how to match couplets. I never expected Zhang Ye to also have such deep attainments in couplets! Teacher Zhang is really defying the heavens!”

“No, I have to watch it again. I have never seen such an awesome couplet duel!”

“The first half was good, but the second half was matched even better! As expected of Teacher Zhang!”

“It’s too bad that Teacher Zhang looks average. His looks are different from the image in my mind. Hai, but it’s nothing much. Teacher Zhang engages in literary work, and is not a movie star or singer, so I can’t ask for too much. I will still support Teacher Zhang!”

“Let’s watch the finals!”

“Right, the finals are starting soon!”

“Looking forward to Teacher Zhang’s performance!”

“The finals won’t be easy. There are so many experts. For example, Big Thunder is also quite formidable. He was the first runner-up for the last Beijing Couplet Competition. He won’t be easy to deal with.”

Chapter 116: A Situation During the Finals!

Peking University.

The grand hall was packed, with no empty seats.

Zhang Ye used his pass to enter, after coming out of the bathroom. The opening speech was already over. A Leader from a radio or television station walked away after putting down the microphone. Following that, two hosts came onstage. Zhang Ye had never seen them before. They were probably students of Peking University and were a male-female duo.

“Hello Leaders, guests and everyone.”

“Welcome to the annual Beijing Couplet Competition.”

“As a host, I feel very honored. I feel like my body is sparkling with light.”

“Is your Zodiac sign a firefly? I’ve known you for so many years, but this is the first time I’m hearing about this ability of yours?”

The stage lines were clearly prepared beforehand. The two hosts exchanged banter with each other to liven up the atmosphere, before announcing the competition’s rules, “Before we begin, let us introduce the rules of the final.” He pointed to a long stretch of seats from his podium. There were about 50 seats. And to the side, there were three seats for the judges. Their names were written on it. They were the same three judges from the preliminary round. “Here are the seats for the contestants. There are where the judges’ seats are. The final will be held in a first to the answer format. The three judges will each come up with a question. Following that, the other 50 contestants will come up with the first half of a couplet. Whoever manages to speak first will be allowed to answer. If the answer is unanimously agreed upon by the three judges, then the answer will be accepted, giving the contestant one point. If you do not manage to match it... One point will be deducted. Please note that there is a new rule for this year. If

a contestant's couplet cannot be matched by anyone in the time allotted, that contestant will obtain ten points. Finally, the contestants with the highest scores will be placed accordingly for the top three."

This year's competition had a slight difference in rules, when compared with last year's, but they weren't much different. There were just some changes to the way the points were calculated and the point deductions.

"Next will be the opening dance."

"Please give a round of applause to our Beijing Couplet Organization's dancing Teachers!"

An ancient melody sounded. A few dance artists dressed in historical costumes appeared. Their long sleeves fluttered and immediately drew the applause of the audience!

Zhang Ye bent his back as he quickly walked to his front row seat, "Excuse me, thank you."

His ticket was given to him by Tian Bin. But since the tickets given to the television and radio stations were concentrated together, everyone was actually in one area.

Tian Bin's wife saw Zhang Ye coming and said puzzledly, "Teacher Zhang, why aren't you preparing backstage? Haven't all the contestants gone there?"

Big Sis Zhou asked, "That's right, Little Zhang. What are you doing here?"

Hu Fei, Xiao Lu and company also looked over, "The competition is about to begin."

Zhang Ye waved his hand and found an empty spot to sit down. "I'm not participating. Let them compete."

Hou Ge was shocked, "What? Why aren't you participating? With your deep foundation in couplets, it is such a great opportunity. Why would you..."

Former Leader Zhao Guozhou also frowned, "Little Zhang, this doesn't seem like your usual style."

Xiaofang was even more anxious than Zhang Ye, "Teacher Zhang, go on up! Hurry! How can you not go!?"

Zhang Ye answered truthfully, "I just happened to be lucky at the preliminary round. I don't believe that I will be that lucky in the final round. They are all experts, so I won't bring ridicule on myself."

Actually, Zhang Ye also wanted to give the final round a try. Of course, he wanted to seize a chance to be famous. However, when he heard the competition's rules when he entered, he decided that it was better not to shame himself. He might as well leave the impressive and mysterious impression he had from the preliminary round. Why? Why didn't he even try? It was because there were too many questions. He had not heard of most of this world's couplets. It wasn't that he could not answer all of them, but he could not answer at least 80% of them. He could not use the literary foundations from his world. So even if he went and happened to hear a few questions that he had previously heard of before, that was pointless. If he couldn't get into the top three, then it would be a waste. He decided not to go, getting rid of the chance for the Beijing Writers' Association to suppress him, and not giving them the chance of using the fact that he did not get a placing to fault him!

As for damaging to his Reputation if he abstained? If the preliminary round did not exist, it would definitely have happened. However, he had staged an astonishing couplet duel with Elder Qian in the preliminary round, and had even won. Hence, even if he did not participate in the final round, his fame would only increase, not decrease.

“Little Zhang!”

“Aiyah, you...”

Many of his old friends and colleagues were persuading him.

Zhang Ye only shook his head. He could do nothing about it. It was just that they did not understand the situation.

Seeing that Zhang Ye did not have any intentions in participating, everyone felt a sense of regret and stopped saying anything.

The opening dance.

Recital of Chinese Literature.

Ancient classic couplets were drawn by famous calligraphers.

The program lasted for an hour. It was very interesting, giving enjoyment to people.

Now, everything was being broadcast live on the internet. A few cameras were facing the podium, and a few were hanging above. One of them was above the podium, and another was behind the audience. Compared to a traditional professional television’s live broadcast, this was not considered very professional; there were too few cameras. But since it was a webcast, it was already considered pretty good.

At this moment, the performances came to an end.

The male and female host went onstage.

“Hello, everyone. I believe that the performance from before was already great fun for many, but what is more fun will be in a while. I am announcing the beginning of the competition. Let me first introduce our judges for this Beijing Couplet Competition...” A judge would walk out from backstage as the female host announced each name. Amidst applause, the judges took their seats. Following that, the female host continued to announce, “Next, I will announce the contestant name list for those who passed the preliminary round. Lu Fang, Big Thunder, Zheng Anbang, Zhou Yan...” The final name, “...Zhang Ye.”

Suddenly, there seemed to be a situation.

A staff member with a blue badge ran out. One could tell at a glance that he was from the Writers’ Association, as all the members from the Writers’ Association wore a blue badge. The Couplet Organization wore white. Different units have different colors. Following that, a few Couplet Organization and Writers’ Association employees came out. They surrounded the three judges and seemed to be discussing something with them. Following that, they even signaled to the host onstage to temporary stop. It was as if they wanted the hosts to first delay something.

“Eh?”

“What’s the matter?”

“Why is the atmosphere so tense?”

“What has happened? It’s a live broadcast, too. Why aren’t they beginning the finals?”

The camera quickly moved away, but the audience present could see it clearly. They began to discuss about it.

The male host was quick to react, “This competition sure is highly anticipated. I wonder who will be this year’s champion. Last year’s champion, Professor Wang, unfortunately could not come due to his old age. This year, I’m placing my bets on last year’s first runner-up, Teacher Big Thunder. What about you?”

The female host smiled and said, “I’m placing my bets on Teacher Zhang Ye.”

“Why?” From the male host’s expression, he clearly did not know who Zhang Ye was. But since his partner had said so, he had to pretend like he knew.

The female host blinked, “It’s nothing much. It’s only because I’m Teacher Zhang Ye’s fan. I have memorized every poem of his except ‘The Song of the Stormy Petrel’.”

The male host was amused, “But this is a couplet competition.”

“So what? It can’t prevent me from worshiping my idol!” the female host said matter-of-factly.

“I only just realized you chase idols!” The male host was at a loss of whether to laugh or to cry.

The two of them exchanged words as they dragged the time out to change the subject.

Offstage, Xiao Lu was smiling with glee, “Look at our Teacher Zhang’s popularity! He has fans all over Beijing!”

“That’s right. That female host is your fan.” Hou Ge prodded Zhang Ye with his elbow. “Teacher Zhang, are you sure that you aren’t participating? This will disappoint your fan!”

Zhang Ye was actually thinking about how much he wanted to go up onto the stage.

Five minutes passed and the audience was already becoming impatient.

The hosts could no longer drag it out any further. Looking offstage, a host said, “Teacher Judges, can we begin?”

An employee with a blue pass offstage noticed the situation and quickly went onstage, and took over the microphone, “Sorry, but we have a situation. Just now, someone reported that a contestant had violated the rules by cheating. So please wait patiently. We are still discussing the situation.”

“Cheat?”

“Who?”

“What cheating?”

The audience began to chatter.

The Beijing Writers' Association's employee said quickly, "The person that was reported is Zhang Ye."

A few judges were looking very harsh, especially Elder Qian. He stared coldly at the Writers' Association employee who had went up onstage to speak without their agreement. The outcome was not settled, so who allowed you to announce the name of the contestant that was reported? Who let you say it?

The female host was also stunned. She had previously mentioned that she had her bets on Teacher Zhang Ye.

The Writers' Association employee pretended that he did not see the fierce stares from the Couplet Organization's Leaders and the few judges. He carried on speaking casually, "This is because during the preliminaries, Zhang Ye was discussing the questions with his surrounding friends. Someone even heard one of his friends suggesting to plan a strategy for him to solve the question. After receiving the report, we checked the video footage and realized that it did happen!"

Elder Qian was enraged, "Get him down! What the heck!"

The faces of the few people from the Couplet Organization turned ugly. A Leader from the Couplet Organization said to a Leader from the Writers' Association, "Things aren't even confirmed. Who let you say that? Eh?"

The Writers' Association's Leader threw up his hands, "I didn't instruct him to do it."

The woman from the Couplet Organization who was responsible for receiving Zhang Ye said, "Get him the f**k down!" Even vulgarities came out!

The Beijing Writers' Association's Leader frowned, but he got his employee down. But since the words had been said, it was useless to think of turning the situation around by having his employee removed!

The words were shocking. This matter immediately blew up!

Whether it was the audience or the people watching the live webcast, everyone heard it!

"Zhang Ye?"

"Zhang Ye cheated?"

"His friends helped him match it during the preliminary round?"

"Hai, I already said it. How can a person manage to match the second half of such a miraculous couplet in such a short time? He must have gotten somebody's help!"

"This kind of person even participated?"

"Right, quickly revoke Zhang Ye's finals qualification!"

"I was even amazed at that Zhang Ye. Who knew that he relied on others to enter the finals!"

Chapter 117: Zhang Ye's Reputation Crisis?

Many people began to despise him!

But many clear-minded people refused to believe!

Big Sis Zhou said angrily, "Little Zhang cheated? Bullsh*t!"

"Does Little Zhang even need to cheat?" Auntie Sun was also enraged, "Who reported it? Who is so mean?"

Seeing how Zhang Ye was being defamed, Xiao Lu's eyes turned red, "We did have ideas! But it was all nonsense! Teacher Zhang relied all on his own ability during the preliminary round!"

Hou Ge also stood up, "Who is so insidious!?"

Zhao Guozhou's expression sank, "Cheating? Even a fool can see through it. Can ideas from a group of people match that miraculous couplet of Elder Qian? Anyone who knows a bit of literature and couplets would know that this isn't about having strength in numbers!"

Tian Bin asked, "Someone is setting a trap for Zhang Ye, right?"

"It must be." Zhao Guozhou inhaled, "They really have vicious intentions!"

Hu Fei suppressed his anger and said, "Some people from the Beijing Writers' Association have already been reduced to such means?"

Hou Di also thought through it, "It must be them messing with things. They were the ones who reported! The staff who went up just now was from the Beijing Writers' Association! When he finished speaking, the people from the Couplet Organization were enraged. The judging Teachers seemed to even order him to come down, and stop talking nonsense. The matter is already very clear. This bunch of people from the Writers' Association are serious in destroying Teacher Zhang's reputation. By accusing Teacher Zhang Ye for cheating during a live webcast, even if only half of the people believed, Teacher Zhang's reputation would be gone in the future. Also, by reporting him, they can prevent Zhang Ye from taking part in the final round. Without him, Big Thunder from the Beijing Writers' Association would probably win the championship!"

Dafei cursed angrily, "Those bunch of grandchildren!"

Only Zhang Ye remained silent. He closed his eyes, but his breathing was hurried. Everyone could tell that Teacher Zhang Ye was enraged, too!

.....

The male host immediately tried to save the situation, "Then let's first wait for the Teachers to come up with a decision after some discussion."

However, the female host was very angry, "Teacher Zhang Ye cheated? I'm the first to not believe in it. I saw the preliminaries, too. I was not too far away. Is exchanging a few words with friends considered cheating? Then all the contestants who used a cellphone during the preliminary round should be considered as having cheated! Just being able to send the question through a phone and get someone to answer... Isn't that also possible? Then there's no point to this year's Couplet Competition. We have all cheated!"

The male host nearly cried as he signaled his partner with his eyes. He was thinking, "What are you doing? Don't you think it's messy enough already? And why is your logic so crooked!?"

The female host ignored him, "Let's wait for the result!"

.....

The situation became more and more messy!

There were people cursing at Zhang Ye, and there were others supporting him!

In the end, even the female host had chimed in to publicly support Zhang Ye. The situation was nearly on the brink of them losing control. Everyone knew that something had to be done!

Offstage, the people from the Beijing Writers' Association were chatting.

"Such a cheat is undermining the fairness. He has to be severely punished!"

"That's right. But that isn't enough to convince the masses. I think we should just cancel his qualifications!"

"Judges, how can anyone be convinced if you do not disburse appropriate punishment to an immoral person like Zhang Ye? The participants backstage are now having their objections, too!"

The woman from the Couplet Organization said with a cold face, "Immoral? What do you mean by immoral? The results aren't out yet. We are still discussing it. Who let you people from the Writers' Association go up onstage? Who allowed you to reveal the entire situation? You haven't even verified the situation! Do you think by just revealing it, those things will become facts?"

A minor Leader from the Beijing Writers' Association said, "Why is it our problem now? My colleague happened to be fast to speak. It is a bit inappropriate, but it is a fact that Zhang Ye cheated. We can see clearly from the live footage!"

Actually, the Couplet Competition had been held for more than ten years. Every year it was about the same. The preliminaries were held in an open area. There was no limitations to contestants using their phones or interacting with others. This was because they believed that everyone had a basic quality to them. They would not lower themselves to cheating. No cheating had ever occurred. Although Zhang Ye discussing the couplets with others was not in accordance with the rules, usually, no one would say a thing. Who knew that such a situation would happen this year? This was the first time that someone had reported such a violation. And the conclusion was given onstage before there was any conclusive investigation!

There was definitely something underhanded about it!

The people from the Couplet Organization could tell!

The youngest among the three judges was also 58 years old. They were very experienced, so how could they not see what the people from the Beijing Writers' Association were trying to do?

The second judge, the old granny said, "Is the video proof? Just seeing them interact is proof? Then flip through the video. I believe this isn't the only occasion where a contestant chats with others during the preliminaries. Oh, so you don't allow the contestants to talk?"

A person from the Beijing Writers' Association said, "But they were discussing the question!"

Elder Qian firmly said, "Even if they discussed it, my question can't be matched just from some planning. Are you underestimating me? I am absolutely sure that the second half of the couplet was matched by Zhang Ye. It was all his own wisdom!" After he said that, he announced, "Carry on with the competition!"

The person from the Beijing Writers' Association, who had went onstage to speak nonsense, stared, "But, Zhang Ye..."

"I said to carry on with the competition! Did you hear what I said?" Elder Qian stared at him, "If you aren't convinced, why don't you be the first judge! I'll give you this seat of mine!"

That person stopped speaking.

A person from the Couplet Organization said, "I'll let the hosts know."

Not long later, the male host announced, "There was no evidence for the report of Teacher Zhang Ye's cheating. The competition will carry on."

.....

Online.

The comments left below the live video feed exploded.

"What? There is no evidence?"

"There's a conspiracy! There definitely is a conspiracy!"

"That Zhang Ye must have cheated! There's no smoke without fire!"

"I also saw it. In the preliminary round footage, there really was a scene of him discussing with a few people. It was coincidentally captured when filming Big Thunder's matching of the couplet. I believe there are scenes the camera got directly, but they did not upload it. They were all cut! So despicable!"

"Boycott Zhang Ye! I already did not find him pleasing to the eye!"

"No way. Teacher Zhang's literary skills are so good; is there a need to cheat?"

"It is impossible to judge a man's heart from his face. How can he have such abilities at such a young age? I guess those past poems of his were written by someone else!"

"Didn't that person from the Beijing Writers' Association already announce that Zhang Ye was cheating? The Writers' Association is, after all, an authoritative source. How can it be fake?"

"Not necessarily."

"We will know if he's a mule or a horse just by testing him."

“Right, let’s watch the finals. Without any ability, even if he cheated to pass the preliminaries, he would not be placed in the finals. Haha, waiting to see Zhang Ye make a fool of himself!”

There were also Zhang Ye’s fans who helped speak up for him, but soon they were drowned by the criticisms. With this scandal, about 80% of the people watching the live webcast were against Zhang Ye!

Chapter 118: The Three Couplets of the Finals!

On the podium.

The female host said, “We now invite the contestants onstage.”

The male host read the names, “Last year’s first runner-up, Teacher Big Thunder!”

The applause from the audience was sparse and not too warm. This was because many people were still focused on the problem of Zhang Ye’s cheating. Even though the judges and the organizers from the Couplet Organization had said the report was invalid due to a lack of proof, it was natural for people to be absorbed by conspiracy theories. They felt that the result was untrue, and that Zhang Ye had cheated.

“Member of the Couplet Organization, Teacher Lu Fang.”

“Peking University Associate Professor, Teacher Zhou Yan.”

“Famous romance author, Teacher Zheng Anbang.”

The contestants appeared onstage one by one as they sat in one of the 50 contestant gallery seats.

As he had the least experience and was the youngest, Zhang Ye was last on the list. When the female host saw the last name on the list, she read, “Please welcome the last contestant, famous poet, famous best-selling author, renowned radio host, Teacher Zhang Ye!” Zhang Ye’s title was the longest amongst everyone.

However, the moment Zhang Ye’s name was mentioned, people from offstage booed.

“Boo!”

“Go back down!”

“There’s no way to cheat during the final round! Don’t embarrass yourself!”

The attitudes of many were unfriendly.

Big Thunder and Zheng Anbang glanced at Zhang Ye, who was sitting in the audience. They smiled at each other. In the audience stands? They were still wondering why they did not see Zhang Ye backstage. So he had decided to not participate and abstain? At least you knew your place! Big Thunder felt that the championship was in the bag!

But no one expected to see Zhang Ye suddenly stand up.

“Little Zhang! You...” Big Sis Zhou said in surprise.

Hou Ge and Xiao Lu also chimed in, “You are competing?”

Hu Fei said with worry, "Didn't you say that you did not have much hope for the finals?"

Zhao Guozhou also gave a suggestion, "Little Zhang, you must think it through carefully. If you really lack the confidence, then you might as well not go. At least you can retain some of your fame. The moment you go and do not get a placing, then the cheating scandal will explode. Everyone will accuse you of cheating, and it will become the truth."

Zhang Ye said lightly, "I'm not sure and have no confidence."

"Then why are you going?" Hu Fei was unsupportive of him going forward.

Zhang Ye only said, "The result is binary. Either you win or you lose. But someone has to win, and why not me?" This was said by famous basketball star Kobe Bryant from Zhang Ye's world. He remembered this line very clearly.

Why not me?

That's right, why won't I win!?

Xiao Lu clenched her fists and stood up, "Well-said, Teacher Zhang! Go all the way!"

Teacher Zhang also cheered him on, "Teacher Zhang, let all those who doubt you see your talent! Use real actions to shut them up!"

Zhang Ye laughed, "I will!"

Onstage, the female host repeated, "Let's welcome Teacher Zhang Ye."

Zhang Ye squeezed out from the row of seats and walked to the 50th seat. His name was written there. He narrowed his eyes as he sat down. Confident? Yes, Zhang Ye was now confident after suppressing his tremendous wrath. Why did he suddenly have such a sudden change? This was because just a while ago, under the tremendous stress and voice of doubts, and the pressure of a stain that could destroy Zhang Ye's life as a celebrity, he suddenly had a bright idea. He suddenly thought of a way out! This method was actually something he was not 100% sure. He was not even 50% sure about it, but now.. he had no choice but to risk it! He was betting everything on this!

Win or lose?

Success or failure?

Zhang Ye had no idea, but he definitely was unwilling to admit defeat. Beijing Writers' Association, do you think that by doing this, you can defeat me, Zhang Ye? Do you think your despicable means can make me forever be beyond redemption? And allow you to achieve your despicable goals?

Alright!

I'll play with you!

Let's see who is more skilled today!

At this moment, Zhang Ye's fighting spirit was lifted from his anger!

Seeing that Zhang Ye did not abstain from the competition, even in the face of the audiences' mockery and laughter, Big Thunder had a look of discontent. But from another perspective, wasn't this a chance for them to gain back their pride after the last Mid-Autumn Poetry Meet? The champion would definitely be Big Thunder. This way, not only would they recover from their loss of face and let everyone know that the Beijing Writers' Association was not a farce, Zhang Ye not being able to get a placing would also verify that he cheated in the preliminaries. Performing so well in the preliminaries, but not even getting placed in the finals? If you didn't cheat, then what could it be!

Two birds with one stone!

Big Thunder glanced at Zhang Ye.

But Zhang Ye did not look at him; he just closed his eyes and gathered his thoughts.

The female host holding the microphone said: "I will now announce the time limitations. After a judge or a contestant has submitted their question, the other contestants have ten minutes to prepare an answer. If no one has an answer within ten minutes, the submitter will gain victory and also ten points."

The male host asked, "Does anyone have any questions?"

Zhang Ye snapped his fingers, "How do we signal our intent to answer?"

The female host patiently answered, "The microphone in front of each contestant has been switched on. The contestants can just directly answer into it. Whoever can match the most perfect answer will gain one point. To emphasize this, it has to be a perfect answer; if it is slightly mismatched or off in meaning, it will be considered wrong. This will be decided by our three judges. If there are any words that the judges are not sure about, the contestant can write out the second verse and it will be displayed out in front for them to verify. But the basic medium will still be by speaking."

Zhang Ye laughed, "Thank you; I understand." It was his first time participating, so he wanted to be sure of the rules.

The male host looked over to the judges, "Teachers, can we begin?"

"Yes, please begin." The third judge said, "I will be giving out the first question. Everyone, please get ready."

At the same time, everyone eagerly looked forward. Some stared towards the old man and felt their emotions tense up as they prepared to match the couplet.

But at this time, just as the third judge was about to speak, Zhang Ye very quickly opened up the game ring's inventory and grabbed one of his two Lucky Breads. He had gained them earlier and stored them away. Now it could finally be put to use. This was the only idea Zhang Ye had in mind. He wanted to switch the situation to his advantage with this Lucky Bread. With its luck, he wanted to let these bunch of people not say any couplet that he had never heard of before! Was this possible? Of course it was possible. The Lucky Bread's effect was already known to Zhang Ye. It would increase his luck stats!

Lucky Bread in Effect!

Countdown begins, 5:00...

As the third judge was about to give the first verse, the second judge beside him dropped the bottle cap of her water onto the table in front of him. Talala! The third judge gave a glance and was distracted. He suddenly forgot the first part of the couplet he wanted to use. But he still had many couplets in his mind that he had come up with, as well as couplets that no one had been able to match with. So, he immediately changed to another one, “Huà shàng hé huā hé shàng huà (A lotus and monk on a painting)!”

As all the contestants listened, they gave a wry smile.

Big Thunder had wanted to be the first to answer. But when he heard this, he felt helpless. He could only be practical and think it over. He knew that this first verse would be difficult to match in a short time. The upper half of the couplet looked normal, but when read backwards, it was no longer normal. It was the same, no matter if it was read from the front or the back!

The first couplet was already that difficult?

That can't be necessary, right? Why is it so complicated!

However, Big Thunder and many others believed that given enough time, they would definitely be able to come up with a match for it!

But somehow, someone did not allow them to have the time to think. When he heard this first verse, Zhang Ye smiled. He knew the Lucky Bread had taken effect. This was a couplet that he knew. It was a couplet by Tang Bohu, who had said that if any future generation could match this, then the person was definitely a genius.

Zhang Ye said without giving it any thought, “shū lín hàn mò hàn lín shū (The ink on the book writes Official Han Lin)!”

The third judge was stunned. Big Thunder and the other contestants were stunned, too. F**k! You are too fast!

Elder Qian laughed and nodded, “Pass!”

The second and third judges also said, “Pass!”

The female host immediately gave Zhang Ye 1 point.

Immediately following was a question from the second judge, “Chù chù hóng huā hóng chù chù (Everywhere, red flowers make it red everywhere!)!” It was again a palindromic couplet, and was one that was so difficult that it needed a lot of time to be solved!

Zhang Ye knew the time limits of the Lucky Bread. He had to answer every question fast. Otherwise, he would have to waste the second Lucky Bread. He answered quickly, “Chóng chóng lǜ shù lǜ chóng chóng (Green tree groves are lush green!)!”

F**k!

Matched again?

Everyone was stunned!

It was time for Elder Qian to put forth his question. It was yet another palindromic couplet, “Xuě yìng méi huā méi yìng xuě (The snow reflects the blossoms as the blossoms project the snow).”

As soon as the last word ended, Zhang Ye matched, “Yīng yí liǔ xù liǔ yí yīng (The larks suit the willows as the willow suits the lark)!”

At this moment, Elder Qian could only wryly smile. He looked at the two judges, who were his old friends, beside him. He helplessly threw up his hands. The questions they had thought about for days had been answered by Zhang Ye in less than a second, like it was a conditional reflex. The second and third judges looked at each other and did not say a word. They were taken aback! They knew very well that these questions could be answered by a master, but they did not expect it to be matched so quickly. The verses were matched without thought? This is too f**king exaggerated! Moreover, the third judge who gave the first verse of “Huà shàng hé huā hé shàng huà (A lotus and monk on a painting)” didn’t even have a second verse for it. Yet Zhang Ye matched it without skipping a beat!

Three questions in a row!

Three points in total!

Zhang Ye spent less than ten seconds in total!

Xiao Lu jumped up and screamed, “Teacher Zhang, well done!”

“Teacher Little Zhang! You are too cool!” Hou Ge also screamed!

Many of Zhang Ye’s friends and former colleagues broke out into cheers. It was relieving! This was so f**king relieving! Who said Teacher Zhang Ye was cheating? Eh? Who said Teacher Zhang Ye relied on others to pass the preliminaries? Open up your eyes and take a look! Is this called cheating?

Some of the audience members were dumbfounded!

Many of the audience were still skeptical. They felt that it was a coincidence. Maybe Zhang Ye was very good at matching palindromic couplets, but he was not good at others!

Big Thunder, Zheng Anbang and all the other contestants thought the same. They could not think otherwise because then there would be no explanation for Zhang Ye’s amazing matches!

No one can be so fast like you!

Chapter 119: A God-Like Zhang Ye, Shocking Couplets!

3 points!

Zhang Ye was in first place for now!

Considering this momentum, everyone knew that Zhang Ye had the chance to become the champion. The contestants could not sit idle. It was their turn to provide the questions. They decided to come up with the most difficult questions. Some of them even decided to change the questions they had originally intended to use.

For example, someone from the Beijing Writers’ Association was Contestant #1. He would be the first to produce a question. He originally had a palindrome couplet, as the difficulty was much higher. If no one

could answer it, he would obtain ten points. This would at least guarantee that he would enter the top five. However, the moment he saw Zhang Ye answering palindrome couplets so easily, as if he didn't need to think, he decided to change couplets on the spot.

This couplet was not created by him, but obtained from a master, so he had not planned on using it, afraid that he would be suspected of cheating. But now, with Zhang Ye's imposing momentum, he had no choice but to use it!

Contestant #1 gave his question, "Shuǐ shuǐ shān shān chù chù míng míng xiù xiù! (Lakes, mountains, bright and gorgeous everywhere)!"

This sort of couplet was in a conversational style called couplets with reiterative locution. The difficulty was quite average, and was considered quite low.

Big Thunder's eyes lit up. He could match this couplet. After giving some thought to smooth the word flow before beginning to open his mouth, that second of thought had allowed Zhang Ye to beat him to it.

Zhang Ye smiled. "Qíng qíng yǔ yǔ shí shí hǎo hǎo qí qí (Sunny days, rainy days, wonderful and miraculous all the time)."

The three judges gave his answer some thought. They did not pass him immediately.

Many of the contestants could see that there was a twist to it. This couplet was not that simple!

Big Thunder saw this, too. After Zhang Ye spoke, he had thought of another second half, but after some further thought, that second half was not appropriate. It did not match!

There was a trap!

There was a trap in it!

Contestant #1 noticed that Zhang Ye had fallen for his trap and gave a laugh, "Sorry Teacher Zhang Ye, this first half of the couplet can be read backwards. Even with the repeated locutions, it can be read backwards, xiù xiù míng míng chù chù shān shān shuǐ shuǐ (The clear mountains and rivers are everywhere)."

Zhang Ye smiled. "What a coincidence. My couplet can also be read backwards, qí qí hǎo hǎo shí shí yǔ yǔ qíng qíng! (It's very good even when it's rainy or sunny!)"

The first contestant was stunned, "My first half can be read in parts, and can be repeated in a cyclic manner. Shuǐ chù míng, shān chù xiù, shuǐ shān chù chù míng xiù! (Clear is the water, gorgeous are the mountains, the lake and mountains are clear and gorgeous everywhere!)"

Zhang Ye smiled. "What a coincidence. My couplet is the same, and can also be repeated in a cyclic manner. Qíng shí hǎo, yǔ shí qí, qíng yǔ shí shí hǎo qí! (Wonderful when it is sunny, marvelous when it is raining, it is miraculous when it rains on a sunny day!)" This was a popular couplet from his world. It was rumored to be written by Huang Wenzhong. But in this world, the second half had apparently been lost.

When Contestant #1 heard this, he nearly vomited blood. He felt as if he had suffered a great deal of internal injuries. In such a short period of time, no, it was almost in an instant, he had managed to see through all the variations of the first half of the couplet?

And he had come up with such a perfect second half?

Your sister!

Is a god possessing your body!?

There were the sounds of gasps!

The three judges pressed their buttons. Beep, all of them unanimously passed him!

Contestant #2 was a member of the Couplet Organization, and he refused to have his beliefs shaken. He gave his question, “Wú shān dé shì wú shān hǎo. (No (Wu) mountain can be compared to Mt Wu)” This was a couplet with different homonyms. It was very difficult!

Just as someone was about to attempt to match it.

Zhang Ye gave the second half, “Hé shuǐ néng rú hé shuǐ qīng! (What (He) water can be clearer than the river’s (He) water?)”

The second judge, the old granny could not help but shout out, “Great couplet!” As a judge, she should not have said anything, but as a lover of couplets, she could not resist giving her kudos!

Wú shān...wū shān?

Hé shuǐ...hé shuǐ!

She looked at Zhang Ye with a pleasant surprise!

The next person tried a different method and came up with a rare couplet that had a missing word, hiding its true meaning, “Wū yā fēi rù lù sī qún, xuě lǐ sòng tàn. (A crow flies into a siege of herons; delivering coal in the snow – meaning to help someone when they need it most)”

But Zhang Ye immediately gave the second half, “Fènghuáng lì zài yuān yāng pàn, jǐn shàng tiān huā! (A phoenix stands upon the mandarin ducks’ pond; adding flowers onto embroidery – to make something beautiful, perfect)”

That person, “...” Then he admitted Zhang Ye’s superiority by giving him a big thumbs up. He did not say another word.

Zhang Ye obtained more and more points. At this moment, it no longer seemed like a Couplet Competition amongst contestants; it became a competition with Zhang Ye soloing against everyone!

It was Contestant #5’s turn. This person was also from the Beijing Writers’ Association. Before he gave the question, he signaled to Big Thunder with his eyes. This person had previously exchanged questions with Big Thunder. He had given Big Thunder the answer, so as to allow him to become the champion. This was one of their tiny tricks up their sleeves.

Big Thunder understood tacitly. The moment the person said his question, Big Thunder would be the first to answer. He definitely did not want Zhang Ye to obtain another point.

And this was a rarely seen riddle couplet. The difficulty of riddle couplets were even more difficult than reverse couplets!

“Yī kǒu néng tūn èr quán sān jiāng sì hǎi wǔ hú shuǐ! (Able to swallow the two springs, three rivers, four seas, five lakes with one mouth)” a person said confidently.

In the end, just as Big Thunder opened his mouth, Zhang Ye was already faster than him, “Gū dǎn gǎn rù shí fāng bǎi xìng qiān jiā wàn hù mén (Daring to enter the hundred surnames, the thousand families and the ten thousand households from everywhere alone)!” The answer to the riddle was a hot water bottle. He had matched it perfectly!

Big Thunder’s face sunk!

The other contestants looked at each other!

“Bái shé guò jiāng, tóu dǐng yī lún hóng rì (a White Snake crosses the river, a red sun overhead),” It was another riddle couplet. Someone had challenged Zhang Ye. The moment he finished speaking, he looked at him.

Zhang Ye immediately matched, “Qīng lóng guà bì, shēn pī wàn diǎn jīn xīng (an Azure Dragon hangs on the wall, multiple golden stars it wore)!”

“Tiān wèi qí pán, xīng wèi zì, hé rén néng xià (the sky as a chessboard, the stars are its pieces, who dares play)?” Another person looked unconvincingly at Zhang Ye.

Zhang Ye chuckled, “Dì zuò pí pá, lù zuò xián, nǎ ge gǎn tán (the ground as a pipa, the paths are its strings, who dares play)?”

Another person said with a blackened face, “Fēng qǐ dà hán shuāng jiàng wū qián chéng xiǎo xuě (the winds are cold, as frost turns to snow)!”

Zhang Ye answered, “Rì zhào duān wǔ qīng míng shuǐ dǐ jiàn chóng yáng (the sun shines in Duanwu, Chongyang can be seen in the Qingming/clear waters)!”

A female comrade said, “Běi yàn nán fēi shuāng chì dōng xī fēn shàng xià (a northern goose flies south; its wings point east and west as they go up and down?)!”

Zhang Ye answered, “Qián chē hòu zhé liǎng lún zuǒ yòu zǒu gāo dī (a cart in front leaves behind; two tracks left and right as it wobbles up and down)!”

A middle-aged man said, “Lǎo yā tà duàn lǎo yā zhī, yā fēi zhī luò (an old crow steps on an old forked branch; the crow flies; a branch falls)!”

Zhang Ye tapped the table with his fingers, “Xiān hè guī lái xiān hè jiàn, hē lì jiàn míng (the red-crowned crane returns to the heavenly ravines, a crane cries; the ravine sounds)!”

It was followed by another long list of couplet duels!

As usual, Zhang Ye answered the moment he opened his mouth. He did not hesitate to answer more than ten couplets!

The female host nearly shouted bravo from seeing this!

The male host was already staring with his eyes wide open while holding the microphone!

Finally, it was the Beijing Writers' Association's Zheng Anbang's turn to provide a question. His eyebrow ticked, for he did not believe Zhang Ye had superhuman powers. Hence, he came up with his question, "Shù yǐ bàn xún xiū zòng fǔ (A halved tree does not need an axe – meaning there's no need to kick someone when he's down)."

Zhang Ye looked up and said his words to everyone's surprise, "Guǒ rán yī diǎn bù xiāng gān (It is indeed not a bit relevant)!"

Why did he match with this?

He didn't match it successfully!

Zhang Ye had finally failed!

Zheng Anbang laughed, "You call that a couplet? What sort of standard is that?"

The first half and the second half had no relation at all. The meaning was completely different, yet Zhang Ye could brazenly say it out?

"What sort of couplet is that?" Xiao Lu from offstage could also tell that it didn't match!

"Is Teacher Zhang beginning to fail? After matching so many, his mind is also messed up?" Hou Ge said in a surprise.

However, an unexpected scene appeared. Elder Qian and the other two judges initially felt it did not match. Their eyes were filled with suspicion. That's not right. Zhang Ye had matched so many, so how could he make a mistake even beginners would not make?

Why did he match in such an entirely disparate manner?

But in the blink of an eye, he understood something before laughing loudly, "Good. What a good guǒ rán yī diǎn bù xiāng gān (it is indeed not a bit relevant)." After explaining a few words with the other two judges, Beep, Beep, Beep. All three of them passed him!

"What?" Zheng Anbang exclaimed, "Passed?"

Some players beside could not accept it, "This second half can actually pass? How's that possible!?"

Many of the audience and guests were also completely lost. What and what?

Elder Qian smiled as he explained, "I see many people puzzled. Hur Hur. I wonder if people have heard of 'Mismatched Couplets'?"

Mismatched Couplets?

Of course they knew!

This was created many years ago by a famous predecessor. However, few people used it, as it was a most unorthodox amongst unorthodox types!

Elder Qian explained in detail, “Shù yǐ bàn xún xiū zòng fǔ, guǒ rán yī diǎn bù xiāng gān (The halved tree does not need an axe, it is indeed not a bit relevant). The ‘shù’ (树, tree) matches with ‘guǒ’ (果, meaning fruit, part of indeed) as the substance. ‘yī diǎn’ (一点, a bit as a length) matches ‘bàn xún’ (半寻, need) as the quantifier. In ancient times, 8 feet is ‘xún’. And ‘gān’ (干) matches fǔ (斧, axe), which is the name of a weapon. In ancient times, gān was a weapon.

So the second half completely corresponds, but the words do not match, so it is considered a Mismatched Couplet. The meaning has no connection at all, but Teacher Zhang Ye’s second half not only miraculously matched the first half neatly, but he had used such an odd ‘guǒ rán yī diǎn bù xiāng gān’ as the second half. This is one of the most impossible Mismatched Couplet amongst impossibles! Of course I need to pass him!”

You can even do that?

You even knew such an unorthodox Mismatched Couplet?

Everyone’s expression when looking at Zhang Ye again looked like they were looking at a god!

The next person to provide a question was Big Thunder. Seeing Zhang Ye killing from all directions, Big Thunder was gritting his teeth with hate. But for his own couplet, Big Thunder had absolute confidence, “Dú lǎn méi huā sǎo là xuě (Leaving a path in Spring’s snow to view the plum blossom)!”

Eh?

It was so simple?

All the contestants knew Big Thunder was good. He was the first runner-up last year. With last year’s champion, an old professor, not coming, many people believed that Big Thunder would likely become the champion. The couplets he gave would be extraordinary. But when they heard it, they were extremely puzzled. This wasn’t just simple; it was overly simple, right?

Dú lǎn méi huā sǎo là xuě (opening a path through Spring’s snow to view the plum blossom)?

Anyone present could match it!

After Big Thunder finished his question, he smiled without a word.

Zhang Ye narrowed his eyes and came up with a second half, “Xì nì shān shì wǔ liú xī (the stream flows through the glorious mountains in a sidelong glance).”

With this, the judges also did not understand. The both of them had come up with an extremely simple couplet, making them have doubts.

Big Thunder chuckled, “Little Zhang, this time you answered wrongly. Do you think my couplet is so simple?” Seeing Zhang Ye fall for his trick, he was very pleased, “My first half has another way of reading it.”

Zhang Ye answered with a chuckle, “What a coincidence. My second half has another way of reading it, too.”

Seeing how Zhang Ye was unwilling to repent, Big Thunder decided to serve him the death sentence as he dissected, “My first half is *dú lǎn méi huā sǎo là xuě* . The first sound of each word matches to do-re-mi-fa-so-la-ti, the seven tones!”

“Ah!”

“So that’s how it is!”

“I knew it wouldn’t be so simple!”

“This is too profound, right? Why is it so obscure?”

“Haha, Zhang Ye really hit his head hard on the wall!”

Big Thunder no longer looked at Zhang Ye as he said to everyone else, “Has anyone come up with a match?”

Zhang Ye leered at him, “Didn’t I already give my second half? Why are you asking others? Your first half may have a trick behind it, but I already said that coincidentally, my second half also has another way of reading it.”

Big Thunder snorted, “What other way of reading it?”

“Read my second half again.” This time, it was Zhang Ye’s turn at smiling without a word.

“Read it again? *Xì nì shān shì wǔ liú xī?*” Upon reading that, Big Thunder stared with horror, “This...This is.. a homonym. One-Two-Three-Four-Five-Six-Seven (*Yī èr sān sì wǔ liù qī?*)?”

Do–Re–Mi–Fa–So–La–Ti!

Matching against One-Two-Three-Four-Five-Six-Seven?

Go f**k your sister!

You can even f**king match that?

Big Thunder nearly fainted!

All the surrounding judges, audience members and contestants were dumbfounded!

*This entire scene of crossing verses with each other can be best understood from comedian actor, Stephen Chow’s movie, *Flirting Scholar*. Watch it here, it’s quite a funny scene too. The subtitles also become somewhat nonsensical as there is no good way of translating the essence of couplets into English.

Chapter 120: Zhang Ye’s Millennial Impossibility!

How can there be such a person?

How can there be such a person?

This was practically how one man could hold back all of the enemy forces!

With Zhang Ye sitting there, no one had the chance to even open their mouths. His not very tall frame had at this moment appeared like a mountain crushing on their heads and chests!

50 contestants! There was no lack of famous authors and masters amongst the other 49 contestants. None of them were useless, and none of them were pushovers. But now, the scene that appeared was something not seen at a provincial or national competition, much less a Beijing Couplet Competition! From the beginning to the end, the 49 contestants had no chance to answer a single question! All the questions were answered by one contestant! And the second half was matched perfectly! It was faultless!

Absolute genius?

A demon not seen in a millennium?

Whatever evaluation given to him would not be too much!

As previously said, cultured people tend to scorn each other, but at this very second, many of the contestants eyed him with respect. Even those seniors clearly much older than Zhang Ye by many years and who had qualifications much higher than Zhang Ye gasped, looking at Zhang Ye with absolute conviction!

Unconvinced?

You have to be convinced, even if you aren't!

Zhang Ye had scared the wits out of everyone in one move!

Actually, there were people who did not think anything of Zhang Ye. Others were saying that he was cheating. And since he was such a young lad, everyone also believed it to be so. No one really thought that he had so much ability. But with the development of the events, people were surprised and enlightened. All that which had previously been said was bullsh*t! Bullsh*t cheating! Bullsh*t having no ability! Apparently, this person had used a melody poem titled "Shuidiao Getou – When will the moon be clear and bright" to overshadow the masses. He was indeed a capable person, worthy of his reputation!

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Offstage.

Xiao Lu strained her throat to shout, "Teacher Zhang, you are so cool!"

Former assistant Xiaofang competed with her in terms of loudness, "One against 49! Teacher Zhang, you are too awesome!"

Big Sis Zhou also laughed loudly, "Little Zhang! Let's see who still wants to say you cheated!"

Tian Bin gasped with amazement again and again, "What a good couplet! Every one of them is a good couplet! Zhang Ye even has this capability?" Previously, he had encouraged Zhang Ye, but... But that was

just simple encouragement. This had really exceeded the expectations of Tian Bin and his wife. That machine gun-like response in the couplet duel made them stunned at every moment!

Hu Fei and Zhao Guozhou did not say a word. They were still reveling in the second half of the couplets that Zhang Ye had answered. They were repeating them with their mouths, as they gave their kudos!

Only Little Zhang has this standard! Only Little Zhang has this standard!

And he said that he wanted to forfeit the finals just now? He said that he did not have the confidence? He did not even have intentions to go onstage to participate in the final? Only when he was forced by others did he go up? A few people who had previously heard Zhang Ye's words nearly cursed at their mothers. No confidence, your sister! No confidence, your third uncle and grandma! You call this not having confidence!? Then how many people in this world still have confidence?

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The audience below erupted in applause!

"Well-matched!"

"Exciting! Really exciting!"

"So much fun! I've never heard such fun matches!"

"Your granduncle! Who the f**k said Zhang Ye cheated? Who said it just now?"

"That's right! Isn't that bluffing and cheating? Isn't this saying lies with your eyes wide open!?"

"With this kind of knowledge, does he even need to cheat? It was announced by the Beijing Writers' Association just now, right? F**k, are you dumb, or are we dumb?"

"These people from the Writers' Association sure are amazing! They treated us as idiots!"

"Cheating, your sister! I finally see it! The bunch of people from the Beijing Writers' Association are trying to attack him!"

"This bunch of grandsons! To think that I even believed that Zhang Ye had relied on the ideas of others to pass the preliminaries!"

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Online.

In the comment section of the live webcast, there was also a huge stir!

ZhangYeNumber1Fan jumped out. Every time that Zhang Ye had a problem, he would be the first to run up and support him. He was a hardcore fan amongst Zhang Ye's hardcore fans. He completely concerned himself with the individual, and not with the facts. He unconditionally supported Zhang Ye, "Say again how Teacher Zhang Ye was cheating! I want to see who dares to say that again!"

The people who had been previously defaming Zhang Ye all had their tongues tied!

Some even went from flamer to fan, "Bro, it was a misunderstanding. A misunderstanding."

Another person said, “That’s right. Previously, we did not know the situation, so we apologize to Teacher Zhang Ye. Teacher Zhang is too formidable. Haha. I’m changing from a bystander to a fan!”

“So amazing! Teacher Zhang’s couplet matches are so amazing!”

“Previously, it was the Beijing Writers’ Association who slung mud at Teacher Zhang? That bunch of bastards!”

“I’m really worried for those people’s intelligence. Did those people from the Writers’ Association who tried to trap Teacher Zhang eat their medicine in the morning?”

“I bought a watch last year! I was even supportive of Teacher Zhang entering the Writers’ Association from before. I even @Beijing Writers’ Association every day for Teacher Zhang. Now, I think it’s pointless going! What a crappy place!”

“Right! If it can’t work, Teacher Zhang can create his own sect! Why must he get the recognition of the mainstream literary circles!? So what if they don’t recognize him? So what if they don’t let Teacher Zhang into the Writers’ Association? Teacher Zhang’s talent can equally demolish all of you! The abuse would be so much that you would take it in silently!”

“Brothers, let’s explode the Beijing Writers’ Association’s official website!”

“Good idea! Agree!”

“Agree+110!”

“Agree+119!”

“My large saber is again again again again again again unable to endure the thirst!”

“Haha. I am meeting ‘Big Saber Bro’ again. Every time I forget how many times our troll army has fought together, I just need to count how many times ‘Big Saber Bro’ uses the word ‘again!’”

This friend with ID, ‘Big Saber Bro’ was also one of Zhang Ye’s hardcore fans, but he was different from ZhangYeNumber1Fan. Big Saber Bro never spoke nonsense, nor did he reason with others. But whenever there was something, he was the first person to lead the charge. He was a hardcore fan who didn’t speak nonsense, but spoke with actions!

With this mess, the number of people watching the livestream soared!

100,000!

230,000!

380,000!

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The situation had reversed so quickly!

Zhang Ye had used his abilities to reverse the situation. The accusation of cheating was now a ridiculous joke. Even the few people from the Beijing Writers’ Association did not even dare to mention it again.

The competition had not ended and was still continuing.

Zhang Ye asked, "Can the next friend come up with a couplet?" He only had a short amount of time left with his Lucky Bread, and even if it was expended, he still had another Lucky Bread in his inventory, so he was not too worried. What was key was that Zhang Ye had not gotten a kick out of it yet. He had reached a climax matching couplets, so he could not stop!

Hurry!

Hurry, hurry, hurry!

Zhang Ye was urging in his heart!

But those contestants that had not given their questions were all smiling wryly. You still want to match? You still want to match? Get lost! Just with that inhuman couplet battle strength..! Who dares to play with you!

"I'm not giving a question," the next contestant said.

The following contestant also helplessly said, "I give up, too."

The next after the following contestant also wiped his sweat, "I, I'll forgo, too."

Zhang Ye had already obtained more than 30 points. Even if he did not answer any of the remaining questions, and they were all answered correctly by one contestant, that person would not have been able to vie for the title of champion from Zhang Ye. So the last few questions no longer had any meaning. But of course, the crux of the matter was that those contestants did not want to shame themselves any further. You can even freaking match the few judges, Zheng Anbang, and Big Thunder's couplets. Then is there any need to talk about ours? Is there any couplet that can give you trouble? So let's not waste any effort. They also left some face for themselves!

"Give up."

"I give up, too."

"A young person's abilities must be respected, I will forgo, too."

All the contestants at the end gave up without a fight!

At this moment, the Lucky Bread's five minutes were up, but Zhang Ye was feeling depressed. He had not gotten a kick out of it yet, but it was nothing much. The result was still good.

The female host was Zhang Ye's fan, so when she saw Zhang Ye's prowess, one could see the joy on her face. They had even said that Teacher Zhang had cheated? The means they had used stooped so low! Hence, she said, "Then is the competition over? I shall announce that the champion is..."

Before she said anything, Big Thunder interrupted her, "Teacher Zhang Ye, aren't you coming up with a question?"

"That's right; Zhang Ye hasn't come up with a question. I'd really like to hear it." So even though the result was fixed, there were people still curious to see what Zhang Ye would come up with.

“More?”

“Is there a need?”

“Anything will do. We can just listen to it.”

Some people did not care. It was not something that really mattered.

However, many of the people from the Beijing Writers’ Association did not have the same view, especially Big Thunder and Zheng Anbang. They had shamed themselves too much today, and had lost terribly. And it was the inhumane kind of miserable loss. After the Mid-Autumn Poetry Meet, their Beijing Writers’ Association had once again been annihilated by Zhang Ye. Of course they were unconvinced. Even if they were convinced, even if they acknowledged Zhang Ye’s standard in matching couplets, they needed to get back some face!

Big Thunder and many people thought simply. He was amazing at matching couplets? But it was not the necessarily the case when coming up with a couplet. There was no topic or theme. All sorts of logic and possibilities could be considered, so the real experts amongst them knew that coming up with a couplet was much more difficult than matching a couplet! Big Thunder and some of them were still unconvinced. Even if Zhang Ye was no doubt the champion, if they could match Zhang Ye’s couplet, then they would win back some face for the Beijing Writers’ Association, and would have won against Zhang Ye in this domain!

Zhang Ye blinked, “Then I’ll come up with one?”

“Please.” Big Thunder did not think that he could come up with a good couplet, and even if he came up with one that was difficult, they had 49 people. Even if they could not answer as fast as Zhang Ye, given enough time, they could definitely answer it. The people present here were the elites amongst elites. How could there be a couplet that they could not match? No couplet was left without a match in every year’s Beijing Couplet Competition!

Elder Qian stared at Zhang Ye.

The second and third judges also widen their eyes, particularly interested while waiting.

That second, the entire audience quietened down. Everyone was focused on him.

Zhang Ye smiled, and said a simple five words. It looked like a very simple first half, “My first half is...