

I Am Supreme #Chapter 11 - Read I Am Supreme

Chapter 11

Chapter 11: A Whole Lot of Trouble

The conversation had turned irreparably awkward.

Yun Yang was clearly unconcerned about his boorish behaviour, while Ji Ling seethed with rage inwardly, a hair's breadth away from bursting out in anger. Lao Mei, for all his dry laughter, was internally picking his young master to shreds for his lack of civility and emotional quotient. The young master and the lady sat across each other at the tea table in a moment of awkward silence, broken only by a stifled cough. No, the awkwardness was all from Ji Ling; Yun Yang was completely oblivious to the tense atmosphere. In all her years, she had never come across such a situation!

"I apologize." Yun Yang sounded contrite.

"My humble home is extremely lacking. It has been far too long since a guest came, so we no longer have any more tea in the residence... Please pardon my lack of courtesy."

Lao Mei felt faint.

Who said our house has no tea?

Ji Ling looked at Yun Yang's flawlessly handsome face, and was completely dumbstruck. "Heh, heh, heh..." Ji Ling forced a chuckle, and shook her head, "I don't mind the joke, this is Ji Ling's first time encountering such treatment since birth; or should I say, the only time in my life."

Yun Yang straightened up, "You're wrong, miss."

Ji Ling stared at him in confusion.

Yun Yang continued, "Whatever it is, once there is a first, there will inevitably be a second time! This is the law of the world. Today may be the first time that you have encountered such treatment, but mark my words, you'll get the chance to be treated similarly in the future."

He smiled, "In time, you'll eventually realize that I'm actually right."

Ji Ling's large eyes stared unblinkingly at Yun Yang's face, with skin so smooth that even women would be envious of it. Her thoughts, however, were entirely focused on keeping her hands from lashing out and tearing that insufferable grin from his countenance.

"I have never met such a terrible man." Ji Ling spoke through gritted teeth. While she was generally more well bred than most of her peers, just a short encounter with Yun Yang had her contemplating murder.

"You'll meet more in the future." Yun Yang said slowly, "How many gentlemen are there in this world? Sooner or later, you are bound to come across those who aren't."

Ji Ling sneered coldly, "Looks like Young Master Yun is aware that he is not a gentleman himself."

Yun Yang's expression was curiously composed. "Miss, please do not insult me."

Ji Ling replied, "Having admitted that you are no gentleman yourself, how can you accuse me of insulting you?"

In a serious tone, Yun Yang said, "What I meant was, do not mock me with the term 'gentleman'. I do not deserve that title, regardless of whether you believe it of me or not.."

"..."

Ji Ling was astounded. It was ironic that this man could speak of righteousness so unashamedly. Admittedly, there weren't many people like him. She remained silent for a while before breaking out in laughter, leaving Yun Yang somewhat bewildered.

Should this woman not be angered and leave? Why was she laughing?

Ji Ling continued chuckling as she spoke, "I am aware that Young Master Yun does not welcome me, but curiosity has gotten the better of me. May I make a few inquiries of Young Master Yun?"

Yun Yang answered guardedly, "What would you want to know, my lady?"

"Before last night, we have never met. As such, I am puzzled." Ji Ling asked with unfeigned interest, "The young master wants me to leave so badly. Why is this so, Young Master Yun?"

Yun Yang grinned but Ji Ling lifted a finger before he could speak, "Young Master Yun, speak truthfully, and then I will turn around and take my leave. I will not linger and play the part of the unwelcomed guest..."

Yun Yang looked at her questioningly as Ji Ling nodded in all seriousness. She meant what she had said.

Yun Yang smiled in amusement, "First, I dislike intrusions in my life... I appreciate peace and quiet. Secondly, but also the more important reason, your visit heralds the coming of tribulations, and I am terribly averse to trouble of any sort in my life."

Ji Ling asked in confusion, "I can accept the first reason, but the second... how are you so certain that I'm bring with me... tribulations?"

Yun Yang's split into a grin and started counting on his fingers, "First, our encounter last night was not a delightful one. Second, you brought along with you a Thousand Illusion Monkey, which indicates that you are far from an ordinary person."

Ji Ling nodded slightly in acknowledgement of this undeniable observation.

"Third, the appearance that you wear now is false; fourth, the same goes for the name that you have given me," Yun Yang spoke with the conviction of a person who knows that he is correct.

Ji Ling blinked like an owl caught in bright light, and coughed, "Perhaps not entirely real. Let us leave it at that, shall we?"

"You conceal your name, and came here alone with a false identity. Normally, ladies like yourself would travel in the company of a guardian... but not you. This would mean, you ran away from home. That would be number five."

Ji Ling coughed, nodding in resignation as she realized that she had been exposed...

"Simply these observations alone would indicate that you will be a whole lot of trouble," Yun Yang sighed.

"There's more to it?" the girl asked.

"Of course." Yun Yang continued, "Sixth, although you've changed your appearance, I'm not utterly blind. Your gaze is clear and your features distinct, but the skin tone of your neck under your chin is different; one side is slightly paler while the other side is that of your normal skin tone. The difference, though miniscule, is there."

Ji Ling flushed, "And what of this?" If Yun Yang had not mentioned it, she would not have noticed it herself.

"This only means one thing; you are a terribly proud person. There aren't many people that you hold in high regard." Yun Yang continued to elaborate, "Therefore, you've formed a habit of tilting your head, unconsciously or otherwise, lifting one side of your chin when looking at people."

Ji Ling frowned and acquiesced that this man could, unfortunately, be right in that aspect. She usually looked at others with a tilted head, lifted chin and slanted gaze..

"With your personality, you'd leave haughtily once there's a disagreement." Yun Yang continued, "And you cannot be wrong. Am I right?" Yun Yang looked at the lady and smiled.

"All that you've said... well, you're almost there," Ji Ling answered guiltily because Yun Yang was, of course, spot on. She could tell that he had even held back from saying that she was proud, conceited, and somewhat spoiled.

"However, despite your proud and stubborn character, and even after our rather unpleasant encounter last night, here you are today. You managed to keep your temper in check, in spite of the treatment you have endured. It must be a terribly difficult undertaking for you. Since you're still here despite being provoked repeatedly, then... it must be for something pressing." Yun Yang spoke, "The eighth and final reason allows me to form my conclusion... this pressing matter that made such a stubborn lady run away from her noble home and hold her temper even when mistreated; if it's related to me, what else could it be but a whole lot of trouble?"

Ji Ling was stunned, this man had judged her based on these deductions? It didn't help that he was irrevocably right in his observations.

"You are absolutely correct. I am here to seek your aid." Ji Ling gave a small smile. "I guess you would also know that by now."

Yun Yang frowned, "As promised, I have spoken clearly and truthfully. I believe that you have agreed with my observations, and admitted the truth of them. Now, I ask that you fulfil your part of the promise and leave quickly..."

Ji Ling winked coyly. "Wouldn't you at least want to find out what I came here for?"

Yun Yang was unaffected by her charms. "My apologies, but I do not wish to know. What I desire most, is for you to leave and not to become that unwanted guest that you spoke of."

Ji Ling laughed dryly, carefully choosing her words, "Right. As I said, as long as you've explained yourself, I'll turn and leave. The problem is, well, I haven't turned just yet."

"..."

Yun Yang's eyes bulged with indignation. For a moment, he was at a loss for words, looking at this girl who had reneged on her promise.

Ji Ling grinned mischievously. "See, how can I leave without turning first? Am I not right?"

So saying, she turned to Lao Mei. "Excuse me, your young master must be parched from all this talking he's done. Look at the sweat beading on his forehead! Do bring some tea over, that's a good man."

Lao Mei reined in his laughter while looking at Yun Yang's expression; it was indeed the first time in his life he had seen his young master routed in a war of words.

Young master, sweating? He's not thirsty, he's infuriated! How could he not be when you've broken your promise?

"Why do you not honor your word?" Yun Yang was exasperated; he had too many secrets, too many things to be done, and he could not afford to be harassed by this girl.

"Young master, why," Ji Ling looked around, "... do I have to honor my word?"

Yun Yang was almost apoplectic with rage. "Why, not honoring your word is simply not the behavior of heroic men!"

"Never claimed to be." Ji Ling chuckled righteously, "I'm just a girl, not some heroic man."

Yun Yang rubbed his temples, feeling the onset of a terrible headache. Seeing this the Thousand Illusion Monkey thought he wanted to play with it and climbed up his head happily, its buttocks lowering right in front of Yun Yang's eyes and blocking his view. "Oh my..." Yun Yang groaned in despair.

Lao Lei had actually gone to prepare tea. Absently, Yun Yang wondered if he should deduct Lao Mei's pay for leaving his side without express permission. The effrontery of the man knew no bounds.

"Please, be patient and listen to what I'm here for, Young Master Yun," Ji Ling grinned. The grin was cunning, like a fox that had successfully stolen a chicken from the coop.

In this case however, Yun Yang was obviously the poor chicken and he wondered if he would share the same fate.

Chapter 12: Threats!

"The hardest thing to do in life is to reason with a woman. If you reason with a woman and attempt to convince her to acknowledge that you're reasonable, you're basically hopeless as a man.

—— Yun Yang"

Ji Ling was adamant about not leaving until she had spoken her peace. Even her pet monkey seemed to have adopted the place as its home, and it looked like there was no easy way to chase this pair off.

“Miss, it will damage your good standing if you linger on here.” Yun Yang was relentless, “This is, after all, a man’s house.”

“Oh, I absolutely agree!” Ji Ling was positively beaming with delight. “You’d have to agree that we should talk this through quickly, so that I may depart with haste. After all, if I do linger on and my name is tarnished, gossip will inevitably spread. The next thing you know, my family will be outside your door, calling for your head!”

Yun Yang spat out his drink at the temerity of this girl. Pointing at the fox that sat in front of him, he was momentarily speechless with exasperation. With his remarkable skills, he should be the one threatening others. Instead, he found himself being blackmailed by this scoundrel.

“Have I forgotten to mention? My family is huge... much larger than the Eight Symbols...” the little devil winked.

Once again, words failed Yun Yang.

Lao Mei, standing beside his master, asked in bewilderment, “Miss, surely you exaggerate? The eight most influential families in the world right now are the Eight Symbols. What other families could possibly be more powerful than them?”

Ji Ling pursed her lips thoughtfully. “This mainland is enormous. The more renowned one is, the fewer people will know about them. Take for example, the man who proclaims himself to be the wealthiest person in the city. More often than not, there will be many others who are wealthier, just that they do not wish to flaunt their riches. Do you not know this?”

Even in his irritation, Yun Yang had to admit that this particular piece of wisdom was undeniably true.

“I believe you,” Yun Yang muttered.

“You do?” It was Ji Ling’s turn to be surprised. Yun Yang had taken her at her word? Was he not afraid that she might just be putting on airs or pretending to be someone she was not?

“You have about you an air of elegance, and you are bossy as you are prideful. The disregard you hold for the eight most influential families comes genuinely to you.” Yun Yang continued slowly, “While the Thousand Illusion Monkey is not a mystical beast of the highest tier, its future is limitless, as it has vast growth potential. Although it belongs to you, you keep it as a pet; not as a companion in combat. This obviously shows that

your family background is incomparable to that of others. The members of the top eight families could have obtained similar creatures with levels comparable to this monkey, but their purpose in obtaining and training them would be vastly different. Their parents would not have agreed to their young masters and misses' wanting to keep them as pets."

Yun Yang was clearly becoming more upset as he spoke, "It looks like I have managed to place myself in hot soup, even though it wasn't I who started the fire." Infuriatingly enough, he had already sensed that she was trouble during their previous encounter, but he just couldn't seem to run away fast enough.

"Miss, what do you ask of me?" Yun Yang inquired. "Speak plainly, as I will not go the extra mile if it is beyond my means."

Simply put, you won't force yourself to do it if you can't. Ji Ling rolled her eyes in contempt. "This would be something simple for someone like you."

"I shall be the judge of that," Yun Yang retorted.

"The annual mystical beast tournament will be held at Tiantang City this year." Ji Ling continued, "A great number of families, including the top eight, will all take part. This is a large event among the second generation of all the great families. Of course, we girls will also be competing against each other."

"How many ladies will there be in total?" Yun Yang was already cringing in anticipation of the answer.

"Including myself... perhaps a total of thirty-odd?" Ji Ling was not entirely certain..

Hearing her answer, Yun Yang's face fell, and he felt that he was about to weep.

Thirty-odd ladies!

He had thought it was only this one insufferable girl, but now, he was looking at a whole troupe of them.

"Look, this is just not feasible." Yun Yang said, "With my dashing good looks, your friends will inevitably fall in love with me, and I would have signed my death warrant!"

"Puu!"

Ji Ling almost choked on the bile that rose in her throat.

She stared at Yun Yang, then nodded slowly. "True enough, you are indeed good looking. Fear not, you don't have to worry about anything with me around! If you found

saw someone you fancy, I'll even put in a good word for you, seeing as to how you've agreed to help me."

Yun Yang raised his hand, "Hold on! I haven't agreed to anything yet. You still haven't mentioned what it is that I have to do."

"It's really simple." Ji Ling said happily, "I've come to realize that Ling Ling is really friendly towards you, which means that you have an affinity towards mystical creatures. This is innate, a gift from God, and you should utilize it for something greater."

Her tone and voice sounded remarkably like that of a scheming witch.

Yun Yang snorted. "It's only your monkey that thinks so. Others may not feel the same way."

Ji Ling smirked, "The Thousand Illusion Monkey's defense mechanisms have always surpassed that of all the other mystical beasts. Why, not even ninth level creatures could hold a candle to it! Since it was so friendly to you, other beasts probably wouldn't be any different."

She continued, "For this tournament, each of us has to pair up with a mystical beast lower than the fifth level. Bets are huge in this competition, and of course, there'll be other bonuses as well."

Ji Ling grunted, "I've lost five consecutive years. This time, I have to win!"

"She lost five consecutive years. You'd think that she'd be used to it by now." Yun Yang thought with amusement.

"How does the tournament work?" Yun Yang asked, feigning disinterest, despite the mild intrigue that he suddenly felt.

"Again, it's simple. None of us can cheat, every competitor has to buy their beast in the mystical beast market after arriving at Tiantang City. Ten days later, we'll compete in obedience, tacit understanding between the creature and its owner, and their abilities; not their innate abilities, but the new ones trained by the owners. This would prove the creature's dependence on its owner."

Ji Ling said in frustration, "The last one is rather difficult..."

"Indeed, it is," Yun Yang agreed.

"...and that is why I came to you," Ji Ling finished, looking at Yun Yang with shining eyes.

“...” Yun Yang felt like a drowning man, as he waved his hand in protest, “Look, I can’t help you, find someone else. Mystical beast trainers are a dime a dozen in the mainland, why can’t you just hire one?”

“Trust me, if they were that capable, I wouldn’t be here,” Ji Ling said sardonically.

“I’m not helping.”

Yun Yang stood up, his mind set. He refused to dig himself into a hole; even if the Nine Supremes were still here, he would still not put himself in such a tight spot. There would be thirty-odd ladies from all sorts of influential families present. He would be in a grave situation, regardless of who he offended. Yun Yang had a lot of things to accomplish, but joining a mystical beast tournament was not one of them.

Again, Yun Yang stretched his arm out towards the exit, “I cannot help you. Please, leave quickly, or I will have to call for someone to escort you out.”

“You’re really not helping?” Ji Ling squinted her eyes dangerously.

“No!” Yun Yang shook his head vehemently.

“Amazing. Simply amazing.” Ji Ling stomped her feet and turned back to say, “Young Master Yun, think this through properly. If you help now, you would only be helping me. Only you and I would know about this. If you refuse me, I could just walk out onto the street and spread the news. Before you know it, it won’t be just me but all the other thirty-odd sisters running in your direction. Not to mention the young masters as well. I sincerely hope that you can manage all that attention.”

“They may not believe me, but they won’t pass up the chance to find out the truth. When that day comes, you’ll offend everyone if you help only one and if you help none of them at all, well, it’ll still be the same. Harrumph, and good day to you.” Ji Ling turned as if to leave.

“Ah...” Yun Yang could feel his head pounding, “Lady Ji, please hold up.”

Ji Ling spun back and beamed like the cunning little fox she was, “Yes, Young Master Yun?”

Forcing a pained smile onto his face, Yun Yang waved his servant over, “Lao Mei, serve tea, the best that we have. Lady Ji, on a second thought, I think there’s still space for discussion on this matter.”

Ji Ling turned around proudly, her face full of delight for successfully winning the rally. “You’ll agree to help?”

Yun Yang nodded in defeat. "Yes, but I would like to ask, what are the bets involved? And how will you reward me for this? You won't allow me to help you without recompense, I hope?"

"The men are the ones who make the big bets. It's only playthings for us girls," Ji Ling smiled, "Some of us bet on spiritual pills, mystical stones, cultivation methods, seventh or eighth grade mystical pills and whatnots; nothing significant. But among the seven of us sworn sisters, we also decide on who's the oldest and youngest according to the competition outcome."

Ji Ling was bitter. "I've been the youngest for five years already."

Yun Yang's expression grew increasingly dark.

Spiritual pills... mystical stones... cultivation methods... seventh or eighth grade mystical pills and whatnots... nothing significant... she called these playthings!

Playthings!

Do you know how many people in Tiantang City would fight over a spiritual pill? Have you seen the riots that would break out for a mystical stone? Do you know that the whole underground martial arts world would turn into a bedlam over a cultivation method? Do you know a seventh or eighth grade mystical pill...

Forget it, never mind.

Yun Yang was peeved. This was the first time he actually felt like a poor man; like a villager who had never seen the world. The ladies' bets were already so shockingly decadent, and he wondered what the young masters would bet on.

Throughout his entire internal tirade, Yun Yang remained stoic, "What about my pay?"

"Whatever I've won, you will get half of it. That is, assuming I win of course." Ji Ling offered generously, "What do you think?"

Yun Yang was tempted to say that it was barely sufficient, but he grudgingly admitted to himself that it was more than he had expected.

"Done." Yun Yang said, "But for me to help you win this tournament, you'll have to help me obtain some information. Would you agree to that?" The world might not know about the Four Seasons Tower, but it should be common knowledge for these large, influential families.

"What information do you require?" Ji Ling asked.

“I’ll let you know after the tournament. If I can’t win this for you, we’ll forget about this whole farce.” Yun Yang continued, “But if you win, I don’t even mind not receiving my portion of the bet. Just promise to help me find out this particular bit of information. Agreed?”

“Alright, agreed!” Ji Ling nodded easily.

Both of their hands clasped loudly together, sealing the deal.

“I’ve just noticed that your hand is even fairer than that of a lady, and better looking to boot,” Ji Ling observed as she peered closely at Yun Yang’s hand. “Let me take a closer look. Are you a woman disguised as a man?”

A flustered Yun Yang refrained from throttling the girl as he replied through gritted teeth, “My dear miss, would you like me to drop my pants to answer your question?”

Translator’s Note

1 Eight Symbols (春夏秋冬、东南西北 chūn xià qiū dōng, dōng nán xī běi): Creatively derived from Four Symbols which are four mythical beasts in Chinese mythology who each represent one of the four seasons and one of the four cardinal directions. Literally means spring, summer, autumn, winter, and north, south, east, west – each representing the family name of powerful, honorable families. Four was changed to Eight so that the title of the eight great families would not mislead readers.

Chapter 13: External Forces, Warnings and Popinjays

The deal was sealed.

Unsurprisingly, Ji Ling insisted on spending the night at the Residence of Yun.

“Such a large home, and only for the both of you?” Ji Ling asked. “How lonely that must be! I’m sure you wouldn’t mind if I availed myself of your hospitality tonight then.”

“Seeing as to how we are both unmarried, that would be an inconvenience. It would be much more appropriate for Lady Ji to rent a room at the tavern, instead,” Yun Yang said while carefully nursing his bruised right eye, the price of his incessant mocking earlier.

“In that case, I’ll just have a little chat with my sisters about how fondly these mystical beasts take to you...”

“Very well, which room will you have?”

...

Yun Yang endlessly sighed as he ate.

Seated across him, Lady Ji watched with increasingly widening eyes as he shoveled food into his mouth.

“How can you possibly eat so much?” Ji Ling felt nauseous looking at Yun Yang practically inhale the small mound of mystical beast meat, albeit with table manners elegant enough to rival any lord...

This would come up to forty, maybe fifty catties?

“Eat quickly, Lady,” Lao Mei’s hands flashed as he quickly skewered a piece of meat, “It’ll all be gone very soon.”

“...”

Ji Ling had nothing to say in response.

...

Yun Yang, who initially had no interest whatsoever in the young lady’s tournament, began to think to himself. “The competition between these young masters’ will be interesting.” Yun Yang’s gaze glinted darkly, “I’m going against the Four Seasons Tower, but I have no clue where to start... I have an objective, but it’s not strength, and even if I had the strength, I would still be lacking a target. Perhaps it’d be a good idea to start with these young masters...”

The more he thought about it, the brighter Yun Yang’s eyes became.

“I can turn back if I’m in error, but I can’t go on sitting on my heels.” Yun Yang continued to brood on the matter, his eyes gazing far away. “If it were the mystical beasts tournament, wouldn’t there already be quite a number of young masters present here already?”

Ji Ling, in contrast, was feeling extremely pleased with herself. “Be vexed with me, chase me away, but in the end, you’ll still have to aid me.” Little did she know that Yun Yang had already made her his stepping stone in his plans. Furthermore, she wouldn’t be the only one caught in his web. Soon, all the young masters from these influential families who were yet to come would be as well, and their foundations would be shaken from that day onwards.

Faced with Ji Ling’s blustering threats, Yun Yang could have just ended the stand-off with a simple sentence, “Whoever you speak to about me doesn’t matter, I’ll just make sure you don’t succeed.” However, he would never do that, because if it weren’t for Ji Ling, Yun Yang’s train of thoughts would never have led this way. Since the moment she

had appeared in the picture, a wide, spacious route was suddenly laid out in front of Yun Yang.

These were external forces that even his own enemies would not have foreseen, making them the real threat. It looked like he would have to make his rounds in Tiantang City more frequently now.

"Tomorrow, we'll go pick out a mystical beast," Yun Yang said.

"Okay." Ji Ling smiled in triumph.

...

It was already late into the night at the Residence of Marshal Qiu Jianhan.

The old marshal gazed endearingly at a painting on the wall in his study.

It depicted a battlefield; nine different colors were splashed across it. The earth quaked, thunder roared and lightning flashed, flames spouted high and mighty as ferocious waves churned, strong winds blew and billowing clouds filled the heavens.

It was a vision of the Nine Supremes' valour, frozen for eternity on parchment.

"You nine men," the old marshal's eyes were moist, "had always been so careful. How did it come to this?"

The painting gave no reply, the nine masked warriors who stood brave in the battlefield were silent.

The old marshal sighed heavily.

Without warning, a sharp whistle tore through the night air. A stern voice hollered outside, "Who goes there?"

In the blink of an eye, the quiet residence dissolved into chaos.

A silver streak split the air as a sword flew from several dozen feet outside of the wall and crashed into the roof of the marshal's residence with a loud crack; broken tiles flying across the sky. There was a incandescent flash of light, followed by a thud, and all present could see a strip of paper fluttering wildly, pinned against the doorframe.

In sepulchral tones, a voice hissed from the night, "Qiu Jianhan! Forget about Wu Wen yuan's case; we honour your reputation, but a smart man knows when to stop. If you choose to remain stubborn, even those sworn to protect you will not be able to guarantee your life!"

Showers of sword sparks flashed in counterpoint to the grunts of the guards. A glowing blade could be seen rising up into the sky, with a black shadow holding onto it. On the ground, countless guards gave chase.

The light then flickered as daggers showered upon the residence, the steel shining brightly like meteorites. In panic, the guards weaved their swords through the air, attempting to deflect the shards of death. When the ray from the sword's glow vanished, only the stars and moon could be seen in the night sky. The shadow that had been there was gone without a trace.

In the midst of bedlam, Qiu Jianhan stood calm and collected by the doorway. His gaze was filled with disdain as his arms rested firmly against his back.

"Bring it to me."

The strip paper was passed to Qiu Jianhan's open palm. Unfolding the strip, it contained only a single line written with blood.

"The Nine Supremes are dead, seek no rancor nor vengeance!"

"Pang!"

Qiu Jianhan tore the paper into shreds as his voice rang out loud, "The vengeance of the Nine Supremes will be sated!"

The sheer volume of his voice echoed through the night, the still air buzzed with the force of his declaration.

"Heh heh heh..."

The eerie voice spoke again, as if from a distance, "So, you've chosen the fool's way. Let us see what comes next!" With that, the voice faded into the gloom.

Old Marshal Qiu growled into the dark, his eyes blazing with fury, "I shall not rest until I am dead!" The old marshal was furious beyond words, and his cries carried out into the capital.

I've only begun to investigate a few culprits, and already you grow impatient? Who then would bring justice to the death of the Nine Supremes?

...

Yun Yang's home was not far from the residence of the marshal. The old marshal's bellows, amplified with traces of refined mystical Qi, had shaken the entire capital awake.

Yun Yang had heard it all, as clear as crystal.

He immediately sat up, a magical radiance flowing from his hands as they worked briskly to trace words which also glimmered with mystical Qi before disappearing into the air mysteriously.

“Investigate the night incident at the Residence of the Marshal!”

...

It was early morning at the mystical beast market.

Yun Yang strolled along dressed in resplendent purple; although unwilling to be here, his innate elegance was not diminished in any way by reluctance. Although shops were lining the streets, the mystical beast market was entirely different from the pet market; here, it was clean without any unpleasant odors of animal waste or musk. The creatures being put up for sale here were all of good stock, second level and higher. These beasts had already begun to gain a reasonable amount of intelligence, and that included an aversion to being dirty as well. Ji Ling trailed behind Yun Yang, casually playing with the Thousand Illusion Monkey that was sitting comfortably on his shoulder. She was the very picture of innocence, but Yun Yang knew that this girl was far from that. The manner in which she could accurately identify his Achilles' heel and threaten him with it was a telltale sign that she was no ordinary girl.

The Thousand Illusion Monkey also managed to look docile, its horns had shrunk into its head and somehow its multiple tails had merged into one. Even if anyone were to look closely, it resembled a perfectly normal baby monkey. Its crimson eyes darted around in mirth along the entire journey, but it remained perched on Yun Yang's shoulder despite the many things that caught its attention.

“Ssss...”

An odd hissing arose from the entrance of the first shop they passed. Here, a mass of golden, statue-like snakes writhing in a cage raised their hooded heads, hissing fiercely at Yun Yang. Their long coils undulated wildly as if attempting to break out.

Slightly perturbed, Yun Yang pondered upon the means of concealing his innate ability. While it was certainly advantageous that he could attract mystical beasts, it would do him no good if he were to be caught and exposed!

Nevertheless, Ji Ling's eyes radiated with glee at the sight.

“I've made the right choice indeed!”

Although Yun Yang had not practiced his cultivation, he could not entirely conceal his uniquely fresh scent and the immense air of vitality enveloping his being from these mystical beasts.

“Golden Silk Snakes,” Yun Yang muttered under his breath and continued to saunter past the shop. These third level beasts were extremely venomous, but Yun Yang barely slowed down to even take a second glance at them. He did the same at the second shop, and then the third. The creatures would grow agitated and work themselves into a frenzy as Yun Yang passed by.

In his mind, he had to keep to remarkably high standards when selecting a mystical beast. It had to be more obedient than the current one, able to form a tacit understanding with its owner, able to be taught new abilities, and must also be able to show dependency on its new owner.

All of that, and it could be no higher than a fifth level beast.

That would come up to a total five conditions; the number of fifth level mystical beasts that could accommodate all of them was few and far in between. To Yun Yang, there was another condition; seemingly insignificant, but in reality, of utmost importance.

It had to be able to receive training from a girl.

This was Yun Yang’s first visit to the market. He would normally never deign to step foot in such places; the lower level mystical meat that he consumed would usually be bought and prepared as a bountiful meal by Lao Mei. Now that he was here however, he saw how merry the place was. It was a lively arena, teeming with people walking about, all abuzz with excitement. Up front there were a number of people dressed in white, chattering loudly as they fanned themselves while walking.

A chuckle almost escaped Yun Yang’s throat when he recognized who they were.

Ah, familiar faces.

Young Master Ma and Young Master Qin had each brought their servants along and were looking around openly. Their gazes strayed everywhere but boldly lingered longest on the ladies who were passing by with their mystical beasts.

Yun Yang’s eyes sparkled with curiosity, was that a baby beast that Young Master Ma held in his arm? Its bright, innocent eyes seemed to be taking in its surroundings.

Interesting indeed.

“Hey, little lady, have we met before?” Young Master Ma attempted to waylay a girlishly slim figure that walked by, pretending to be deep in thought. “Where was it again? Allow me to think...”

The girl spat on the ground in disgust and stalked off in a huff.

“Hey, wait, don’t go! I’ve figured it out! Why are you leaving? Meh, girls these days. No fun whatsoever.” Young Master Ma wore a bored expression.

“Hey, lady, seeing you today has inspired me to write a poem... Hey, don’t go!” Young Master Qin stared at the girl dejectedly and said, “I just wanted to show you my talents! Sigh.”

Undaunted, the two womanizers just shrugged and continued the hunt for their next prey.

Yun Yang hid a smile.

These lechers! Philanderers indeed!

“Those two popinjays are utterly unsavory!” Ji Ling’s frowned in their direction.

Even as she spoke, Young Master Qin and Young Master Ma had already spotted her from a distance. Although they could not see her face from the angle that she stood, her well-proportioned figure had the two animals rushing over in a frenzy. Being somewhat blinded by lust, they did not see Yun Yang standing just within arm’s reach. Casually placing themselves on both of Ji Ling’s sides, they wheezed, “Young lady, you look familiar!”

“Ahem,” Yun Yang gave a discreet cough in warning. If he did not intervene in time, Ji Ling might have pummel the men to their deaths.

“Young Master Yun?” Young Master Ma looked like he had seen a ghost. On the other side, Young Master Qin who had also heard the admonition turned around with a sour expression on his face. “Brother Yun. It looks like there isn’t anywhere we can go without running into each other.”

Yun Yang sneered, “Are you two having fun?”

Young Master Ma laughed uncertainly, “Brother Yun, you would know better! There’s no way we can compare ourselves to you. You certainly have an eye for the ladies, walking about with a beauty like this!”

Young Master Qin plastered on a pained smile, “Right right, Brother Yun has all the luck when it comes to the opposite sex...”

It was at this moment that Ji Ling turned her head over, her eyes boring holes into both Young Master Qin and Young Master Ma. Their faces froze in a rictus as they caught her angry gaze. How could this lady possess such an elegant figure but have such a

homely face? The compliments they were about to ply on her abruptly vanished, and they were left gaping in silence.

Translator's Note

1 Ancestor's grave would smoke(祖坟上冒青烟 zǔ fén shàng mào qīng yān): to have really good luck or fortune.

2 Long Hu Dou(龙虎斗 lóng hǔ dòu): literally 'dragon fighting against tiger'; famous Cantonese dish made of snake and wild cat.

Chapter 14: The Lightning Cat That Wasn't

"Popinjays!" Ji Ling spat and walked away with her head raised high.

Young Master Ma exhaled in relief and looked towards Yun Yang, his expression filled with amazement. "Brother Yun, I must say... our tastes are... ahem, vastly different."

Young Master Qin's was a face of regret. "What a pity, such a waste..."

Pity? Looking carefully at Young Master's Qin's salacious eyes, Yun Yang concluded that he regretted letting that alluring body walk away from him, homely face notwithstanding.

Yun Yang tried not to laugh out loud and instead, waved a negligent hand at the baby beast in Young Master Ma's arms, "Brother Ma, what is this is?"

Young Master Ma chortled, "This? It's just a Lightning Cat. I bought it since it looks like lots of fun. Initially, I was attracted to its snowy fur; it's pretty and obedient. Ordinary Lightning Cats are worth about 1,500 silver taels each, but I had to part with 2,000 silver taels for this one, it's so expensive! I had to see what was so special about it."

Yun Yang nodded distractedly. The self-indulgent fellow had actually bought the cat just because it was more expensive than usual. He probably had no idea what to do with his money. It looks like I asked for too little the last time. Furthermore, he said that this was...

A Lightning Cat?

Yun Yang's thoughts came careening back to the grinning fool in front of him.

How could this be a Lightning Cat? A Lightning Cat would normally attain its third level upon reaching adulthood, but this one had already achieved the third level while still in its infancy!

“This is not a bad cat at all.” Yun Yang managed to keep the excitement from his voice.

“Does Brother Yun like it?” Young Master Ma asked in delight. “Please accept it then, with my compliments.” He handed the tiny bundle of fur over to Yun Yang.

Yun Yang was at a loss for words as he accepted the creature. Scratching his head, there was one thing he knew for sure; this wasn’t a Lightning Cat. It had to be an unidentified mystical creature... and it would definitely not plateau at the fifth level. For it to reach the third level before even a month of age, it was highly probable that the cat could reach the eighth or ninth level upon complete maturity!

To have bought it for 2,000 silver taels was such a stroke of luck, even the ancestor’s grave would smoke1!

Meanwhile, this philanderer Ma was willing to give it away, just like that.

“No, I couldn’t possibly accept this.” Yun Yang was torn. “It is, after all, Brother Ma’s most prized gem.”

Young Master Ma laughed, “This is nothing! It’s just a cat! With you, it’ll probably live a few days longer; if I were to bring it home, it would end up with a golden scaled snake in a pot of Long Hu Dou2...”

Long Hu Dou...

“If a small dragon was given to you, are you going to braise it too? What else do you know other than to eat?” Yun Yang was tempted to ask.

“If you so insist, then I shall accept it.” Yun Yang was graciousness personified. “Should I pay you 2,000 silver taels?”

Young Master Ma waved his hands in exaggerated protest, “Young Master Yun, please say no more! It would be an insult if I were to accept payment for such a petty thing. Are we not brothers? Even if you wanted my wife... of course, you’d never want my wife. But even if you did...”

Yun Yang promptly cut him off, “I get the point, let’s not wander off too far. Young Master Ma, I am in your debt.”

Young Master Ma positively beamed with delight.

Young Master Yun’s favor! That would mean...

Upon hearing this, Young Master Qin, wide-eyed with amazement, pushed himself over. "Young Master Yun, I have one here too!" he proclaimed loudly.

Yun Yang saw a small black bear in the arms of a guard standing behind Young Master Qin. It was struggling in his embrace as it cried pitifully.

"Ah, a third level mystical beast..."

Yun Yang shook his head, "No more, please. I have already accepted the cat. I'm embarrassed enough as it is."

"No worries there." Young Master Qin had already plucked the black cub from the guard's hands and thrust it at Yun Yang. "Don't be shy, we're brothers! You absolutely must agree to take this as well!"

Yun Yang felt out of sorts hugging the black cub.

I wanted the cat because of its potential; what use is this cub?

"This... cat... where did you manage to purchase it from?" Yun Yang asked, "Are there others left?"

"Why, sure, there were plenty!" Young Master Ma's words set Yun Yang's heart racing. Mystical creatures such as these were rarer than rare, and there were more where it came from?

Astounding.

"Let's see, it's just over there. It's the first, second, third, fourth, fifth... ninth or tenth shop from here," Young Master Ma counted. "Look for a big basket containing all these cats."

Just as he finished, he saw a shadow streak past him, and Yun Yang was already gone.

"Where's that man?"

Young Master Ma scratched his head. "Where'd he go?"

"Beats me." Young Master Qin lowered his head with a disheartened look; Yun Yang had disappeared but he had also left behind the black cub. He had spurned his offering! To Young Master Qin, the world was filled with evil and injustice. "Why did you accept Ma's cat but not my bear? It's so much larger than his cat! Even if it were to be made into a dish, it could have been apportioned into so many more servings..."

Young Master Ma was delighted as he hummed a nameless tune. "Come, Brother Qin, let me buy you a drink to celebrate!"

"I'm not free!" Young Master Qin shot his comrade a hostile glare and turned around to leave.

...

Yun Yang's steps were leisurely at the start, but he began to pick up speed immediately, covering an incredible amount of ground within the blink of an eye. He moved like a raging whirlwind, but he had to remember to conceal the cat within his robes carefully. If nearby experts caught a glimpse of it, he wouldn't be able to hold onto it for long. Forcing himself to slow down, he maintained a brisk walk; his left arm was hugging a white kitten and on his shoulder rested a young golden monkey. Ji Ling, totally clueless as to what was happening, could only break into a run to keep up with the man.

Yun Yang's had only one goal in sight, and he immediately recognized his destination when he saw it; clear as day, a large bamboo basket stood right in front of the shop. On the outer side of the basket was a sign, "Precious Baby Beasts, Lightning Cat Offsprings". Inside the basket, a litter of snow-white kittens were playfully engaged in a ferocious fight.

Yun Yang sprinted over in excitement but stopped short as he neared his prize. There, in front of the large bamboo basket, were a few young men playing with the kittens. Ji Ling who saw them at the same time as Yun Yang made an about-turn and promptly vanished.

These men wore lavish clothing, their gazes were sharp, and they had an indescribable aura of wealth about them. They did not speak, but their bodies radiated pride and grace as naturally as the sun gave out warmth.

They were unfamiliar to Yun Yang, and it was by that same unfamiliarity that their identities were unmasked. They need not have proclaimed their names, as there were no young masters in Tiantang City that he was not acquainted with. Ji Ling had mentioned that all the young masters and ladies from large, influential families would join the annual mystical beast tournament... and this year it would be in Tiantang City.

These men standing right before him were obviously some of those young masters, and they seemed to know exactly what they were about.

Yun Yang kept his anxiety concealed, and walked over slowly. There were indeed three kittens that were different than the others, snow-white all over with sapphire blue eyes. Although they were tiny, they seemed disinclined to play or socialize with the other kittens.

Looking carefully through squinted eyes, he could see that the other three were not as big as the one he held in his arms; they were not even second level beasts. However, that in itself was already a rare thing.

The other three young masters looked thoughtful as well.

“These kittens are quite odd,” the one bedecked in blue said.

“Perhaps they have consumed something nourishing?” the one in white suggested.

“So small, and already attained the second level!” the young master in green added.

“It’s unfortunate that they are just Lightning Cats,” the man in blue said regretfully. “The mother cat probably ate some wondrous treasure to have given birth to these, but they are still only Lightning Cats...”

Yun Yang heaved a sigh of relief.

Only Lightning Cats?

It was a good sign that these men were not very well versed, after all.

Yun Yang had to admit to himself that it was to be expected. Had the Supreme Wind, his eighth brother, not forced him to flip through the ‘Illustrated Encyclopedia of All Beasts’ during his idle moments, he would not have recognized these ‘cats’ either.

“These white kittens are really not all that bad...” Yun Yang who had a golden baby monkey on his shoulder squatted down while scratching the kitten hidden under his robes. Without giving away a hint of what he was doing, he sent a sliver of Endless Divine Art into the kitten’s body. The kitten immediately curled up peacefully and laid still.

Simultaneously, he directed three other pulses of the Endless Divine Art’s energy into the three kittens in the basket; comforting them. The three kittens that had wanted to move towards Yun Yang laid back down in contentment.

It didn’t matter who these people were, Yun Yang was determined to see his plan through; he had to have these little critters! His mannerisms practically screamed, “I will buy them!”

Chapter 15: Care to Place a Wager?

While Yun Yang was utilizing his talents, he did not notice the three young masters observing him with keen eyes, upon catching sight of the golden monkey on his shoulder.

“Shopkeeper!” Yun Yang straightened up and asked in a loud voice, “How much for these kittens?”

Delightedly springing out from his store, the shopkeeper's plump face beamed like a blooming flower, "Young master certainly has a good pair of eyes on him, these are the precious offspring of Lightning Cats. Why, I've spent a fortune..."

"Yes, yes, just tell me how much does each one of these cost?" Yun Yang feigned annoyance, "I'm buying them back for my lover as playthings. Money won't be an issue here!"

The shopkeeper was elated but carefully said, "May I then know which one has caught the young master's fancy?"

Yun Yang straightened up and wove an air of wealth about himself, "This one, this one, this, this, and this one. If the price is reasonable, I want them all."

He pointed to five of the kittens, two genuine Lightning Cats mixed alongside the three unique ones.

The plump shopkeeper was beside himself with joy, "If young master wants all five... I surely can give a discount of..."

"Hold up!"

Walking up, the young master in blue said leisurely, "Brother, we have the first claim towards these kittens."

Yun Yang turned around. "What is the young master trying to say?"

The man in blue explained slowly, biting off each word, "Simple, I want these kittens."

Although he was unaware that a few of them were exceptional, he was irked by Yun Yang's arrogant manner, showing off his wealth, and felt an inexplicable need to bring him down a notch. He also had an odd feeling that he would regret missing this opportunity to procure these kitten.

The young master in blue had always believed in his instincts. He did not fully understand how or why giving up a litter of puny, baby Lightning Cats would cause him regret, but he would stand by what his intuition was telling him.

Yun Yang chuckled, "You claim you saw it first, may I ask if you've asked for the price?"

The man in blue's face darkened as he shook his head, "No, I have not."

Yun Yang then smiled. "May I then ask if you have paid a deposit of any sort for these kittens?"

The man in blue frowned. "I have yet to ask for the price, how could I have paid any surety?"

"I see." Yun Yang nodded and continued, "It seems to me that the young master had no intention of buying them, but upon seeing me make an offer, changed his mind immediately. Is this so?"

The young master in blue had no wise retort. It was the truth, more so in others' eyes. The three of them had stood there for the longest time but had shown no inclination of making a purchase. Only right after the purple-robed young master came to ask for the value did they step in and claim first rights. What was this if not asking for trouble?

All three men's gaze sharpened as they honed their stares on Yun Yang. He felt a piercing sensation of his face as if a sharp knife was held against his skin.

The young man in blue spoke slowly, his tone light but imposing, "Young master, your words are a tad too harsh. If I did not wish to buy them, why would I look at them for so long? I didn't make an offer right away because I wanted to take the time to choose..."

He paused before continuing, "Besides, even if I didn't want to buy them at first, I do now. Do you hear? I'm buying them! I saw them first, and of course, that means they belong to me."

Yun Yang laughed, "May I ask if young master knows the Greatest Beauty, Shui Lanqing?"

He had switched the topic entirely. The man in blue was immediately on his guard, "What do you mean?"

Yun Yang spoke in a carefree tone, "Shui Lanqing was acknowledged as the Greatest Beauty in the world thirty years ago. Before she met her husband, Unrivaled Expert Ling Xiaozui, countless numbers of people had seen her first, but of course, she was still married to her husband in the end."

The man in blue's expression darkened in anger.

Yun Yang continued breezily, "If I'd seen Shui Lanqing then, I think, I would also have claimed her hand in marriage. Though, she might not have chosen me of course. But I couldn't very well say that Shui Lanqing is mine because I saw her first right?"

The young master in blue grew even more incensed.

Ling Xiaozui, Shui Lanqing.

This was Tianxuan Continent's match made in heaven; Ling Xiaozui was a legend, an unrivaled expert! Dragons such as he soared above mortals, drunken with a tipples and

sword; chasing infinity to the corners of the Earth, he was unrivaled among heroes across the world!

Yun Yang was impudent to use this legend as an analogy. Although Yun Yang had a temper, he would have been willing to forgo arguing with these young masters and not think of it as a humiliation if these kittens had not been so very important to him.

After all, there were a lot of influential people in this world, and grudges had always stemmed from petty matters such as these. On any other occasion, Yun Yang would usually steer clear from such troubles.

However, he just had to have these kittens! It wasn't just for Ji Ling's tournament; these Lightning Cat offspring were an undeniable treasure. Once they grew up, they would definitely be a force to be reckoned with! Such opportunities only came once in a lifetime, how could Yun Yang not insist on seeing it through to the end?

The man in blue glared at Yun Yang for a long while before relenting, "If that is so, let us bid for them. That way, you can't accuse me of bullying you." He looked like he was about to explode in anger but somehow, he had managed to force his fury down and replace it with icy indignation.

Yun Yang said lightly, "This can only mean that you are absolutely confident that you are wealthier than I am, and can afford to pay more than I; it may seem fair, but it's just another form of bullying. Browbeating people with money. Where is the fairness in that?"

The man in blue took a deep, shaky breath, "I must have these kittens!"

"You must have them, and so must I. We will never get anywhere if we go on like this. Would you care to place a wager against me?" Yun Yang gave it some thought and continued, "Only with an absolutely fair method of course. If it's laid, it's played."

The man in blue said, "A wager? How?"

Yun Yang replied, "With these kittens. We both have encountered them for the first time today. Let's bet on who these kittens are willing to follow. We can use anything to entice them, be it food or spiritual methods. Let them choose their owner! What say you?"

The man in blue squinted his eyes and looked thoughtfully towards the energetic kitties in the basket. When his gaze swiveled back to Yun Yang, however, it took on a different light altogether...

Yun Yang could feel his hackles rise as tendrils of probing energy slid over his entire form, seven or eight different ones all at once. There was a trace of inquiry in the tendrils; he could even whiff the scent of a Treasure Hunting Rat. These young masters

were clearly making sure that he had nothing that would entice the mystical creatures hidden on his person.

Standing in an open stance, he smiled gently. "What say you, young masters? Would you dare take up this wager?"

Right from the very beginning, he had no intention of backing down. When you dealt with wealthy, spoiled brats, it was impossible to avoid disagreements forever. If they had to resort to a dispute, however, he fully intended to come out top.

He had already cast the net, now was the time to delicately reel it in. The brains and intelligence of the Nine Supremes would never behave brashly.

The young master in blue that faced him gave a confident smile, his hawk-like eyes boring into Yun Yang. Certain now that Yun Yang had no secreted items that would lend him an advantage, he was perceptibly more relaxed, assured that he would win this time.

"You want to bet... against me?" The man in blue smiled in ridicule; his friends beside him wore similar amused expressions. He was not a mystical beast trainer, but he had been familiarizing himself with the profession since he was young; he was certainly more skilled than the average trainer. The guards shared a look between themselves, and one of them hurried away.

"My stakes are high, and perhaps not everyone may be able to match it." He grinned at Yun Yang, looking for all the world like a cat toying with a cornered rat.

Yun Yang frowned. "Surely you jest? Have we not decided on the stakes since the beginning? It's these kittens! They belong to whomever who wins."

The young master's smile never faltered, and he replied slowly, "Just mere Lightning Cats are nowhere near worthy enough to serve as stakes."

Yun Yang's resolution wavered slightly at that, but his gaze turned sharp again after a moment, "If you insist on losing more treasures to me, it would be impolite of me to decline."

"I thought so too," the young master in blue retorted.

In a shadowed alcove nearby, Ji Ling covered her mouth, trying desperately to hold in her laughter. When she first overheard Yun Yang requesting to buy the kittens, she had already seen the trap coming from a mile away. She was certain that the schemer's ultimate goal was not the ordinary Lightning Cats. When she then heard Yun Yang's suggested wager, and how it was to be carried out, Ji Ling almost guffawed aloud.

“Even the mighty Thousand Illusion Monkey had submitted entirely to Yun Yang... These young masters want to challenge his hold of obedience on mystical beasts? They might as well just give him the money right now.”

She watched as Yun Yang weaved like a boxer, first advancing aggressively with a single step, then retreating by two, successfully luring his opponent in without missing a beat; Ji Ling rolled her eyes, she had nothing to say about this behavior.

It was simply unfortunate for these affluent young masters to have encountered Yun Yang. They would be slaughtered like pigs in the market. Furthermore, they had been the ones who had forced Yun Yang to up the ante; any misery that transpired from this debacle would be of their own doing.

How could there be such miserable people around?

It was certainly an eye-opener for Ji Ling, who had been observing the whole affair from her hiding place. After all, it was rare to find these sort of buffoons who would help their enemies set up a trap and then spring it themselves!