

I Am Supreme #Chapter 21 - Read I Am Supreme

Chapter 21

Chapter 21: A Myth is but a Myth

"I am absolutely at a loss for words," a bewildered voice chimed from the back.

Yun Yang remained silent at her admonishment.

"Perhaps you have taken leave of your senses?" Ji Ling sighed deeply as she stood behind Yun Yang. "Still, no matter how much of a loon a person is, he still wouldn't have done what you just did today."

Yun Yang continued to smile but did not bother to defend himself.

"These cultivation resources that you've just sold could have advanced an ordinary man to the third peak. All that, for something so useless as gold!" Ji Ling stared at him as if she was looking at a slow child. "Do you not know what you have done?" Unbeknownst to her, her voice was tinged with puzzlement, doubt, anger, and overriding it all, a sense of loss and disappointment.

"Of course I do." Yun Yang did not turn around as he continued, "You and I, we are from two very different worlds." His tone was distant as he spoke.

Ji Ling could no longer reign in her anger and said in vexation, "I don't understand how you could be so short-sighted! What use would you have for so much gold? Even if you could have all the gold in the world, what would you do with it? A single piece of mystical stone would be far more precious to a mystical Qi martial artist than all the gold in the world! It would be able to lend him strength and longevity, and gold certainly can't do any of that!"

Ji Ling was breathing heavily by the time she ended her tirade, and she inhaled deeply to quell her anger, trying reigning her emotions in. "I shouldn't be upset. This does not concern me, anyway." Yet, Ji Ling was not able to fully calm herself down and failed utterly at maintaining a calm demeanor.

Yun Yang turned his head calmly and looked into Ji Ling's fuming eyes. After an uncomfortable interlude, he finally spoke, in tones as chill as the grave, "What is the use of discussing this, as we are from two totally different worlds?"

Ji Ling wisely held her tongue and waited for him to continue.

"Perhaps gold is useless to you, and you can only see value in mystical stones and crystals." Yun Yang's calm gaze was distant even as he looked directly at her. "But to

me... the value of gold far outweighs that of mystical stones. Gold can buy rice, food, and other things that could quell hunger. I am even able to receive some change after doing so. You can't do the same with mystical stones. Such is the difference in the way we think."

Yun Yang attempted to conclude the dispute, "Let us not argue about this at this hour. It is late, go get some rest." He then turned to leave.

Ji Ling threw a parting shot at him, "Then why didn't you sell all the mystical stones and crystals? Why did you sell just half of them? Wouldn't you have gotten more gold if you had sold them all?"

In his heart, Yun Yang laughed humorlessly.

I'd love to sell more too... if only the rest of them hadn't been siphoned away by Emmie! Mystical stones would definitely be of use and make me stronger, but gold could feed the families of my fallen brothers! This takes precedence as I lack resources, even as I regain my powers...

Ji Ling flounced back to her room to sleep in a huff; one particular line resonated in her head as she lay on the bed.

"People from two different worlds!"

"Indeed, we are from two very different worlds." Ji Ling was disheartened. "Our viewpoints and values are all different... Maybe he's right, what's there to argue about if we already know that we have such differing opinions? Sigh..."

...

It was late in the middle of the night when a group of a dozen men garbed all in black came silently to meet Yun Yang.

"Change all these gold to silver." Yun Yang ordered in a low voice. His mood was foul, his gaze chilling and depthless; nobody could have read what was going on in his mind or how he felt. "The eight hundred families... a thousand taels of silver for each of them. Distribute it all tonight," he continued.

"Yes, young master."

"Subsequently, all families of warriors and veterans in Tiantang City... a hundred silver taels for every household," Yun Yang resumed his instructions on the logistics of distribution.

"Yes, young master."

"I presume that I won't be forced to repeat my orders?" Yun Yang looked over at them with cold eyes that brooked no disobedience.

"We shall follow the young master's instructions carefully. No accidents, no disputes, and no pilfering!" The masked leader of the men in black spoke in a rich, resonant voice.

"Go then." Yun Yang then said, "One last thing. Pay heed to all that I've ordered; should there be anyone who violates them or chooses to ignore my warning, report him to me immediately."

"Yes!"

The men looked like moving shadows as they ventured back and forth to collect the heavy pieces of gold. It took a few passes before they managed to cart a ninth of the gold away. By their estimations, a ninth portion of gold would be sufficient to carry out Yun Yang's instructions accurately.

Yun Yang left the remainder of his treasure lying in the yard and returned to his room.

Under the cold, sterile moonlight, the backyard of the Residence of Yun was warmly illuminated by the bright reflections of gold.

...

The night passed without incident. The next morning, Ji Ling had regained her temper as she stayed in her room and trained the young Silvermoon Celestial Wolf, not inclined to venture out and risking an encounter with Yun Yang. Yun Yang, pleased with his newfound peace, went to check on his critically injured patient before he proceeded to cultivate and practice with the saber. He had planted the seeds of turmoil and trouble would come anytime now.

Yun Yang intended to be prepared for it when it arrived.

...

Old Marshal Qiu Jianhan had just finished attending the imperial court meeting and had returned to his residence with a heavy heart.

The imperial court meeting was abuzz with news on the enemy states, the Empire of Dongxuan and Empire of Dayuan were both ready to make their move; their target was naturally the Empire of Yutang, the largest prize in the collective eyes of all the empires.

The prospect of war had been smoldering for years and had not lost any measure of heat. If the coals were to burst into flames, it would not be a pleasant prospect for the Empire of Yutang...

Old Marshal Qiu Jianhan sighed and turned towards the sky.

“Marshal, something strange has happened again last night.”

An advisor in the residence, as well as the Old Marshal’s close comrade, Sir Wang came walking in with a smile, his face calm and gentle. “What do you think it could be?”

Old Marshal Qiu sighed, “I am an inch away from boiling and you’re asking me to play guessing games?”

“What is it?”

Sir Wang could tell that the old marshal was not in the best state of mind today; he summoned up a serious mien and explained, “The whole of Tiantang City experienced a night of falling gold once again..”

Old Marshal Qiu’s eyes shone with curiosity, “Hmm?”

“The families of the eight hundred warriors who followed the Nine Supremes to war last year; more than half of them had a large amount of silver appearing at their home. They were there when they woke up, and no one knows where it came from.” Sir Wang described slowly.

“It has happened once again...” The old marshal’s eyes were alight at the bizarreness of the incident.

“It doesn’t stop there. A number of families of the warriors and veterans also had silver materializing at their houses as if a generous benefactor was giving them out...” Sir Wang was clearly captivated with delight.

Old Marshal Qiu Jianhan’s eyes shone even brighter, “Brother Wang, from what you have seen... could it be that... someone from the Nine Supremes is still alive?”

Sir Wang briefly pondered upon it and replied, “This does not prove with and certainty that anyone from the Nine Supremes is still alive. Nonetheless, the possibility is there and remarkably large at that.”

The first half of his conclusion dimmed the old marshal’s gaze, but the flames in his eyes roared again when he heard the latter half.

“It’s obvious, however, that this generous philanthropist does not wish to be identified,” Sir Wang said thoughtfully.

Old Marshal Qiu Jianhan sighed and replied, “The death of the Nine Supremes is a colossal conspiracy. Our investigation didn’t yield anything substantial, even with the

entire nation involved. If this person were really one of the Nine Supremes, or even related to them, would they dare expose themselves?"

He waved his hand tiredly, "Let us do what we've always done; close one eye and don't ask any questions. When the situation permits, remove all traces of this incident!"

Sir Wang nodded, "Agreed!"

"Let all traces of hints stop right here," the old marshal sighed, his tone despairing but resolute.

Sir Wang replied, "I have already issued the order."

"Excellent."

Old Marshal Qiu closed his eyes in a rush of sadness and spoke softly, "Are any of the nine of you still living? Even if you are hiding, I would hope that you would come speak to me..."

"This old man misses you..."

Old Marshal Qiu had his eyes shut tightly, but traces of tears could be still seen in his countenance.

Sir Wang sighed inwardly and took his leave soundlessly. Just as he got to the door, he suddenly remembered something and turned about, "Marshal, about the mystical beasts tournament that is to be held in Tiantang City by the influential families..."

With eyes still closed, Qiu Jianhan waved his hand in dismissal and said with a tired voice, "Let them be."

Sir Wang knew well enough that Old Marshal Qiu was reluctant to say anything more but he could not help but add, "Rumor has it that just yesterday, Marquis Yun's young master, Yun Yang, got into a conflict with members of the Ximen family in the mystical beasts market. It was said that he almost won almost everything from the young master of the Ximen family on a wager..."

Old Marshal Qiu Jianhan groaned once more, "This too... just let them be. Since when did Marquis Yun's young master bother to show himself in Tiantang City in these past few years? Let Marquis Yun handle this himself."

Sir Wang had thought about it and wanted to comment that this incident was a passing strange, but looking at the old marshal's exhausted state, he kept his opinions to himself and left.

After today, he would not be taking note of these small matters anymore – a wealthy popinjay of Tiantang City and a wealthy popinjay of the Ximen family... how much trouble could they possibly get into?

...

Heavy breathing could be heard from the room on the east side of the residence. It was the injured man controlling his breathing and flow of his mystical Qi in an attempt to heal himself.

Yun Yang was not at all surprised by this and remained unmoved.

Another door opened and Lao Mei walked out with a spring in his step.

“Have you managed to break through?”

“Not just yet. But that half a step has already been taken.” Lao Mei was thrilled, “I shall be able to move forward within half a month! I would like to accumulate more practice so when I advance I could push myself forward a bit further.”

Yun Yang nodded.

Pushing through the bottleneck was only half the battle; once the feeling was there, the breakthrough would not be difficult. The crucial part was to prepare for the accelerated improvement in cultivation base once the breakthrough had been achieved.

This particular accelerated improvement would have to depend on accumulated practice as Yun Yang no longer had any spiritual medicine that could strengthen one’s foundation and increase one’s energy; allowing him to improve by leaps and bounds.

“Young master, the injured man... does not look like he will be a simple problem,” Lao Mei spoke in a deliberately lowered voice.

“He isn’t.” Yun Yang nodded in agreement.

“Young master, are you looking to form... an alliance?” Lao Mei probed, “Or do you wish to... subdue him?”

Yun Yang smiled coldly. “This alliance that you hint at will never be forged.”

Lao Mei was puzzled by this. “I beg your pardon?”

Yun Yang shook his head. This man had put his life on the line and risked everything to acquire four ninth level mystical beast babies, but they were now in Yun Yang’s possession. How could he possibly be willing to form an alliance in good faith? When

the man recovered his ability, he would most probably exact his revenge and forcibly attempt to make away with his treasures.

"I only wish to rein him in for my disposal." Yun Yang was brutally honest in his speech, "I am lacking in manpower right now."

Lao Mei then asked, "What would happen if he refuses to submit to you?"

Yun Yang looked at Lao Mei, his eyes crinkling with mirth as he spoke slowly, "What do you think?"

Lao Mei could only feel the faint tingle of fear all over his body as if a snowy breeze blew straight through him, the chill settling straight into his bones.

"If young master wishes to subdue him..." Lao Mei suggested, "Now would be the best time, as he is grievously injured, and incapacitated."

Yun Yang shook his head, speaking confidently, "This tactic is inappropriate against such an expert. I will need a more intricate method."

Yun Yang chuckled inwardly, "An expert who could venture in and out of the mystical beast forest alone, an expert who could fight and perhaps overcome a ninth level mystical beast... how would it possible to have him submit with this petty favor?"

"A more intricate plot?" Lao Mei was confused.

Yun Yang grinned, "The idea of servitude as a reward for saving a life... Lao Mei, such stories would only exist in myths. Let us take you as an example. You were near death from sustaining heavy injuries and someone has saved you. Would you agree to be a slave at his house as a form of reward?"

"Therefore, a myth is but a myth and a story is but a story. We shouldn't be so naïve as to believe in such things."

Yun Yang's expression conveyed a myriad of meanings as he smiled.

Chapter 22: To Parry and Subdue the Fealty Jade Sword

Lao Mei scratched irritably at his head, his face filled with awkwardness.

His young master who had barely seen the passing of nineteen summers had just called him, an aged man, naïve! It was preposterous and laughable.

Nonetheless, Lao Mei could clearly feel it; if he were to compare himself to his young master, he did seem to lack wisdom and knowledge of the world's workings. He had not noticed it in his earlier years. He was aware that his young master was mysterious at times and worked hard at keeping his martial arts skills concealed. Whenever they were together, Yun Yang somehow always managed to look idle and indolent. His master would frequently vanish as well, his disappearances lasting for months on end.

However, since he had returned home a year ago, he had never left again.

Lao Mei's instincts as a martial artist were sufficiently sensitive to inform him that his young master had borne serious injuries, and had lost his cultivation base as well. Those wounds were grievous enough to threaten his life, yet his young master didn't seem to mind them at all.

Even now, he still appeared to be listless and lethargic. It was only during the late hours of the night that Lao Mei could see his young master sitting alone from afar, and catch sight of the despair and loneliness he carried within him, reflected in the desolate glow of his eyes. He knew then that the young master carried the burden of secrecy in his heart. Lao Mei did not dare to ask about it; even if he did, he was certain that he would glean nothing from his young master.

Despite all appearances, a mighty force seemed to swirl around Yun Yang, and it had been gathering force. It was a raging, murderous aura that would set the world ablaze, and of late, it had only gotten stronger.

In a sudden flash of comprehension, Lao Mei saw that his young master's prescience had been accurate beyond his wildest imaginations. It seemed that there was nothing that he did not foresee, and no dilemma he could not solve, just like a game of chess.

A chess player who was able to predict the next three or four turns would be considered a formidable opponent, but his young master was able to see an additional dozen steps ahead, and that too wasn't sufficient for him. In the year that had passed since his master had returned, there were many underlying motives behind his actions, but Lao Mei was unable to decipher any of them.

Young master says that I'm naïve... Perhaps, I really am?

I wonder what sort of ploy would my young master use to compel this man, now lying injured in the east side room?

...

"These five cats..." Lao Mei looked at the five snowy kittens trailing behind Yu Yang and coughed as his hand reached for his beard.

He had taken only a day off and the residence had turned into a zoo overnight.

“Just consider them as... Lightning Cats.” Yun Yang said, “They’re rather adorable.”

“Adorable...” The word seemed odd coming from the young master whom he had deemed ‘scheming’ in his heart; Lao Mei suddenly felt that his perspective and views on life, values, and the world had turned upside down. The Thousand Illusion Monkey was sitting on Yun Yang’s shoulder. The little simian had been practically glued to him for the past few days but had grown a little less lively as well.

Furthermore, as long as the four kittens were below him, the Thousand Illusion Monkey refused to get down from its perch. Its eyes were alert; if it were not for the monkey’s reluctance to leave Yun Yang, it would have run away ages ago.

The friction arising from the level difference. Even though it was only a single level, it had made the Thousand Illusion Monkey feel threatened, a fact that escaped the attention of everyone present.

Yun Yang had examined the four Eclipse Panthers, one of them was already in the fourth level while another two were in the third level; the weakest one had also managed to achieve the second level.

These little felines were clearly Blood Masked. It was the greatest act of love a high-level mystical beast could perform for its offspring – using its blood to obscure their true nature, making them appear to be weak, insignificant mystical beasts in the eyes of others. It was a mechanism that would guarantee their safety, and ensure that no harm came to them before they had achieved maturity.

However, Blood Mask could only be cast by ninth level mystical beasts – Yun Yang was certain of this. In this aspect, he was of a similar mindset with the parents of the brood, both reluctant to remove the Blood Mask. Once the Blood Mask had dissipated, it would be obvious to anyone with eyes that there were four ninth level mystical beast infants railing behind Yun Yang like lost ducklings. With his abilities still pathetically absent, he wasn’t sure if he could even survive out there for two hours.

“For your own longevity, you fellows can continue to be cats.” Yun Yang stroked the four Eclipse Panthers’ heads, four tiny pink tongues flicking out to chase after his palm.

The real Lightning Cat mewled anxiously as it had not fully recovered and could only curl up on its side, unable to catch Yun Yang’s attention.

Yun Yang chuckled, “Right, there’s still one more here.” He stroked the Lightning Cat’s head as well, the kitten purring in contentment as it showed its snow-white belly. As usual, flows of the air of vitality permeated the air; the ground was soon filled with snow-white balls rolling around in joy. The Thousand Illusion Monkey made impatient noises on his shoulder; Yun Yang could only direct another flow over to it, stopping quickly when he realized the pitiful amount left of his Endless Divine spiritual Qi. Despite the

minute amount, the Thousand Illusion Monkey was content. It hopped off his shoulder and fled towards Ji Ling's room.

Yun Yang suddenly felt a sharp gaze train on him. As he turned, he saw a head popping up at the window of the east side room; a pair of eyes staring daggers in his direction.

Yun Yang laughed and turned to begin his walk to the injured man.

...

The man had already sat up and was leaning against the bed. He forced a smile when he saw Yun yang entering the room.

Yun Yang observed that the man's hair was not as messy as it was yesterday when he was still unconscious. He had obviously tidied it up. Even though it was just a simple smoothing down of stray strands, it was apparent that this man took care of his appearance. Yun Yang also realized that his hands were impeccably clean. For someone who had just woken up from such serious injuries, there was not even a speck of dirt between his nails.

"Could you... help me wipe my face?" It was the first words the man had uttered after he smiled at Yun Yang upon their first meeting. "Cold water will suffice."

Yun Yang nodded, "Certainly."

He went out to bring in a basin of cold water and soaked a towel before wringing it and placing it on the man's face. When the moisture had almost evaporated, he took it off and dipped the towel in the water once more before placing it on his face again. After five cycles of this did Yun Yang use a corner of the towel to wipe his face. The man remained calm throughout the entire process.

"You are very young." He said quietly, "Yet, you know how to administer to people. I hear the man calling you young master, which means you are not one accustomed to taking care of others, and still you appear to be extremely comfortable with it."

"This is Tiantang City. This is a large residence but there aren't many people, I don't see any maids or guards around. I heard a female voice addressing you as Yun Yang."

This man continued, "Would you be the young master of Tiantang City's Marquis Yun? Yun Yang? As a young master of a marquis, how would you know how to take care of somebody?" the man asked.

Yun Yang continued to wipe his face for him as he spoke lightly, "You, on the other hand, are not young. Although you've been badly injured and lay near death, you only look to be about forty years old but I place your real age at eighty or higher. In the mortal realm, an eighty-year-old man would be considered aged. By looking at your

cultivation base, however, you are definitely in your prime. It is not often that an ordinary mortal exhibits such curiosity.”

“Moreover, you emphasize cleanliness and put stock in your appearance. Even if you die, you’d want to depart in a clean state. People like you are few and far in between.”

“You took the greatest care of your hands,” Yun Yang wrung the towel and continued, “Even though you’ve been comatose for a long time and your nails have grown their natural course, they are still very neat. It seems that you’ve paid them the most attention, seeing as to how you trim them regularly...”

“The inner side of your right thumb and the inner side of your left index finger are both softer than the other parts of your hands. Under normal circumstances, this is where force will usually be exerted. If you were a martial artist, regardless of whether you were practicing with a sword or saber, it will be callused; but yours is not. It isn’t even because it has never been callused but due to the overall cleansing of spirit and meridians upon reaching a certain level of cultivation. The blood and bones of the weakest parts were healed first, that’s why it is much softer.”

“Your left index finger and middle finger show no traces of using force, it’s obvious that your left hand is used to make sword incantation gestures; you’ve never practiced any other form of martial arts or else there would definitely be signs of them.”

“You are an individual of power, used to dealing with people of a higher position. Your words are sharp as you speak them.”

“You are, therefore, a swordsman.”

“Your left shoulder has the look of being perpetually raised, and the back of it has the impression of being pressed on for years, so your sword is not worn on the hip but always carried on your left shoulder. This position must be the optimal position for you to unsheathe your sword.”

“You have turned half of the cultivated mystical Qi in your body into sword Qi.” Yun Yang continued, “So you are nothing else other than your sword.”

“Your gaze is sharp, a habit picked up from constantly staring at the point of a sword – staring at the point of your sword when you practice, to be exact. Thus, even if you’re not using a sword or holding one in your hands, you still exude an intimidating aura, grievously critical injuries notwithstanding. Your eyes are clear and impartial, it goes to show that you are not a despicable man who would do anything to get what he wants.”

“You do not have your sword on your person, and the part between your right thumb and index finger is badly torn with broken bones. I would hazard a guess that your sword has been broken as well. No sword and you refuse to reveal your identity, of which I am unable to accurately derive.”

"You use a sword and have never practiced other forms of martial arts; you carry a sword yet how you unsheathe and apply it is unusual. You are impartial, you don't rob or steal. You pay attention to cleanliness and appearance; you live within your means. You are a proponent in the martial arts world, yet you don't belong to any nation; you don't appear to be an assassin, but your abilities are simply astounding." Yun Yang thought and said, "From the little knowledge I possess, there are three people who are like you."

The man appeared to be pleasantly astonished he asked, "Which three?"

"One of them is already deceased." Yun Yang replied, "If you were he, I would have recognized you even if you had turned into ashes; the other is a legend, a peak expert. Experts like that would not even have gotten himself injured as you did."

"You, on the other hand, hobnob with mystical beasts."

"That leaves only one identity that fits you." Yun Yang smiled, "Do I have the pleasure of addressing the renowned mystical beast hunter, Fealty Jade Sword Fang Mofei, otherwise known as Old Sir Fang?"

The man on bed stared wildly in disbelief, looking at Yun Yang as if he had seen a ghost. He had always thought himself a nondescript man. Being a solitary individual, he had always come and gone on his own terms, had few acquaintances, and always felt that not many people would be able to recognize him.

Yet somehow this youth who sat in front of him and whom he had never met, had easily determined his identity purely through observation. Even though he had been unable to reshape his visage as a result of his severe injuries, he was certain that the youth had not examined him prior to this, and had made a spontaneous decision to observe and analyze even as he spoke. Although the contents of his speech were unorganized and repetitive at some points, he was ultimately correct in his assessment.

This was simply incredible. Fang Mofei never knew that he carried upon himself so many telling signs! He did know, however, that the youth had only spoken at length because Fang Mofei had deduced his identity first; it was a deliberate parry to an initial sword thrust.

Fang Mofei had intended to browbeat this seemingly inexperienced young man with his over and complex deductive prowess in unmasking his identity. He had hoped to build a position of superiority through his craftiness, and ensure that he could continue to stay here and heal his wounds.

Not only had he failed miserably in his efforts, the latter had retaliated and completely subdued him!

Chapter 23: The Four Noble Young Masters

Fang Mofei stared wide-eyed, and his breathing became increasingly labored. The shock was just too much for the man who had just been recently injured. Before he knew it, he had collapsed in a dead faint, Yun Yang's laughter ringing in his ears.

"Why do people always feel that they need to gain the upper hand in every situation?" Yun Yang murmured to himself. Fang Mofei had attempted to intimidate him by using his native intelligence to deduce Yun Yang's identity, even as he was confined to his sickbed. Yun Yang had turned the tables on him instead, using his superior powers of observation to gain the upper hand.

Ji Ling had finally brought the Silvermoon Celestial Wolf out of her room and into the courtyard. The small, lupine figure with a snow-white coat padded behind her merrily, attesting to the reliance it already placed on her.

"These children from the influential families certainly have a way about them," Yun Yang looked out from the window and marveled. "A single night of effort and the notoriously rebellious and highly unapproachable Silvermoon Celestial Wolf has already developed a sense of kinship with her."

"Yun Yang!" Ji Ling howled from the courtyard, "What is the matter with your kittens?"

Yun Yang peered out into the yard and saw that the timid Silvermoon Celestial Wolf had come to a complete halt, refusing to budge upon seeing the four Eclipse Panthers were lying peacefully on their sides. The corners of his mouth curling up in amusement, Yun Yang went out to them. Looking at Ji Ling, who had regained some semblance of her former self, his smile grew broader; he could sense the difference, a vague sense of distance, from the shift in her attitude.

They were indeed from two very different worlds.

Yun Yang smiled inwardly, but kept a straight face as he wandered over and asked, "What is it?"

"Why does my wolf not dare to go over?" Ji Ling asked.

"Wolves are pack animals; they have been conditioned to move about in a large group. This little one is young and without companions; it hasn't even been through a battle and it now has to face five cats all at once. They are so similar in size, I'd be surprised if it actually dared to advance," Yun Yang rolled his eyes.

"If that is the case, could you just share how exactly do you plan for me to obtain victory?" Ji Ling asked in consternation.

"I shall keep it as a secret, for now." Yun Yang said lazily, "I can guarantee that you will win, and I only ask that you keep your word at the end of it."

Ji Ling rolled her eyes in exasperation as well, "What a petty man you are! Of course, I'll fulfill my end of the bargain!"

Yun Yang looked at the young Silvermoon Celestial Wolf and squatted down whilst waving his hands, "Hey little fellow, come over here."

"Good try, but it won't be that easy." Ji Ling laughed. "I've spent so much effort yesterday..."

Before she could finish her chiding, the tiny Silvermoon Celestial Wolf stood up and wagged its tail like a puppy, before it shot towards Yun Yang, straight as an arrow, yowling in eagerness the entire way.

Ji Ling's jaw dropped in disbelief.

How frustrating!

In an attempt to get the baby wolf used to her presence, she had resorted to using her treasured spiritual medicine.

This guy is great! Just a crook of his little finger and this tiny fellow here runs over, as joyous as if seeing its own mother.

There is no longer any logic left in this world.

Yun Yang scooped up the Silvermoon Celestial Wolf and patted its back with his right hand. Suddenly, he flipped the tiny body over, and held only onto its front left paw, leaving the rest of the torso dangling in mid-air. As it hung there, Yun Yang gave it a vigorous shake.

"What in the world are you doing?" Ji Ling screamed and gathered up her dress, ready to charge over to this callous man.

How could you treat such a tiny creature like this? If you didn't know your strength, you'd end up killing it!

Oddly enough, the young Silvermoon Celestial Wolf was howling in delight, its tail wagging feverishly even if it was held with just one paw. Yun Yang then tossed it like an embroidered ball straight up into the air. With a quick flick of his right hand, he caught the wolf's right front paw and swung it around.

Ji Ling was paralyzed by fear at the sight she saw in front of her eyes.

The wolf then flew into the air once more, this time hurled by its left hind paw followed by its right hind paw, and finally by the skin on its neck.

Ji Ling was nearly beside herself with hysteria. This is a wolf, not a cat! What are you trying to achieve, grabbing it by its neck? She was almost certain that she could hear fragile bones cracking in the tiny cub's body.

"My baby wolf!" Ji Ling's eyes were rimmed red in distress.

Finally, she looked on as Yun Yang tossed the cub into the air again, where he actually grabbed onto its tail and twirled it about. Instead of crying out in pain, the wolf actually howled in excitement and danced enthusiastically with all four paws waving about.

Impossible!

"Yun Yang!" Ji Ling could not hold it in any longer. "Is my cub now part of your circus juggling act?"

Yun Yang turned around and smiled a genuinely delighted smile, "Don't you see that this little fellow is almost frantic with joy?"

As much as she would have liked to refute that claim, Ji Ling had no reasonable response to his question. Instead, she remained sullenly silent.

"Alright." Yun Yang said, "All I ask is that you leave your baby in my care for two days. You can then bring it to the tournament, and if you can't win it, I'll do whatever you want me to do. Of course, if you do win, you will have to adhere to your promises, as we agreed earlier."

Ji Ling could not help but sigh, "Again, the conditions. Must you always speak of them?"

Yun Yang replied with a grin, "One always has to be practical."

Ji Ling was immersed in her own ruminations as she brought her Thousand Illusion Monkey back to her room. Yun Yang, having gained momentary ownership of the baby wolf, carried it back to his own room with a grin. He patted the cub's head and said, "I can tell that you understand what I am saying. If you win the tournament for your owner, I'll lift you the same way I did earlier, as your reward. Understood?"

The cub gazed at Yun Yang with its shiny eyes, its tail wagging furiously.

"Do you understand?"

Yun Yang's face darkened as he seized the back of the cub's neck and lifted it like a rag doll. "Do you understand? If you win, I'll lift you up again. Agreed?"

The cub's sparkling eyes blinked twice before it suddenly lifted its front paws, its hind legs following closely behind. It then turned and pointed its rear end towards Yun Yang, tail standing tall. Its limbs and tail lowered down again and it hopped twice to indicate that it wanted to be lifted, to be shaken. Looking at Yun Yang, its dazzling eyes seemed to ask if it had shown the correct response to his demands.

"Yes, that is correct!" Yun Yang was simultaneously exasperated and elated.

"Wooo!" the cub howled in happiness in its yet unformed voice.

A bargain had been struck. Yun Yang heaved a sigh of relief; these mystical beasts were creatures of intelligence, and yet, the Silvermoon Celestial Wolf had managed to exceed Yun Yang's wildest expectations. Staring into the little fellow's distinctive pair of luminous eyes, he mumbled under his breath, "Could this be the direct offspring of the Wolf King? Certainly, this girl can't be as fortunate as that!"

...

"May I ask if Young Master Yun is available?" a baritone voice hailed from beyond the gates.

Lao Mei immediately replied, "Who is it?"

The voice answered, "Please inform Young Master Yun Yang that Ximen Wandai from the Ximen family, Dongfang Mingtian from the Dongfang family, Nangong Bubai from the Nangong family, and Beiye Qingkong from the Beiye family, are here to pay him a visit."

As he heard the names being spoken, Lao Mei's expression took an increasingly worried cast.

Ximen Wandai, Dongfang Mingtian, Nangong Bubai, Beiye Qingkong.

East, South, West, and North.

By themselves, these four people would not have been the cause of much worry, as Lao Mei had never heard of them; but the weight of the bloodlines they represented was substantial. Arrayed in front of the Residence of Yun were members from four of the eight greatest families in the empire! The one who had taken up a wager against the young master was Ximen Wandai, and he was the young master of the Ximen family. It wouldn't be too far-fetched to assume that Dongfang Mingtian, Nangong Bubai, and Beiye Qingkong were also young masters from the other three families. While it was possible that they were not direct descendants of these noble families, they were still part of an elite group of people, worthy of immediate attention.

Yun Yang waved his hands and his five kittens ran pell-mell into the eastside room obediently.

"Invite the four young masters in." Yun Yang directed Lao Mei, "We shall have tea by the flower yard." The flower yard was the pavilion under the flower canopy in Yun Yang's courtyard. There the flowers had blossomed, their fragrances filling the air with the scent of serenity and peace.

Yun Yang spoke with refined elegance as he held the teapot with a single hand, "It is my honor to play host to four young masters today. This is spring tea, which I have just obtained this year. It grows only on the mountain's snowy peaks and thrives in the coldest of blizzards. This is the shoot of the Evergreen Rattan; it has to be picked while still covered in frost, dried in the cold, dry air of the mountains, and baked under a chilly shade. After three cycles of steaming and drying, it is placed in an ice cave high in the mountains to absorb the spiritual energy that swirls in the frigid air, before being baked dry under extreme heat. This turns it into tea immediately and locks in the flavor. The tea cannot be kept for too long and has to be consumed within a month. If it were to be left out in the open, it would absorb the moisture in the air and be absolutely worthless in a day!"

The emerald tea poured out from the teapot was a vision of polished jade turned liquid, forming a crystal-clear amethyst surface; wisps of steam above the cup gave it a mysterious and ethereal look.

"This tea is called Snow Flurry of Cold Mountain." Yun Yang smiled as he raised his teacup, "Please, drink up."

As they sat silently, all four young masters were transported into the wondrous world of tea; Yun Yang, in his valediction, had made the story sound exciting and poetic all at the same time. Savoring the hot beverage, they could taste a myriad of flavors coiling about their tongues.

Ji Ling looked upon the scene from the window of her room in the west and sighed. Yun Yang, who held the lowest rank and status, acted more the part of a great lord than the four other young masters who sat together with him. His poise, demeanor, and composure outshone his compatriots, and would probably even put the direct descendants of the greatest families to shame! They would not possess an iota of the grandeur that Yun Yang now displayed and Ji Ling surmised that it had to be from the tranquility that resided deep within his bones.

"Young Master Yun does indeed possess an amazingly grandiose demeanor as well as a benign temperament." Dongfang Mingtian gulped down his tea that of which he could not discern the flavor, and smiled lightly, "It is no wonder that Brother Ximen lost to you."

A glimmer of resentment flashed across Ximen Wandai's eyes, almost too quickly to be noticed, before he smiled lightly in response, "If it's laid, it's played. It is within Young Master Yun's capacity to win. As such, I admit my defeat."

Yun Yang smiled amicably, "Young Master Ximen is too polite. Fortune was on my side during our wager. Besides, I am immensely impressed by Young Master Ximen's magnanimity and unrestrained nature. I have been longing to meet Young Master Ximen to form a companionship ever since that day."

As he spoke, Ximen Wandai's tensed face relaxed.

"Of course, I would also like to forge a friendship with the other three young masters here, alongside Young Master Ximen," Yun Yang spoke earnestly and without guile.

The young masters still maintained a snobbish air, but the tense atmosphere had evaporated, and their animosity grew lesser with every word that Yun Yang said. Perhaps only Ji Ling, who was eavesdropping by the window, could truly understand the implied meaning of Yun Yang's words amongst these people, "I wish to be friends with all of you, which allows me to swindle you even more easily!" Looking at Yun Yang's artfully earnest face and the young masters who were obviously entranced by this charming man, Ji Ling almost laughed out loud.

She grew increasingly certain that these young masters from great families could not hold a candle to an ordinary marquis' son! These elites, who had received extensive education in the ways of speech and culture since birth, could come nowhere near Yun Yang's tranquil composure and cunning mind!

How odd indeed!

Chapter 24: I Have Never Seen One Either

In Ji Ling's extensive memory, there were only a few individuals who could have come close to Yun Yang's collected manner – and these were the very ancestors of her own family. They had been seniors who had suffered through the vicissitudes of life, endowed with a wealth of knowledge and served as the fount of wisdom for their honorable families. She knew full well what these paragons had to go through to attain such an esteemed stature; risking their lives in countless battles, witnessing an unending stream of births and deaths, suffering immeasurable heartaches and surviving an innumerable count of hopeless situations. It was only through these tribulations that they could become who they were, men and women unimpressed by authority that possessed of incredible foresight. They were always unruffled, a deep pool of clear water that would not be perturbed in any circumstance.

How had Yun Yang achieved all these when he was just nineteen years old? Ji Ling was truly curious about this young man who was wise beyond his years, with an impeccable demeanor and flawless mannerisms. Nobody could fault him on the way he carried himself, bold with a graceful flair. All said and done, Yun Yang was a man with many secrets.

“... we are here today, firstly to witness for ourselves Young Master Yun’s grace.” Their pleasantries had finally given way to the real meat of the conversation. Beiye Qingkong was the first to speak, “Secondly, it was to sate our curiosity. The astonishing wager of the ninth class mystical beast offspring placed by Young Master Yun has indeed astounded the world at large.”

He seemed to be abashed as he rubbed his hands together, “Truthfully, it is a tad embarrassing to admit this. While we come from great, influential families, we have never seen the young of a ninth level mystical beast with our own eyes.”

His words garnered the agreement of the other three young masters as they nodded furiously in unison.

“Yes, I have never seen it.”

“A ninth level mystical beast has always been shrouded in mystery, I had always hoped to be able to catch a glimpse of one...”

“Sigh, my losses the other day can all be attributed to my greed for this being... How could I not come to see it for myself?”

Ximen Wandai was the last to speak, his sigh laced with helplessness. Given a choice, he had initially planned to make this journey alone but the three other young masters, upon hearing his intent, had clung onto him like tenacious leeches. They refused to let Ximen Wandai experience the wonder of seeing the exquisite beast all by himself. If it were not for these troublemakers, Ximen Wandai would have wound up at the Residence of Yun on the very same afternoon of the day he had lost the bet. The young masters were all smiles but the tension in the air had obviously thickened.

Ji Ling, who was by the window, too held her breath, unsure of how Yun Yang would figure his way out of this one. These young masters might be amicable now, but the moment Yun Yang failed to produce the ninth level mystical beast’s offspring, the entire Residence of Yun might very well be razed down to the ground. There would be no exceptions as these people were here to hold him accountable. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that, they were here to divide the bounty!

Whether Yun Yang was able to produce the ninth level mystical beast’s offspring or not, it would be the end of him either way. The moment he brought it forth, the four young masters would certainly covet it. Regardless of who would ultimately end up possessing

it, Yun Yang would certainly not be left alive as the original owner! The conviviality of these people now was simply the calm before the storm.

"A ninth level mystical beast baby..." Yun Yang smiled, "It is something wondrous indeed. I do not doubt that the four young masters have never seen it. But then again, never have I.."

As his words tumbled out into the open, the atmosphere in the courtyard grew silent with a sudden chill. Collectively, all four of the young masters' expressions darkened instantaneously.

You have never seen it?

Ximen Wandai's face had turned an odd shade of maroon as he gazed menacingly at Yun Yang. Taking a deep breath, he spoke with an eerie calm, "Perhaps I have misheard what Young Master Yun has just said. If Young Master Yun has never seen a ninth level mystical beast offspring, then just what exactly was it that was offered to me as a stake in our wager?"

The other three young masters stared at Yun Yang with wide, unblinking eyes.

"If I had lost the wager, I would naturally have been able to keep my end of the bargain." Yun Yang was nonchalant, his tone taking on a defensive edge, "But since I've won, that's all water under the bridge."

Ximen Wandai could feel his fury rushing up to his head, "If you've never seen it, it means you don't have it. What then was your bet based on?"

Yun Yang smiled, "It was based on a few premises, the first of which was that I was certain I could win. As long as I win, everything would be fine. Second... Young Master Ximen, who was it that told you not seeing means not possessing?" His words confused everyone, as they were meant to.

If he had never seen it, did he or did he not have it?

Dongfang Mingtian's expression transformed at once, his icy smile replaced by a warm beam as he spoke, "Could it be that Brother Yun has another explanation? I would really love to hear it."

Yun Yang smiled faintly, lifting the teapot to serve everyone the hot beverage even as he spoke, "Truth be told, I need not explain this. If it were anyone else I had challenged, that'd be the end of it; there would be no long-lasting consequences. However, since you young masters have all paid me a visit... it'd only mean trouble for me if I failed to explain. It would be proper of me to speak further."

Ximen Wandai's face was still the same crimson maroon as he said, "I can admit my defeat but I loathe being cheated."

"To say that you were cheated is an exaggeration." Yun Yang spoke with a straight face, "If Young Master Ximen had won and I could not hand the ninth level mystical beast baby over, that would be cheating. When I last checked, however, Young Master Ximen had not won."

"Hmm, this isn't important actually." Yun Yang continued, "Please, do drink your tea. To gamble, one must have the capital to back up his wager; if one did not, that would be cheating. I suppose Young Master Ximen's thoughts are also along this line?."

All the young masters were thinking, "Who would have come all the way here if not for this?... Are you speaking rubbish?"

"I really have never seen the offspring of a ninth level mystical beast." Yun Yang was assertive, "It is true, from when I was young until the present, I have never laid eyes on one."

Boom!

The fuse was lit once again.

You speak of a lot of things, but, you still have never f*cking seen it...

"However," Yun Yang's emphasized, "I have an egg of a ninth level advanced mystical beast that is about to hatch."

"Uh..." Ximen Wandai felt horrible, like his full-force swing had punched nothing but air.

"Where then is this mystical beast egg?" Nangong Bubai asked with squinted eyes. Yun Yang smiled and shot him a quick glance. The four young masters understood well in their heart nobody would be willing to respond freely to such a question;

"It wouldn't mean that Young Master Yun is merely trying to tell us that doesn't have one, would it?" Beiye Qingkong asked in an odd voice.

"Young Master Beiye, you do not need to provoke me. I'll speak what I have to." Yun Yang smiled, "Simply put, I do not wish for any conflict with your noble and influential families; or should I say, I do not wish to hand to these young masters the instruments of their own deaths."

"Instruments for our deaths?" Ximen Wandai smirked, "Isn't that a bit absurd, Young Master Yun?"

Yun Yang looked at Ximen Wandai meaningfully, "Would Young Master Ximen be willing to bet with me again?" His gaze was disdainful, hints of condescendence and provocation apparent when facing these four great young masters.

"Uh..."

Ximen Wandai's face paled. Another bet? If he lost this wager again, he would have no means to survive.

Dongfang Mingtian played the intermediary as he laughed, "We would all become gamblers if we go on like this. Brother Yun, as we have traveled all the way here, please don't leave us guessing.. We intend to forge a friendship with Brother Yun; it wouldn't be beneficial for either of us if we got off on the wrong foot."

Internally, he was thinking, "Is he threatening us? Where does his confidence come from?"

Yun Yang's smile was full of meaning as he said, "That is correct. It would not be advantageous for anyone if we have any conflicts."

"Admittedly, I was indeed rash about the ninth level mystical beast offspring." Yun Yang spoke casually, "I instantly felt regret the moment the words left my mouth and I fully intended to call off the bet with Brother Ximen right on the spot... If it wasn't for the slip of my tongue, this would have passed and there wouldn't have been as much commotion afterward."

Everyone's gaze had then fallen upon Ximen Wandai, whose face flushed red. He had been the one to insist on continuing with the wager, turning hysterical over the mention of a ninth level mystical beast baby.

"This relates to a secret of the Yun Family." Yun Yang said, "I am not allowed to say much, but this ninth level mystical beast egg... is a Golden Pinion Bird's egg."

A Golden Pinion Bird's egg!

All four young master's breaths quickened harshly.

Legend has it that one of the strongest legendary beasts of heaven and earth was the Garuda. It was magical and could wreak havoc across both the planes. Of course, the Garuda had only existed in old myths and legends as nobody had ever seen it before. This Golden Pinion Bird was naturally not the Garuda itself, but an advanced mystical beast that had sprung from the weakest lineage of the legendary beast. Once fully grown, it would undoubtedly become a ninth level advanced mystical beast!

What made it even more priceless was that it could fly!

“My master had always wanted to find a more powerful mystical beast offspring for me; firstly to keep me company as I grew up, and secondly so that I could protect myself when he was gone for good...” Yun Yang spoke slowly and admiringly, his expression was one of utter devotion.

“Your master?” Dongfang Mingtian finally caught onto the main point.

“May I ask who is Brother Yun’s master?” Dongfang Mingtian questioned with barely veiled interest.

Yun Yang kept quiet for a moment before his hand went into his robe and removed a small, wooden plaque, placing it gently on the table. Everyone’s gaze followed his slight movements. The wooden plaque was black all over but as they continued to look, it seemed to glow faintly. Upon further scrutiny, the glow seemed to glimmer like stars in the night sky. It was akin to the constellations of yore that glimmered with endless radiance, eons away.

“Stellar Wood of Onyx?” Dongfang Mingtian shuddered in reverence.

“That is correct, it is the Stellar Wood of Onyx, or more commonly known as... the Infernal Stellar.”

Yun Yang’s tone was deliberately indifferent, “My master’s writings were carved on this. Please keep it in your heart when you look upon them. I have no choice but to reveal this plaque today, and this act alone would be an utter humiliation to my school! If news were to spread, my master would definitely be angered!”

All four great young masters felt the obvious threat within Yun Yang’s words, and an indescribable tension fell on their shoulders. This small black wooden plaque was filled with greatness and grandeur, and seemed to be far heavier than thousands of catties.

Since Yun Yang had brandished this small wooden plaque, there was no longer doubt in the hearts of Dongfang Mingtian and his cohorts. The Stellar Wood of Onyx was a treasured gem in the known world. What rendered it so impossibly invaluable was that there had only been one of it in this world for the past thousand years.

Furthermore, there had been only one person who was known to have possessed this ancient talisman. No hand other than his could have held the Stellar Wood of Onyx! Its appearance signaled the presence of that vaunted personage. As the wooden plaque was turned slowly, four rows of words on its back struck the four young masters’ eyes like lightning; at that moment, all four pairs of their pupils actually contracted and their delicate faces grew pale.

“Long since have I been a guest of heaven; half a step to ethereality; by virtue of a soulmate, I was halted a step before the clouds.”

There were only these four lines, with nothing else to prove its identity. Four lines, however, were sufficient to demonstrate its extraordinary character, one which even the eight greatest families in the Tianxuan Continent were unable to offend. It was the singularly unparalleled mythical figure of his time.

He was a legend who could already decimate the void and soar through levels five hundred years ago; the first and only one to attain the godly rank of his times, the unprecedented hero who triumphed in the Tianxuan Continent for over three hundred years.

Dugu Chou!

Chapter 25: It Has Already Begun

It was said that Dugu Chou had been a paramount in the realm then, and no one in the known world could have deigned to challenge him. However, just as he was about to ascend into immortality, he came upon his soulmate and was subsequently caught in the snare of love. Unfortunately, his soulmate was innately weak and was unable to practice cultivation. Dugu Chou renounced his opportunity to obtain life everlasting, and instead, stayed by his lover's side for a decade, taking great care of her before she passed on from the world. The ensuing heartbreak and despondency drove him to self-imposed seclusion; he lived right by the side of his late spouse's grave. The one and only Stellar Wood of Onyx could be found there, standing like a shade over the tomb and his mean hut.

"Long since have I been a guest of heaven; half a step to ethereality; by virtue of a soulmate, I was halted a step before the clouds."

Those were the final words that marked the loss of a legend.

No one had laid eyes on Dugu Chou ever since.

In the wake of his disappearance, the legends that had always been his legacy grew increasingly large and vast. These tales became so incredible with each telling that none of the countless experts of mythical standards that sprung up in the Tianxuan Continent could even begin to rival his acclaim. The titles of Unrivaled Expert, Unrivaled Swordsman and so on would be held by a string of people that came and went every few years, but no being dared to challenge the honorific of 'Unrivaled in the World'. In a realm where a contest of martial arts would easily forge heroes, his name still remained uncontestable to this day.

Staring at the plaque, the four young masters were awestruck as they recalled the name and legend associated with it. They each felt a faint buzzing in their heads as they stared at Yun Yang, eyes almost comically wide with shock. According to the legends,

the Stellar Wood of Onyx plaque was a representation of Dugu Chou's identity. Only one of it existed in this world, and here it was, sitting in their hands.

Dongfang Mingtian felt his palms tingle as if they were being scalded by red-hot steel before he quickly put the wooden plaque down, a sickly smile on his face. The other young masters' laughter, too, had a strained quality to it.

"Brother Yun... You and Senior Dugu?"

Yun Yang sighed, his expression remorseful as if experiencing a remembered pain, "I was given this plaque as a gift by master upon our first meeting. It shames me to admit that I was found wanting when it came to the art of learning and had to depend on my master's name to stay alive. I was embarrassed to face him..."

The thoughts of all four young masters were equally muddled and haphazard.

Why are we here today? It certainly wasn't to make new friends.

How did Dugu Chou come into the picture? How do we proceed from here?

This ninth level mystical beast baby... what do we do about it?

Dongfang Mingtian took a deep breath, his face frozen as he plastered on a smile, "Now, this is certainly a surprise. Who would have guessed that you had such an, ahem, exalted master, Brother Yun?"

Ximen Wandai suddenly frowned in realization as he began to gather his wits about him, "Hold on, if your discipleship was under such an esteemed master, why is your cultivation base in such a state?"

These were young masters of influential and honorable families. Having seen and experienced many sights, they could clearly recognize that Yun Yang was highly talented, but his cultivation base was a ragged mess! He was, in all likelihood, lower than half a peak now, hardly better than an expert of the fifth or sixth peak. His non-existent abilities was an extremely peculiar situation to ponder upon.

Yun Yang chuckled merrily as he said, "Perhaps the main question that troubles you is not so much about this, but rather, why did my master accept me as a disciple in the first place? I believe that you would be highly skeptical about this fact."

The four young masters shook their heads in unison, like a rattle drum, "No, no, not at all."

Indeed.

Yun Yang smiled and said, "You could say that my physique is unsuitable to practice cultivation." Under four pairs of stunned gazes, Yun Yang continued to explain in an offhand manner, "My master's late beloved and I share the same physique!"

"Oh!"

All four men exhaled a loud breath of comprehension; they finally understood why an illustrious legend would reach into the gutter and accept this highly inadequate man as his disciple. It was a labor of love, and after all, one would be hard-pressed to find reason or logic for obsessions of the heart.

"Although I too am a gifted person of innately awakened chakras, my meridians were a mess and could not be cultivated, so..." Yun Yang sighed dejectedly, "My master uprooted my meridians. They have started to grow again, but I am uncertain how it will all turn out. He has also taken my safety into consideration, which was the reason why he traversed the world in search of a ninth level mystical beast baby. News finally came three months ago that he finally discovered one."

Yun Yang raised his head to look straight at Ximen Wandai, "That was why I dared take on the wager! I was also reluctant to continue with the wager and had decided to withdraw from it. Young Master Ximen, have I quelled all your doubts now?"

"Yes, yes," Ximen Wandai answered shamefacedly. With Yun Yang's elaborate explanation, their cynicism had dissipated and they looked upon him in an entirely new light. This young master was indeed a fortunate soul, to be the disciple of an unparalleled master despite being utterly incompetent. He had only been taken in due to his inner demons; sharing the same nature of meridians as his master's madam. In other words, he was but his master's experiment, to the extent that his meridians had been destroyed to see if they could be regrown.

In a nutshell, Yun Yang was both highly fortunate and sadly hapless. The young masters were already passing judgments in their hearts. They had established that Yun Yang had spoken the truth and that Dugu Chou was indeed his master. This Stellar Wood of Onyx would never have been placed in his hands as Dugu Chou had been the only one in the world who could lay claim to it. Furthermore, this Stellar Wood of Onyx was grown at his late wife's grave; Dugu Chou had always treasured it and would never have agreed to give it away willingly even if the emperor of an empire or the supreme master of the martial arts world had demanded it.

By association, the ninth level mystical beast Golden Pinion Bird's egg would also be true. They could not think of anyone in this world, other than Dugu Chou, who could match the speed of the Golden Pinion Bird, let alone kill it and obtain its egg.

Putting together these thoughts with the disordered look Yun Yang had on that day where he went from being provoked to regretfully offering to withdraw his wager, the four great young masters were even more convinced of the story's truth.

If I had been the one whose tongue had slipped... I'd definitely pull out from the wager as well!

...

This revelation, however, meant that their original plan to go against Yun Yang could no longer be used. These four great young masters immediately shifted gears to decide how they would be treating Yun Yang from then on. They would not be imposing, but would not grow too close to Yun Yang either. It was also impossible to put an end to him as well. Although Yun Yang's master was phenomenally powerful, Yun Yang himself was obviously without potential.

Dongfang Mingtian thought, "Let's leave it first. I can't afford to offend him but I don't have to be overly close to him either. I should wait until he actually obtains the ninth level mystical beast to see if it's true; what if he's been lying through his teeth? I would be the biggest joke in town if I pandered to him now, wouldn't I?"

Ximen Wandai was thinking, "If his master were Dugu Chou, it is perfectly acceptable to have lost to him. However, it is impossible for me to forgive him and equally impossible to recover my losses from him now." The more he thought about his losses, the more menacing his expression became. Young Master Ximen's eyes flitted around, while his mind conjured up ideas that he kept hidden from his fellow cohorts.

Nangong Bubai was actually thinking, "It would be beneficial to me if a strong alliance could be forged; even if I can't use Dugu Chou as a connection, I'll settle for the identity of Dugu Chou's disciple. Still, this Young Master Yun's personality seems to jive with mine. I don't see anything wrong in being sincere friends."

In contrary, Beiye Qingkong thought, "If I could wait until the ninth level mystical beast offspring arrives before I terminate Yun Yang with no one the wiser, won't the baby beast be mine then? The ninth level mystical beast baby would need at least a hundred years to grow anyway, I could just disappear and hide myself during this period. Dugu Chou is only human... how would he ever find out?"

While all four young masters had their own thoughts running through their heads, Yun Yang had surreptitiously kept the "Stellar Wood of Onyx" plaque. The moment it disappeared from view, it vanished without a trace, turning into a saber that was embroidered on the sleeve of Yun Yang's robe.

Yun Yang had never been the disciple of Dugu Chou, so where could he possibly have obtained the alleged Stellar Wood of Onyx?

He hadn't, of course. He had simply invoked the shape-shifting ability of the Destiny Saber and borrowed the name to protect himself momentarily. Yun Yang felt absolutely no guilt or shame in doing so; Dugu Chou would not have known anyway. In any case, what matter if he did?

I've never been bothered that the whole world is against me right now, what's more, you alone, Dugu Chou?

...

After a round of pleasantries to bid their farewells and fix their next appointment, the four young masters went on their way, although Yun Yang had warmly welcomed them to stay on. They had stood tall and proud when they came, but they parted harmoniously on good terms and without fuss. They had wanted to wrestle the ninth level mystical beast offspring from Yun Yang with force and then tear down the Residence of Yun. Instead, they now faced a grave threat.

Dugu Chou!

Just thinking of the name had all four young masters feeling like spouting profanities. To think that our top eight greatest families are honorably unmatched, even though the four of us are not the legitimate successors of the families, the entire continent – even princes of the five empires, have to practice courtesy when they see us.

Caution, even.

Who knew we would encounter such a personage today?

Instantly, all four great young masters greatly resented whoever it was who had decided to organize the mystical beast tournament this year at Tiantang City. Couldn't it have been done elsewhere? It just had to be held here.

You might as well use our prestige to sweep the floor now!

It's really... f*cking unfortunate!

Watching the retreating silhouettes of the four young masters, Yun Yang eyes narrowed, thousands of thoughts running through his mind all at once.

First, I cause an uproar, then I impose a legend into your eager hearts. However, an uproar is still an uproar, and the burden of that turmoil lies solely in my hands.

From this day forth, I, Yun Yang, shall be in your hearts and minds.

This will suffice for now, and it seems that... it has already begun.

...

Hot on the heels of the four men who had just vacated the premises, Ji Ling emerged with the cub. Disbelief was written all over her wide, charming eyes that stared straight at Yun Yang as she asked, "You're Senior Dugu's disciple?"

Yun Yang stroked his chin and said, "Let's make a deal. I will tell you, only if you reveal to me your true face."

"Hmph!" Ji Ling's head was raised. "It wouldn't kill me not to know, actually."

Alarm bells suddenly rang in Yun Yang's mind. He had just successfully deluded the four masters and had temporarily evaded danger; his normally unflappable state of mind was slightly out of sorts. Had there been a teasing tone in his words just now? That would never do. He shook off the cobwebs in his mind and diverted the topic with a smile, "Your baby wolf is obedient now, isn't it?"

Ji Ling's attention was immediately distracted as she excitedly answered, "It is! How did you do it? I'm terribly glad the cub is so compliant now!"

As she spoke, she allowed the cub to waddle out and ordered it to perform tricks and impressions. She even commanded the cub to stay upright and walk on its two hind legs, and then suspend its hind legs in the air to walk on its two front legs.

Yun Yang felt slightly ill.

Even though the cub had such highly cooperative skills and an excellent foundation, the girl wasn't even focusing on its combat capabilities; she regarded it as an ordinary puppy, trained to answer her every beck and call!