

I Am Supreme

Chapter 6: No Mercy Under My Sword

These miscreants had always lusted after Juan'er, renowned for her beauty, but while Wang Zhuang, enforcer, and avenger of justice, was alive, no one even dared to glance sideways at her.

It was almost unbelievable that the bastard had finally died. What a good way to go, passing on in a blaze of glory while on the battlefield!

Wasn't the memorial ceremony for the fallen men already over? Weren't the culprits already caught and executed? Most honest men would already be on their way home, not lingering around like vagrants.

These bullies were then definitely up to no good.

The elder was enraged, "Have you no shame? Wang Zhuang sacrificed himself for the country, and here you are, harassing his widow! Wang Bao, the end to your life will not be a peaceful one!

Wang Bao laughed maniacally, licking his lips, "Old Jia, don't you worry about how I'll die. Wang Zhuang though, he didn't die a real death, I must say. Old Jia, I'm warning you, I'll beat you up as well if you don't get out of my way!"

He then took a step forward and stroked Juan'er's face, "Juan'er, tell me, darling, what did you enjoy most about marrying poor Wang Zhuang? Not only was the man a pauper, but he's also dead now... If you had married me long ago, you wouldn't be a widow today! My heart has always belonged to you, for all these years..."

Juan'er looked at the burly ruffian with hatred, speaking through gritted teeth, "Wang Bao, you will die a horrible death!"

Wang Bao laughed, "I wasn't able to do as I please with you, back then. But now... I'll die a horrible death, you say? If so, I'll make sure you die in pleasure tonight!"

Just as he laughed sleazily, a deep, bold voice cleaved from the darkness, "Wang Bao, I'll have all of you die in pleasure tonight!" Yun Yang emerged from the shadows, a vengeful god in his purple robe. He placed himself right in front of Juan'er, blocking her from Wang Bao's nasty ogle. His gaze was icy and merciless. Yun Yang was furious; his bloodlust was nearly uncontrollable. The blood of the warriors had been smeared over the battlefield, and lives had been lost for the country. Yet, some people could still

bring themselves to speak ill of the dead to their families and kin, despite all their sacrifices!

Such inconsiderate vermin deserved to be exterminated.

Wang Bao and his three subordinates met Yun Yang's menacing glare as they lifted their heads; the latter's murderous aura trembled with the power to summon a thousand spirits from the netherworld.

The four bullies felt like they had just caught a vision of hell; their souls frozen with death's chill touch. One of the men even cried in fear, as warm droplets trickled down his thighs; he had lost control of his bladder under Yun Yang's demonic glare. His entire body quivered with terror.

Yun Yang stood silently; without uttering a word, his intent to kill them was as clear as day.

The four large men paled as they took several steps back; that murderous aura generated from a soul that had fought countless wars and battles was not something they were able to face; it was akin to mice looking up at a vicious fox waiting to devour them.

A sliver of shock ran up Wang Bao's spines. He wanted nothing more than to turn tail and flee. However, his legs seemed to possess a mind of their own – they refused to move, rendered immobile under Yun Yang's stare.

But as he looked closely at Yun Yang's face again, something he saw in it lent him calm. Yun Yang's face was pale, and his steps were uncertain – a definite sign that he was either sick or severely injured. Besides, he looked so young. Wang Bao's tattered confidence began to knit itself back, as he mustered enough courage to ask, "What did you say?" The sensible part of his mind screamed in disbelief as he asked the question; only regaining some of his senses after managing to utter those words.

Yun Yang smirked when he heard Wang Bao's question. He raised his arm, and an unseen palm landed right across the latter's face.

"Slap!"

The loud, resounding smack spun Wang Bao's large body several rounds in midair before he landed with a loud thud, several meters away.

Coming to his knees, Wang Bao spewed blood; along with the gush of crimson liquid and a dozen broken teeth.

The seemingly ordinary slap had flung this man, who weighed nearly 200 catties, several meters away.

Yun Yang strode over and placed his foot right on Wang Bao's face. A sharp snap was heard; he had his nose broken under Yun Yang's weight.

"You didn't hear what I said, did you?" Yun Yang ground his foot harder on Wang Bao's bleeding face. The small, popping sounds of fractured bone were heard as he whispered calmly, "Should I repeat myself?"

"No... No... ohhhhh..... ughhh" Wang Bao's world was ablaze in agony. He could not stop moaning in torment, yet the sharp pain did not allow him to lose consciousness just yet.

He wanted to beg for mercy, but as his whole face was trampled beneath Yun Yang's foot, his words came out muffled.

Even as he writhed in discomfort, a detached part of his mind curiously pondered as to where this prideful young man had come from. How had the situation turned out like this?

With his foot still on Wang Bao's face, Yun Yang waved his hands, beckoning to the other three men, "Come over!"

Hearing him summon them, the thugs were petrified. Although they were all too familiar with committing crimes around the city, they had never experienced this level of cruelty that was being displayed right before their very eyes.

Their legs had almost given up on them when they heard Yun Yang calling for them. One of the men cried out in terror and turned around to run.

Yun Yang snorted, "Brave fool, do you have the courage to flee?"

Hands whipping in a blur, he flung a small piece of silver towards them – it struck the man's thigh in a lightning-quick motion. Everyone watched in horror as the man pitched onto the floor, moaning and writhing in pain. After only taking two steps, his leg had been twisted bizarrely, and his bones snapped out of their joints, at painfully perpendicular angles.

The other two crooks exclaimed in horror, their thoughts fluttering like trapped butterflies; Death had finally come for them... was it to be in the form of a great master?

Incessant cries of pain could be heard, as the man with the broken thigh thrashed around aimlessly.

"Are you coming over or not?" Yun Yang's foot was still on Wang Bao's face, as he cajoled the other two men, "What will it be? Do you both want me to strike your legs as well?"

The two crooks shuddered upon looking at the two pieces of silver that had appeared in Yun Yang's hands. Both of them dropped to their knees immediately, "Great... great knight... my humble... my humble self... begs for mercy..."

"Mercy?"

Yun Yang responded with the dispassionate tone of a vengeful god, "If I let the both of you go, how will I be able to face my late brothers?"

Wang Bao groaned in pain, his voice trembling as he pleaded, "O' great knight, please have mercy... We, we are from the Green Snake Clan, everything... and anything can be brought to a discussion..."

"Green Snake Clan?"

Were they in a clan? Yun Yang's eyes glinted, "Stand up, follow me! Do enlighten me, as to what exactly a Green Snake Clan is!" He turned around and nodded at Juan'er, "Please return home, this has does not concern the rest of you."

Juan'er looked at him in shock; her expression aghast, apparently taken aback, "You're... you're... Wang Zhuang's brother?"

Yun Yang hesitated a moment before responding, "My lady, you need not fear. There will no longer be a single soul that would dare harm this family of warriors anymore."

Deliberately ignoring her question, Yun Yang turned away and hastened all four thugs to a deserted courtyard where he threw them to the ground and slammed the doors shut.

"Green Snake Clan? Who is the clan master? How many people are there? Where is your base located?" Yun Yang's tone brooked no opportunity for deviation, and they could see what would happen to them if they lied.

Wang Bao and his gang immediately answered his questions, as they were still suffering from agonizing pain. They were entirely certain that if they hesitated in their responses, this demon would inflict even more grievous injuries upon them.

This man confronting them was the devil incarnate!

Yun Yan's smile began to grow wider as he gathered the information he needed, "Green Snake Clan. Phew, it doesn't matter if you are from the Green Snake Clan or even if you are the crown prince. Only death awaits you if you ever harm any family member of the warriors!"

His intentions for bringing the thugs to this deserted courtyard were simple – to avoid causing further trouble for Juan'er, and to gather information regarding the Green Snake

Clan. Now that he had achieved his goal, well, there was nothing else stopping him from doing what he desperately wanted to do since he had first set eyes

Yun Yang bloodlust was unleashed with terrible efficiency; a swift slash of his blade drew a brilliant line of silver across the courtyard.

Blood splattered everywhere, as four heads dropped onto the floor with wet thuds.

Yun Yang's voice was soft and sinister as he whispered,

"If the world's atrocities will never end; there will be no mercy under my sword."

"Brothers in war share life and death as comrades, for we are family;

Having me killed is like killing my father;

Humiliating me is like humiliating my mother;

The laws for high treason restrictive, the civil laws inadequate;

Sword in hand, kin in heart;

Kill on sight, have no mercy!

No regret in drawing your sword, no qualms in living this life."

Chapter 7: "Even Though the Law of Majestas Allows You to Live, I Won't."

The blood of heroes had already soaked the battlefield, their families had earned the right to a life free of oppression and troubles. Yun Yang would never compromise on this, and as he had told Juan'er earlier, he would not allow anyone to harass the families of these warriors anymore.

If he had to, he would be ready to kill anyone who did.

Gazing at the heavens, Yun Yang inhaled deeply. "Big brother, I finally know what you meant all this while. I understand why you brought me back to serve as an enforcer, working outside the limits of the law. This world still bears witness to so many atrocities, and the vaunted official law of majestas will never be able to banish them all..."

"Heroes may bleed, but they should never shed a single tear." Yun Yang mumbled, "You were absolutely right, big brother. Don't worry, I will remember your words."

And just as Yun Yang was about to depart, he paused when he felt a shudder wrack his body. Glancing across at the corpses of Wang Bao and his cohorts, he could feel a weak tug as a miniscule amount of Qi energy flowed from their bodies to his own.

“Just as I thought.” Yun Yang looked inward into his subconscious, and saw the tiny swaying lotus. Was it just his imagination, or had it grown just a little bit bigger than it was before?

“My assumptions were correct. Absorbing the air of injustice hastens the growth of the lotus leaf.” Yun Yang thought, “Does this mean that the more criminals I kill, the faster the Lotus of Endless Fate will grow? Will the Endless Divine Art develop as quickly as well?” His thoughts were coming hard and fast now.

“There’s such wonder in this world, a skill that matches my intentions!”

“Even if this were not the case, I would still be out there removing these scum on my own. Having this effect is just a bonus thrown into the hat!”

With this amazing revelation, Yun Yang dusted off his blood-speckled robe, and faded away into the deepening night.

“If Wang Bao is an example of the members of the Green Snake Clan, let us see what kind of filth the others are made up of. If they were as vile, I would have to wipe them all out, starting from the very roots.”

“Besides, my Lotus of Endless Fate needs a little... fertilizer.”

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Their faces were brutish, under the illumination of the dim yellow light. The headquarters was nothing more than an abandoned courtyard, conveniently occupied by these men.

“Now that the war is over, the nation will take better care of these soldiers and distribute pensions; this would make up a great portion of our income!” The scar on Green Snake’s face wriggled animatedly as he spoke, “We won’t be able to rob the strong and train in martial arts, but if we went back to our old ways and take from the disabled and weak... Don’t tell me we can’t overcome those poor, crippled fools? The empire might as well hand their fortunes directly to us!”

The glimmer of avarice was replicated across the eyes of all those that sat there. They were no strangers to taking advantage of the weak, and it was indeed a simple task!

“These crippled veterans, they have already received plenty of silver taels upon returning home,” Green Snake was practically foaming at the mouth from excitement,

“From what I know, the pension this year should be distributed within a few days... We will make our move then, when they have gotten their silver taels.”

“Big brother is far sighted!” The other clan members were all delighted with his brilliance and greed. There was nothing complicated about robbing a few disabled men, especially those with broken legs... after all, they couldn’t even catch up even if they let them! It was a brilliant idea.

“Li San’er, find out how many disabled men are in your area; Du Tou, Sun Wu, both of you too. We’ll begin shortly. Swap areas, you’ll take his and he’ll take yours to avoid suspicion,” Green Snake ordered.

“Okay. We’re gonna’ be rich!”

“Wang Bao, that son of a bitch, why is he still not here?” Green Snake complained with a snarl, “He’s still out fooling around at such a critical moment! Mark my words, that idiot is going to die at the hands of a woman sooner or later.”

“Bang!”

The doors blew apart with a resounding crash; following in its trail, a figure in black walked in like a vengeful spirit in the dead of the night. Clutched in it’s hand, a sword glinted with a cruel chill.

Recoiling in shock, Green Snake and his cohorts scrambled up, screaming, “Who the hell are you?! Bastard, if you wish to pick a fight with me, you must be seeking your own death!”

Yun Yang had arrived just in time to hear the last few sentences of Green Snake’s dastardly plan, but he had been angered enough to burst into action. Never mind that these bastards were neither respectful nor grateful towards those who were handicapped fighting in the war for their country, but to think about robbing them! They were practically the scum of society. With these thoughts furiously running through his mind, he slammed upon the doors with enough force to completely destroy it.

“Get him!” Green Snake hollered.

Two of the men by the door charged him with matching growls.

Yun Yang strolled forward without uttering a word, his gaze cold; lips curled into a cruel smirk as they barrelled towards him.

A quick flick of his sword and two heads fell, blood spurting from their necks like a twin pair of fountains. Yun Yang kicked the bodies aside and continued strolling forward.

Each step he took sounded like a death knell to Green Snake.

The blood in his face drained away as the others trembled, looking at the black-clothed man in fear.

Who was this ruthless man? He entered the courtyard and started killing indiscriminately without so much as a single word!

“Who are you?” Green Snake was terrified, backing away like a frightened mouse, “Great knight, I’m sure we can talk it out... I... I don’t know how or when I may have offended you...”

Yun Yang continued walking without making a sound; his murderous rage becoming palpable with every step he took. Another two men standing by the door attempted to escape, but with another flash of that wicked sword, two more heads came falling off. It happened so quickly that their headless bodies managed to take a few steps before they fell over and crashed onto the floor.

Green Snake’s bowels failed him at that point, releasing itself in intense fear, “Great knight... great knight... What is this all about? Who are you? Why do you do this?”

Yun Yang was silent as he continued forward, his sword leaving a trail of crimson blood behind him.

“Drip, drip, drip...”

It was the sound of blood dripping from the blade; to the remaining crooks, it sounded as if the king of hell had summoned them. The three men remaining cried in terror as they dropped to their knees, “Great knight have mercy... have sympathy... this lowly one still has an 80-year-old mother and a 3-year-old child...”

Unmoved, Yun Yang waved his sword almost negligently – and three heads rolled off.

There was only Green Snake left in the room.

Yun Yang had already killed seven people from the moment he stepped into the room, without saying a single thing. From his knowledge, the Green Snake Clan had a total of 12 members. Including the four who had succumbed in his hands earlier, he had executed the whole bunch; the only one left alive one was the clan master himself, Green Snake.

“Thump, thump.”

Yun Yang footsteps rang clear as made his way to Green Snake, step by step.

Green Snake was paralyzed with fear; he still did not know when and what he had done that had offended this killing machine, this demon who had yet to utter a word as he separated the heads of his men clean from their bodies.

Glancing down, he saw Yun Yang's shoes that were right in front of him, and he knew there was no way out for himself. Like a cornered rat, he went berserk with fear.

Yun Yang's sword was already raised.

"Hold!" Green Snake shouted, "This... This is Tiantang City, and we practice the majestas law! Although I'm no saint, the crimes I've committed don't call for capital offense! You, who are you to defy the law of majestas, slaughtering people with no regard?"

Law of majestas?

Yun Yang almost rolled his eyes, but managed to keep his expression constant.

He raised his sword even higher.

Green Snake was near tears, "You... even if you want to kill someone, even if you want to kill me, you have to at least give me a reason! Why? Why!?"

"Why?" Yun Yan paused, and finally spoke with an air of dignity, "You have a subordinate called Wang Bao, correct?"

Green Snake stared, his eyes wide enough that they seemed as if they were about to fall off his face. "Yes... that is correct."

"Wang Bao harassed a widowed mother and child. So I'm here to see if everyone in his clan is the same type of scum."

Green Snake froze, despair evident in his eyes as he shouted, feeling wronged, "This... this Wang Bao harassing a widowed woman... so you're killing me?" He cried hysterically, "What... what does that have to do with me?!"

"I'm innocent! I..."

Before he could finish his protest, his head was already rolling on the floor; his eyes wide open in terrified uncertainty. As his body slumped to the floor, Green Snake's last thoughts were that of confusion.

Why was he killed, just because Wang Bao had harassed someone else?

And then there was nothing that remained.

Yun Yang wiped his sword clean on the body and sheathed it. He looked at the dead bodies that littered the floor with a chilling gaze.

"Law of majestas... these scum want to talk about the law... with me."

Yun Yang murmured, “The nation’s crisis has dampened, taking away the conscience of these crooks’. Their offenses don’t call for capital punishment according to the law, but they should be killed for oppressing disabled veterans! Must be killed!”

Looking at Green Snake’s headless corpse on the floor, he said, “You’re right, and there is the majestas law in this city. It’s true that you didn’t have to die for your offense according to the law.”

“However, even though the law of majestas allows you to live, I won’t.”

Yun Yang turned to leave and as he departed, he felt the mystical energy being absorbed into his body once more.

His subconscious gave a slight quake. The small seedling of the Lotus of Endless Fate was growing rapidly as it swayed, much to Yun Yang’s surprise.

“Unforgivable heinousness and the extermination of it by the sword, followed by the absorption of the air of injustice, completes a leaf of the Lotus of Endless Fate.”

Chapter 8: Thousand Illusion Monkey

Yun Yang had never felt more alive.

A jade-green lotus leaf grew in his subconscious, slowly growing into the size of a fan, and now, the budding tip of another leaf could be seen as well. A plethora of information surged through Yun Yang’s mind, and the intensity of it rendered him drunk and insensate. Straightening up, he quickly started making his way back to the Residence of Yun, while his mind possessed enough clarity to remember the way there. Due to the air of vitality that the Lotus of Endless Fate exuded, the entire sight of Tiantang City was painted in chaotic lucidity as he began his trek home.

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Among all the creatures in the universe, none were more sensitive to the ebb and flow of spiritual Qi than the mystical beasts on the Tianxuan Continent. The higher the level the creature was, the more perceptive it would be towards changes in the mystical Qi and the refined air of vitality.

Tiantang City, being one of the top three cities on the continent, contained all sorts of crouching tigers and hidden dragons¹; mystical Qi experts, professional martial artists, renowned schools and clans... there were countless numbers of them. Among these people, it was not uncommon for them to own a mystical beast or two. Of course, these beasts were not regarded as pets, but as battle partners or familiars. These mystical

creatures possessed an impressive array of combat skills, and it was widely known that the combat skills of a ninth level beast was equal to that of a grandmaster.

Of course, ninth level beasts were extremely rare, and were more likely to be found in legends and stories shared by bards. Third to sixth level creatures, however, were plentiful in Tiantang City, and it was not entirely impossible to find seventh level mystical beasts as well. Right at this moment, all the mystical beasts in the entire Tiantang City were abuzz with anticipation...

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In Sky Room No.1 of Tiantang City's Soaring Cloud Tavern, a young lady dressed entirely in black rested her face in her hands as she played with her pet happily. It was only by being in front of her little friend that she could be this relaxed and at peace.

The creature stood approximately 3 feet tall, with a pair of jade-like horns on its head and lively crimson eyes; there were actually three tails on its back, its fur as smooth as silk. It was lounging on the bed cozily.

Anyone who had an inkling of what it was would have exclaimed, "Thousand Illusion Monkey!"

Mystical beasts were rare, but what was even rarer were their offspring! Any mystical beast hunter worth his salt could kill a mystical beast, but the magnificent creatures would usually take the lives of their own offspring first before succumbing to death. It was preferable that their offspring perished than to live on as slaves to humankind. This practice was especially true for the higher leveled creatures.

In the case of the Thousand Illusion Monkey, it was even more so, hence, the word 'invaluable' would be a poor way to describe the value of a young Thousand Illusion Monkey!

Thousand Illusion Monkeys belonged to the Eight Mysterious Beasts, the highest ranked in the food chain among all known mystical beasts in the Tianxuan Continent. Furthermore, Thousand Illusion Monkeys could be leveled up; an extremely rare occurrence but not an impossible one.

If the people had known that there was actually one now in Tiantang City, it would definitely cause a great deal of commotion and talk. At this moment, with the owner looking at it, the monkey suddenly straightened up; ears perked and crimson red orbs glowing. Something had made it so agitated that even the horns on its head seemed to be glowing!

"Lingling, what is it?" The girl was surprised as she gasped, "Lingling, what are you doing? Hey, where are you going? Come back!"

Instead, the Thousand Illusion Monkey stood up and with a wag of all three tails, shot out from the open window. It was a tall, eight-storied building, but height was nothing for the monkey as it scampered into the dark. The girl shouted for help, but realized that there was no one for her rely on since she had run away from home.

Without giving it a second thought, she hopped off the window as well.

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Yun Yang finally felt at ease and was only plagued by a slightly pulsing headache as the flow of information continued to rush into his mind. He had no time to inspect his thoughts, however, and continued to hurry back home.

The Residence of Yun would be around the next corner. As he was about to take the turn, an odd noise arose from somewhere in front of him in the gloom, and in the next moment, a dark shape charged towards him like lightning. Its speed was impossibly fast, and within a blink, the dark shape coalesced into a discernable shape before his very eyes.

At first glance, it looked like a small, golden-furred monkey squatting in front of his feet obediently, its lifted head looking at him earnestly with a pair of bewitching eyes.

"..." Yun Yang was speechless.

A monkey had materialized out of nowhere, right in front of him.

"What is this? It's looking at me like we're familiar with each other. What a friendly gaze! I'm sure this is the first time we've encountered each other though."

Yun Yang was tempted to look around to see if he was still in Tiantang City or if he had been magically transported to the mystical beast forest.

The little beast was eagerly hopping up and down like all monkeys do, and would not put up with being ignored by Yun Yang. Scratching its head, it clung onto his legs and looked up, as if asking for Yun Yang to carry it. It was the scratching, however, that revealed its pair of tiny horns, further surprising Yun Yang. "Dragon's horns on its head, several tails on its back; jade white as bones, crimson eyes; a mystical beast... Could it be a Thousand Illusion Monkey?"

Upon closer inspection, there was no doubt that the creature in front of him was actually a baby Thousand Illusion Monkey.

"This is strange..." Yun Yang began to scratch his own head as well, "A Thousand Illusion Monkey coming to me to seek shelter on its own... My luck today knows no bounds!"

Looking at the young monkey's pitiful look, Yun Yang's heart softened as he spread his arms to scoop the monkey up.

The monkey nestled itself cozily in Yun Yang's embrace, its thin arms spread, purring in comfort as its eyes closed, seemingly about to fall asleep. All three of its tails coiled up and it began to curl into a ball of fur. Yun Yang was left in a daze.

This was the Thousand Illusion Monkey of the Eight Mystical Beasts!

Although this was only a three-tailed baby, its intelligence was still high; legends had it that Thousand Illusion Monkeys were aggressive, ill-tempered, powerful and ever-changing creatures. How was it that this one could be so approachable?

"I didn't do anything, but it jumped right into my embrace the first time it saw me?" It looked completely at ease as well, obviously contented with where it was, curled up in Yun Yang's arms.

"Perhaps this baby monkey is daft..." Yun Yang peered at the monkey in his arms with a critical eye.

At the moment, his senses tingled and he sensed a chilling aura surrounding him; it was piercing, with a murderous intent. It was as if he could feel a sharp sword pointing at himself; any rash or sudden movement could cost him his own life. With his abilities that had been depleted and barely replenished, he could do nothing to ward himself against the aura.

"Thief! What are you doing?" A cold and crisp voice ordered from the gloom, "Let go of my mystical monkey!"

Yun Yang lifted his head, seeing a slim figure appear from the swirling night mist. There was no sword in her hands, but the distinct feeling of a sharp blade did not diminish. A faint fragrance not unlike orchids but also resembling musk pervaded the air. As the slim girl stood amidst the mist, she looked like a fairy among the clouds, holy and elegant. Yun Yang was unaffected, however. No mystical beast or ravishing beauty was worthy of his attention right now.

He lifted his head slightly, speaking in light tones, "This Thousand Illusion Monkey belongs to you?"

The girl's face remained concealed in the dense mist but her voice was cold, "Could it be yours then?"

Yun Yang replied, "It does not belong to me, but I am no thief, so please, recant your accusations.."

Although this girl was mysteriously enigmatic and had a strong cultivation base, it was still unforgivable behaviour. "What is this, your monkey came to me on its own. I had no chance to chase it away, and now you call me a thief?"

The girl moved forward then, in anxiousness and impatience. Her pretty eyes widened along with her mouth as she looked disbelievingly at the tiny monkey lounging comfortably in Yun Yang's embrace. If it were not for the heavy mist concealing her face, Yun Yang would have seen how astonished she was. Even then, she still stumbled in shock, and her steps faltered.

"What am I seeing?"

It's the Thousand Illusion Monkey! I've been at its beck and call for three months and it's never been that close to me. It meets this man for the first time, but it's already lying so obediently in his arms!"

It was becoming glaringly obvious that this man had not done anything forceful, and that the Thousand Illusion Monkey had been nothing but willing in all this! Seeing that she was here, the creature actually nestled further into the man's embrace, its head going into the man's robe as it directed its rosy bottom towards its owner.

The girl calmed down a little. "I apologize, this creature ran out on its own. I was distraught and overly rash. Please pardon me for my harsh tone."

It was Yun Yang's turn to be surprised.

This girl's cultivation base was stronger than he had expected from such a young woman. Pride had always come hand in hand with youth, but she could surprisingly control her temper well and even managed an apology, albeit one spoken in a cold tone.

This was such a rare occurrence. Girls like this were usually spoiled, and acted all high and mighty.

Since she had apologized, Yun Yang backed down as well, "Since this belongs to you, please take it back."

A Thousand Illusion Monkey was a spiritual creature of heaven and earth but at that moment, Yun Yang could barely be concerned about it.

He had not been impressed with a full-grown Thousand Illusion Monkey, what more this young one? He estimated that it would take at least another 70 to 80 years for the little fellow to grow up into a seven-tailed beast, and he would be a decrepit old man by then.

An old man with a monkey by his side? That would be a sight to see.

“Hello little one, your owner is here.” Yun Yang grabbed the monkey’s head, “Quickly, go back to her!”

If it was possible, the girl’s eyes widened even further. He had dared to grab the enchanted fur on the monkey’s head? This was considered taboo; not even their owners or partners that had spent years together dared to touch that tuft of hair at the cost of enraging the monkey!

It was what happened next, however, that left the girl dumbstruck.

Translator’s Note:

1Crouching tigers, hidden dragons (卧虎藏龙 wò hǔ cáng long): Idiom to mean hidden talented people, concealed talents not yet discovered.

Chapter 9: A Destiny of Sabers

The man had lifted the Thousand Illusion Monkey by the tuft of fur on its forehead, causing it to curl up into a ball, its flailing limbs vainly trying maintain an iron grip on the man’s robe. It cried out in distress, fat tears rolling out of it’s eyes, not in anger, but in supplication and obvious reluctance to leave this callous man’s embrace. As the owner, the girl naturally intuited that the monkey’s actions carried a meaning as clear as day; “Please don’t make me leave, I want to stay right here!”

“You’re not mine, so what’s the point of clinging onto me?” Yun Yang said impatiently as he tried to shake off the clingy creature. He managed to toss the monkey back to the girl which he finally noticed was dressed in green, but not before landing a solid smack across its buttocks.

The girl caught hold of the monkey purely by reflex, but before she could even get a proper grip on it, it was already squirming mightily, trying to claw it’s way back to the man. The girl quickly clamped a firm hand on it as she spoke, “Thank you young master, would it be too much to ask for the pleasure of your name?”

This man had to be either be a legendary beast trainer, or possess some sort of gem to have charmed the monkey to such an extent. As her question left her lips, she allowed her powerful senses to reach out to the man, conducting multiple delicate probes which eventually left her puzzled.

She could sense nothing at all!

His depleted cultivation base was only slightly stronger than an average person; he was no expert, and definitely not a trainer either. What then, had happened to the Thousand

Illusion Monkey? For all the time that she had been taking care of it, it had never behaved as lovingly to her as it did to this total stranger.

“Not at all, I’m Yun Yang.” Yun Yang nodded.

“Since I’ve returned it to its rightful owner, I shall be taking my leave.” With that, he turned and left without a second glance, vanishing into the dark all at once without fanfare or commotion; as if he encountered fairy-like beauties and mystical beasts every other day. Normally, if such a wondrous vision had asked your name first, logic dictated that you also ask for hers in return.

However, Yun Yang was no normal man. He behaved as if being distracted by a beautiful woman would cause him to be slower, to lose focus.

The girl dressed in black continued to stare at Yun Yang’s silhouette, although it had long disappeared. Blinking rapidly, she recited softly to herself, “Yun Yang... Nineteen this year, the only son of the Empire of Yutang’s Heavenly Marquis¹; he had arrived at Tiantang City 5 years ago and nothing is known of his past. Throughout that five years, only a handful of events that the young master was involved in had been documented. Was it because he stayed at home most of the time? Or was he even home at all? Although Yutang’s Heavenly Marquis had always been a mystery, his real identity should be Absolute Swordmaster Seven Stroke Death²; otherwise known in the underground martial arts scene as Yun Xiaoyao. Since when did Yun Xiaoyao have a grown-up son? That was the type of news that the world wouldn’t have missed.”

The young girl frowned, confused.

It was supposed to be normal. A son of the Heavenly Marquis. But somehow, there seemed to be a cloud of mystery around it.

It made sense in every direction but at the same time, there were also questions in every direction.

“What a strange character.” The girl shook her head and laughed, “A young lady coming to Tiantang City alone, bringing an extremely rare mystical beast’s offspring. Anyone else would have acted with malicious intent, but this guy was not fazed at all! I suppose he could be considered an odd sort of fellow. Furthermore, this Thousand Illusion Monkey that has always been aloof towards anyone was bizarrely intimate towards this young master...”

The monkey also dolefully looked towards the direction Yun Yang had left with falling tears as if saying, “Why did you abandon me? Why didn’t you bring me along? I want to follow you, I don’t want to go back to my owner!”

"This Young Master Yun..." The girl's eyes glinted, "Looks like I'll have to get to know him better..." Her voice was faint as she began to dissolve into the fog, becoming translucent and ethereal.

When the breeze blew and the mist dissipated, the girl was nowhere to be found.

...

Yun Yang had arrived back at the Residence of Yun where Lao Mei was waiting anxiously for him.

His young master had gone to the memorial ceremony alone, still bearing the pain of severe injuries. The ceremony had long ended while the night's sky deepened to the darkest black, and yet, he still had not returned, until now.

"Young master, where have you been?"

"Why did you only return after so long?"

"It's not a good time to be out now, it's dangerous outside!"

Lao Mei's complaints were ceaseless, and had yet to stop since Yun Yang first stepped foot into the house. Comforting him with some mumbled assurances, Yun Yang halted Lao Mei's rants and entered his room impatiently, closing his door with a bang.

The first leaf of the Lotus of Endless Fate was already fully grown, and he could not wait any longer to find out what he would get. The changes in his body had buffeted him like strong winds since he had massacred the Green Snake Clan, and he was unable to stay calm or patient. To add to the delay, he had been waylaid by a mystical monkey and an equally mysterious girl. He had managed to get rid of them after some pestering, but he was already burning with impatience at that point. As soon as he entered his room, he sat down, folded his legs and delved into his subconscious mind.

Purple fog immediately enveloped him, the large lotus leaf floating in mid-air and glowing an emerald green. The vitality contained in the viridescent light would make anyone looking at it feel at ease and delighted. The energy in his subconscious then entered his meridians, making Yun Yang feel as light as a feather. The grown lotus leaf trembled twice before it dropped off the Lotus of Endless Fate, floating towards Yun Yang. He extended his arm mechanically and the leaf landed on his hand. Where the leaf originally was, a small silhouette of a leaflet appeared; it was only half the size of a palm but its veins were clear as day.

All around him, his subconscious rumbled loudly, and Yun Yang was withdrawn from it unwillingly. He was again sitting on his bed. Slowly opening his eyes in a daze, he only lowered his head to look at his hands when he felt a comfortable, cooling sensation emanating from his palm.

“Yah!”

Yun Yang cried out in surprise. In his hand, he held the jade green lotus leaf!

The leaf, large as the table that sat in front of him, glowed softly, and a faint violet-gold sparkle could be seen glimmering in between.

Violet-gold glimmer?

Yun Yang squinted to take a closer look, and as he did, he could see rows of tiny words written on it. As he saw the words, the rows of writing lifted up from the leaf in a whirl, and turned into a pulsing golden light before entering the space between Yun Yang’s eyebrows.

“... comes out of nothing, grows into infinity... eradicates ten sinners, lotus grows in a pulse; matches the destiny, follows the heart...”

Yun Yang finally understood the mechanics of the seed.

The first leaf of the Lotus of Endless Fate could only complete its growth when ten sinners were killed and the resulting air of injustice was gathered. His first kill had been Wu Wenyuan, followed by Wang Bao and the three men. Eight more of the Green Snake Clan had also been claimed by his hand, bringing it to a total of thirteen people. That was sufficient for not only the growth of the first leaf, but for the budding of the second as well.

“... Destiny Lotus Leaf, goes with the heart; Destiny like saber, eternal saber.”

Yun Yang was deep in his thoughts, studying the lotus leaf.

This Destiny Lotus Leaf would be the first gift bestowed by the Lotus of Endless Fate. It was obvious from the literal connotations that it would turn into your heart’s desire; basically, into whatever you wanted it to become.

“Since destiny is like saber, let’s have you turn into a saber then,” Yun Yang looked at the lotus leaf gleaming in green on his palm. Being sound of mind, he was rather skeptical about how this leaf would go about turning itself into a saber of steel.

However, with the words barely out of his mouth, he could suddenly feel his hand being weighed down by an unknown object. Incredulously, he raised his arm, only to find that the lotus leaf had been replaced by a saber, gleaming with cold conviction.

The moment Yun Yang laid his eyes on it, he knew that this saber would be irrevocably his.

The entire saber was violet in color, a budding lotus formed the pommel; and the grip felt like a lotus stem with tiny bumps protruding from it. Oddly enough these bumps did not feel like a hindrance when Yun Yang held the saber; they improved his grip instead. It felt light in his tight grip and a cooling sensation emanated from the very saber itself.

He somehow knew that no matter how much blood or sweat drenched the grip, the saber would not slip from his hands as long as he held it.

The cross-guard was a small jutting oval-shaped piece with a slight concave that formed an efficient angle; it could prevent the enemy's blood from flowing as over his hands, as well as offsetting the resistance of his strength perfectly.

The blade was icy and thin like a cicada's wing; the fullest part of the blade was a bit thicker, the edge as long as 2 feet and 7 – 8 inches, while its point was sharp and longer than most sabers by at least two fingers' length. The blade glittered as if all the stars of the universe had been captured in its mirror-like surface; it should have looked bumpy but it was smooth and shiny even upon closer scrutiny..

Streamlined and flawless, every angle of the saber was perfectly sculpted. Even with Yun Yang's considerably complex and demanding tastes, he could not point out any flaw on the saber!

"Divine Edge!"

These two words blazed across Yun Yang's mind. It could not have been formed by anything other than God's will; it was impossible for even a master weaponsmith to forge such a perfect saber!

Divine Edge. Yes, it was certainly deserving of the name.

"Destiny like saber, saber of destiny, kill with the saber, kill for God!"

Yun Yang held the saber reverently, slowly entering his subconscious. In his mind, a figure was slowly practicing with the saber.

"Saber Truth: Destiny Blade³, Destiny's First Form."

"Grip the hilt in concentration, watch the injustice without emotion; those rampaging and those who sinned, Destiny Blade will show no mercy!"

"One form, two styles. First style, Merciless Saber. Second style, Merciless Dao⁴!"

Yun Yang felt that he had entered an intriguing martial arts world; this Saber Truth: Destiny Blade, had exceeded all of Yun Yang's expectations of forms and styles; and it was only the first form! Yun Yang couldn't help but imagine that if he had a sufficient cultivation base, no one in this world could escape from his saber!

It was unfortunate that his cultivation base had only recovered, at most, one-tenth of his initial cultivation base. He had to start all over again.

Time passed slowly...

Yun Yang had already memorized technical nuances of Destiny's First Form by heart. Although it was only one form, he had to incorporate his body, mind and steps together in perfect unison for it to work.

Although Yun Yang practiced with the lotus leaf consistently in his room, he could still feel the lack of power even as he was drenched in sweat and filled with exhaustion..

"Looks like I can only practice and understand it slowly from now on." Yun Yang sheathed his saber and thought, "I can only unleash half of the effect of this first form with my current cultivation base and it's already taken up all of my spiritual energy... the power of Destiny's First Form is not to be taken lightly!"

He looked at the violet saber in his hand that was glowing like the night sky and smiled gently. Slowly, he drew the blade across his wrist, letting his blood drip onto the blade. He wiped the crimson liquid across the blade, speaking softly, "Divine Edge, henceforth, you shall be my eternal partner. Allow me to banish all the injustice in this world with you in my hands!"

The battlefield was filled with blood, and fire seemed to burn bright in his eyes.. Countless warriors charged into the fight while smoke rose and flames danced across the plains.

First, the faces of his eight brothers flickered through his vision, faces that he would never forget.

Then it was the battle at Tianxuan Cliff, the event that would be forever etched in his soul.

The families of the heroes came next, the harassment and hardships that the knight's family had faced. His vengeful aura arose, gaining strength and purpose as the memories of injustice and wrongness flashed across his eyes.

Divine Edge began to vibrate in his hand with a wild keening, and the blade pulsed with a radiant glow. It was like the constellations had fallen from the sky and landed among men, or an explosion of numerous rainbows. After some time, the blade quaked, right before sucking all the radiance of the stars and rainbows alike like a thunderous maelstrom!

Translator's Notes

1 Heavenly Marquis (天外侯, Tiānwài hóu) lit. Title: Marquis Beyond Heaven. Yun Yang's yet-unnamed father was first mentioned as 天外云侯, Tiānwài yún hóu, which had the additional character 云, yún, which means cloud. As such, he was previously called Marquis of Heavenly Clouds. We believe that Heavenly Marquis is a more general term for a specially ranked marquis of the empire while Marquis of Heavenly Clouds is the special title assigned to Yun Yang's father.

2 Absolute Swordmaster Seven Stroke Death (超级剑道高手七步杀生, Chāojí jiàndào gāoshǒu qī bù shāshēng) lit. Extreme Swords Expert Seven Step Kill. This name was a pain to translate. Regardless of how you play around with it, the name remains just as long. We considered removing the Absolute Swordmaster part or Seven Stroke Death part hoping it could make the name much more concise and readable. However, due to recent circumstances involving readers complaining about the inaccuracy of translations, we now try to alter as little as possible.

3 Saber Truth: Destiny Blade (天意刀法, Tiānyì dāo fǎ) lit. Heaven's Will Saber Law.

4 First style, Merciless Saber. Second style, Merciless Dao (第一式, 刀不容情。第二式, 道不容情, Dì yī shì, dāo bùróng qíng. Dì èr shì, dào bùróng qíng!) Had to make a TL note for this as well, notice that the first phrase contains dāo which is the Chinese character for single-edged curved swords a.k.a. sabers. The second phrase contains dào which is what most readers understand as the concept of the Dao. Basically, the author Feng Ling Tian Xia is playing with words that are pronounced the same (except for the sound), which we are unable to convey by translating the meaning of the words.

Chapter 10: A Good Family Name, and a Great First Name

While Yun Yang did not pass the night peacefully, another soul in another place was equally disturbed. In the residence of the old marshal, Qiu Jianhan's brows were locked together in a tight frown.

"Who was it that spirited Wu Wen yuan away, and sent his lifeless body back?"

"Who was it that rescued Wu Wen yuan's mother and wife?"

The old marshal had difficulty trying to put a name to these two questions. If one had intended to do away with Wu Wen yuan, why bother saving his mother and wife? If this mysterious figure could do that, why not save Wu Wen yuan's children as well? It was simply bewildering.

What greatly distressed the old marshal was that this figure was capable of not only removing a person from a guarded facility, he or she could also return the body and make away with another two other prisoners with apparent ease. It was a prison! How

someone could perform such a vanishing act in one of the most secure places in the capital was beyond him.

By the marshal's side stood a man, dressed in the ways of Confucianism. He had a serene look about him, as if the world's problems were merely clouds, gently passing by.

"Marshal, I believe this is not an entirely important matter. After all, it could be said that the victim was somewhat deserving of his fate." The man smiled, "There is, another issue that may warrant your attention."

"Hmm?" Qiu Jianhan frowned in confusion.

"Killing Wu Wenyuan, returning his body, saving his wife and aged mother..." the Confucian scholar continued, "It is obvious that the individual or organization that undertook this does not side with Wu Wenyuan; as accomplices, they would not have killed him."

Qiu Jianhan hummed in agreement.

"My guess is that they killed Wu Wenyuan but saved his wife and mother as conditions of a bet." The scholar smiled, "That sounds entirely reasonable.."

"They further demonstrated their animosity towards Wu Wenyuan by leaving behind his children, so as to prevent his lineage from surviving." The scholar said, "This was why they did something so inexplicable. After a while, I am inclined to think that this person is on our side; friend not fiend. Although his actions were a tad over the top, and contemptuous of the law, it was understandable."

Qiu Jianhan gave a slow nod, "If so, what is this other matter that you speak of?"

"The other matter..." The middle-aged scholar spoke slowly, "Although Wu Wenyuan was convicted with concrete evidence, he had to have been backed by some formidable foes, as his other identity has not been exposed even until now! Has the marshal managed to look at the city gate's record after the memorial ceremony today?"

For once, a slightly worried expression marred the scholar's pleasant expression, "There are many underground martial artists entering Tiantang City from everywhere, and through all the four gates. A lot of these individuals were among the experts, but their names were not on any of the records. I believe that these people's identities were all fabricated at the point of entry. So many people coming into Tiantang City with concealed identities, at a time when Wu Wenyuan was just executed? This would be too coincidental to be genuinely unrelated. I'm afraid that this mysterious organization has come for revenge. Or perhaps, they have some other malicious purpose in mind."

The scholar concluded, "I just wanted you to be aware of this."

Qiu Jianhan nodded grimly.

"It's just, I still think..." Qiu Jianhan kept up, "The incident in the prison is still a little strange."

"I feel that..."

After a moment's hesitation, the scholar continued, "This incident is rather similar to when the Nine-Day Decree was ordained. In that particular year..."

He frowned uncertainly as his voice lowered, "There was the familiar feeling of an unstoppable tide, a series of incidents which we could do nothing about. It was as if someone had a hand in these events..."

"Who?"

Old Marshal Qiu Jianhan shot up from his seat, his eyes glinting brightly, "The Nine Supremes!"

...

It was barely dawn, but Yun Yang was already up and practising his swordplay. He was reluctant to use the Divine Edge just to familiarize himself with saber forms, so he held a practice saber instead.

The saber was now cleverly camouflaged as a purple lotus on the sleeve of his robe. For a magical weapon with such an ability; it would be tactically unwise to reveal all his cards so early in a fight. As for wearing it on his hip, well it would just be plain foolish to do so.

"First style, Merciless Saber." Yun Yang rotated the ball of his foot and his knee moved along with the rotation of his calf to his hip, his body swiveled half a loop as the practice wooden saber in his hands slashed the air from top to bottom. He had been practicing this routine for a hundred or perhaps even a thousand repetitions.

From afar, Lao Mei looked on with tightly pursed lips.

This form... While it looked very impressive; it was too gaudy to be of any use in real-life combat. Yet, his young master had put in his all on the practice grounds.

"Hu!" Yun Yang dropped to the ground with weariness when the last of his energy had been used up, clothes soaked through with sweat and dust.

He kept his mouth closed, struggling to breathe with only his nose so as to cause the tiny amount of spiritual Qi in his dantian to flow through all his meridians through the use of the Endless Divine Art. He almost suffocated, but he flatly refused to breathe in

through his mouth as that would nullify all his hard work this morning. Just a short while later, Yun Yang recovered his breath; his pale face gradually turning rosy again.

Lao Mei went from skepticism to grudging respect; not everyone could be so harsh on themselves. Since his young master had begun practicing and regaining his breaths, he had broken through the human body's physical limits a dozen times; a feat which would become the driving force behind Yun Yang's advancement in life – for he had chosen to train the hardest in his most exhausted moments!

"Young master will definitely become a great man in the future. It's just..." Lao Mei had a question bothering him for too long, "Young master has always been cautious in doing things. Never rash, always planning before making his move. Beyond that, he is exceptionally intelligent and has always managed to avoid danger. What was it that had caused him to be injured so severely? To the point of losing all his cultivation base?"

"Young master, what have you gone through?"

Despite being the faithful manservant for three whole years now, Lao Mei felt like he had never really understood his young master. It seemed that a cloud of mystery had always surrounded the young man. Moreover, it was puzzling that all the jade the young master kept on his person were gone. Yun Yang had loved Frost Jade a lot, as it could invoke a sense of calm, but he carried none of them on him now.

Where had it vanished to?

Loud, resounding knocks came from the door.

"May I know if Young Master Yun is home?" a clear voice rang out.

Both Yun Yang and Lao Mei were equally startled. A visitor? This was a highly unusual occurrence. The Residence of Yun closed its doors to visitors, and had never entertained any social contacts; this was an arrangement everyone in Tiantang City knew of. It had been at least four to five years since they had someone come a-calling, and out of the blue, there were guests at the gates once again!

"Chi! chi!" an excited chattering could be heard from doors.

A golden-furred monkey bolted into Yun Yang's courtyard and hopped right into his surprised embrace, wearing an incredibly ecstatic look on its simian features.

"..." Yun Yang's expression was the very definition of perplexion.

Had he not left this monkey behind yesterday? Why was he holding it in his arms again today? Do monkeys really like me that much?

While he looked at the small creature in his arms, it crawled around in his embrace and shot up his shoulders then slid down from his back. It then crawled through the space between his legs and scuttled back up into his arms.

Yun Yang rolled his eyes.

A breeze wafted in from the doors, bringing with it a soothing fragrance. There, a beautiful lady stood, smiling at Yun Yang. She had a beautifully proportioned body. The ordinary black clothing she wore looked as if it was made for a queen, as she had an air of elegance that was unlike any average person.

The face, however, was a little too commonplace.

Of course Yun Yang did not think for a moment that this was the real face of the lady.

"Pardon me for the impromptu visit, Young Master Yun," the girl's melodic voice was a pleasure to the ears.

"Not at all. It's my pleasure to have you pay a visit to my humble home." Yun Yang smiled gently, "Please come in."

"Thank you." The lady entered, her eyes glittered merrily upon seeing the monkey that had not left Yun Yang since it got in.

"Pardon my impoliteness last night, it slipped my mind to ask for your name," Yun Yang spoke with an apologetic tone.

The lady in black was tempted to roll her eyes, thinking, "If I didn't come today, you probably wouldn't have thought of this for your entire life. My sudden visit would have served you well as an excuse for an opening line!" This was the perfect example of a man who looked intelligent, but was actually not and did not care for what a girl would think!

"My family name is Ji¹, Jimou²'s Ji," the lady answered in response.

"What a wonderful family name!" Yun Yang clapped, his expression and tone dramatized with a hint of sarcasm as he loudly laid on praise, "Just this one word makes me think of people from ancient times up till the present, all of which successful because of utilizing tactics. Ji, this is the foundation of society; nothing is ever achieved without... Ji!"

"The young master has flattered me too much," the lady in black finally gave in, and rolled her eyes. If it were not for the Thousand Illusion Monkey and something regarding her own hidden agenda, she would have left immediately.

You have mockingly complimented my family name, and with such glaring insincerity! Such temerity deserves a solid punch in the face!

Yun Yang pinched his nose. “May I ask for your full name, as well?”

The lady almost let out a groan, “It’s a single first name, Ling³.”

“What a great first name!” Yun Yang praised loudly once again, “All Ji (tactics) have to be Ling (effective)! You have a amazing name! The saying goes, Ji Ling Ji Ling (effective tactic); Ji that is not Ling is not a Ji (tactics which are not effective are not tactics), only Ji Ling is a Ji (the only tactic is an effective one). Good name, a good name indeed! It represents the means behind every success...”

“ ... ”

Miss Ji Ling only felt blinding anger building up in her mind, so tempted was she to flip the table over and leave! If it were not for the impropriety of using foul language as a lady, she would have cursed him with all her might! Certainly, she knew she was not welcomed, but did he have to be such a boor? After all, she was still a woman, could this cretin not show at least a little bit of chivalry?

Lao Mei, standing beside and listening to the entire tirade, heaved a sigh of exasperation.

“Young master, it’s no wonder you’re still alone even though you have seen nineteen summers. Despite your fine features, just listen to your conversation with this lady! At this rate, it would be a miracle if you could ever get married!”

Translator’s Note:

1Ji (计jì): used as family name in this chapter; the word on its own also means tactic or scheme.

2jimou (计谋jì móu): tactic, scheme or plot.

3Ling (灵líng): used as first name in this chapter; the word on its own also means lark; effective.