

Bai Xiaochun was done fighting. When the north bank disciples opened up a path for him, he shook his head and, looking somewhat melancholy, slowly began to walk away.

Mixed emotions could be seen in the eyes of the disciples as they watched him go. Off in the distance, he sighed and swished his sleeve. "It's my fault," he said. "I should have kept a lower profile. Ai." Inwardly, he was feeling very pleased with himself, even excited. And yet, he maintained the melancholy, lonely look. He made a very bleak silhouette.... The disciples of the north bank were torn, and none of them were really sure what they were feeling. The Gongsun siblings, Xu Song and Beihan Lie didn't want to give up so easily, and yet, they felt powerless. They had worked hard to catch up to Bai Xiaochun, and even believed that they had surpassed him, only to find out that they had been left far behind. That feeling left them feeling very down. Xu Song sighed. "Perhaps, years from now, it will be him or Ghostfang... who reaches the Legacy Echelon!" The Gongsun siblings were thinking similar thoughts. The only one who reacted differently was Beihan Lie, who stood there trembling, his hands clenched into fists. He would not give up. Could not give up. The memory of the Chosen battles was like an invisible whip that constantly lashed at him. Even as he gritted his teeth, a hand came to rest on his shoulder. It was none other than his Elder Brother Beihan Feng, the number one Chosen of Sunset Peak. He had long since arrived on the scene, and one of the paper cranes Bai Xiaochun had abandoned belonged to him. After personally witnessing what Bai Xiaochun had accomplished over the past month or so, Beihan Feng knew very well that he himself... was not a match for Bai Xiaochun. And he was in the tenth level of Qi Condensation. Because of Bai Xiaochun's terrifying fleshly body power and indescribable speed, he knew that he would be crushed as easily as a dried twig. "Big bro...." Beihan Lie said. "Your latent talent exceeds mine," Beihan Feng said encouragingly. "Work hard at your cultivation. Temporary setbacks don't mean anything. Some members of the senior generation who are now in the Legacy Echelon were nobodies back when they were in Qi Condensation or Foundation Establishment. They worked for years to prepare themselves to become the ultimate Chosen of their generation." Although those words had been spoken to his Junior Brother, they were meant for himself. Beihan Lie stood there quietly for a long moment before nodding. "In the future, don't provoke Bai Xiaochun," Beihan Feng said softly. "It doesn't matter how vile he was in the past, as of this moment, he has earned the respect of the north bank. Furthermore, you could learn a bit from how he does things. He knows what to say and how to say it. Knows when to advance and when to retreat. Doesn't get caught up in his imagination. Doesn't get entranced by wealth. Stays focused and perseveres. This guy... is terrifying." Beihan Feng wasn't the only one who harbored such thoughts. Of the more than two thousand Inner Sect disciples Bai Xiaochun had defeated, most were thinking the same thing. Sometimes, Bai Xiaochun was a smooth operator. The north bank had taken the initiative to challenge him to fight, but he hadn't pushed things too far. It was a decision he had made for the benefit of the north bank, and the more than two thousand disciples he hadn't beaten, to leave them some face. Continuing to accept the fight challenges would have been meaningless. Furthermore, he had already accumulated a terrifying number of merit points. For now, the best thing was to simply let matters drop, and allow the remaining challenges to expire half a year later. Not only would that give some face to the north bank, it would reduce a bit of the hostility the disciples there felt towards him. No one said a word. The north bank disciples stood there quietly, and many of them understood what was happening. Even more of them sighed inwardly as respect for Bai Xiaochun bloomed in their hearts. The four peak lords hovered there, looking down with serious expressions. "This Bai Xiaochun is actually far more powerful than he was during the Chosen battles...." "Young Ghostfang has been in secluded meditation this whole time in preparation for Foundation Establishment. Of the two of them, I wonder who is stronger. Years from now, perhaps one of them will enter the Legacy Echelon and become one of the Spirit

Stream Sect's most powerful resources." "It's a very, very difficult thing to enter the Legacy Echelon. The only way to do it is to reach the Gold Core level within two sixty-year cycles. If you exceed two sixty-year cycles, then even reaching Gold Core will only make you a prime elder. Both Ghostfang and Bai Xiaochun have a long road ahead of them.... If one of them really does manage to reach the Legacy Echelon and surpass us peak lords, they may be able to enter the location where the most profound of the Spirit Stream Sect's reserve powers are located, the Spirit Stream Pocket Realm. Not only are the legacy magics of the prime elders located there, if one is lucky, it's even possible to meet... Patriarch Spirit Stream!!" "To date, only about twenty Legacy Echelon members have entered the Spirit Stream Pocket Realm.... They are the true indestructible legacy seeds of the Spirit Stream Sect. Each of them... provide the true power and support for the Spirit Stream Sect.... None of us have any chance of being anything other than peak lords who protect the mountains. Only Li Qinghou... has a real chance!" The four peak lords exchanged glances and sighed as they recalled Bai Xiaochun's relationship with Li Qinghou. Eventually, the crowds dispersed. In the following days, the north bank quieted down and returned to normal. It was the same in the both the Outer and Inner Sects. The fear that had been instilled into the hearts of the disciples manifested in the form of diligent cultivation. Perhaps they no longer viewed Bai Xiaochun as a true enemy, but they most certainly viewed him as an opponent to surpass. The explosive increase in cultivation activity left the four north bank peak lords very pleased. Time passed. Half a year. Bai Xiaochun remained within the Beast Conservatory, the same as ever. Every day, he cultivated the Dragon Mammoth Sea-Forming Scripture and worked with the Waterswamp Kingdom. He also spent time carefully observing all of the beasts in the Beast Conservatory. He worked hard to care for all of the animals, both the docile ones and the violent ones. As a result, the beasts continued to grow more fond of him. Plus, the more time he spent exploring the jungle, the more familiar he grew with it. That was especially true of one location deep in the jungle, where a pitch-black cave existed. Boundless streams of black mist roiled out of that cave, which was a famous place on the north bank. The Ancient Beast Chasm. Supposedly, that cave led straight down to the Nine Serenities Underworld, and was also connected to an arcane pocket realm. Countless vicious beasts lived in the cave, sealed in place by patriarchs of the Spirit Stream Sect countless years ago. They were now a reserve force for the sect, and one of the main reasons why the north bank disciples cultivated their shamanic beast control arts. However, the arcane pocket realm had a very mysterious origin. Throughout the 10,000 year history of the Spirit Stream Sect, only one small portion of it had been explored. Every few hundred years, the power of the seals would need to be strengthened, which required a significant cost to be paid by the sect. Even still, the vast resources within the arcane pocket realm ensured that it was one of the most important places on the north bank. In addition to all that, the Ancient Beast Chasm was also the abode of the Spirit Stream Sect's holy beast guardian, the Heavenhorn ink dragon. In fact, it was even part of the seal itself. The Spirit Stream Sect's most powerful offensive weapon, the Heavenhorn Sword, which had received a tenfold spirit enhancement, had been forged from the shed horn of that very dragon. The Heavenhorn ink dragon's cultivation base was so terrifying that even Zheng Yuandong had no choice but to call it Senior. Back when the Spirit Stream Sect fought its way from the delta into the Lower Reaches, the Heavenhorn ink dragon had been a follower of Patriarch Spirit Stream, and its contributions to the sect could not be understated. One day, Bai Xiaochun stood at the edge of the waterfall that led down into the Ancient Beast Chasm. He had visited the location a few times, and had read about the history of the place, and the Heavenhorn ink dragon. Just like he always did, he tossed one of his medicinal pills down the waterfall, then cleared his throat. "Senior Heavenhorn," he called out, "It's me again, Bai Xiaochun of the Junior generation. I just want to use the earthflame here. Uh... the price is the same as usual, right? I'll pay with a medicinal pill like I usually do." Not waiting for a response, he hurried over to a cave he'd opened up a short distance away. After becoming familiar with the Beast Conservatory jungle, he'd almost immediately noticed the traces of a vein of earthflame in the area. This small cave he'd excavated connected to that vein, and had become his pill-concocting workstation on the north bank. All of the pills he made for the beasts were concocted here. However, after reading about the history of this place in the jade slip, he decided to play it safe. Therefore, every time he came to use it, he would toss some spirit medicine down the waterfall, which he viewed as paying the rent in a way. Although he never got a response when he tossed the medicine down, verbally or otherwise, he'd gotten used to the practice,

and therefore continued to do it. A month later, Bai Xiaochun emerged from the little cave, eyes glittering brightly, his expression one of excitement. His concocting had gone very smoothly. By now, his results with tier-3 spirit medicine were superb, to say the least. Furthermore, his cultivation base was no longer creeping along slowly. Instead, it had rocketed up to the great circle of the ninth level of Qi Condensation. "Hahaha! It won't be long now before I can step into the tenth level of Qi Condensation. Then I can get ready for Foundation Establishment!" During the past half year, his Undying Silver Skin had also become even more refined. Certain that his cultivation base was now even more extraordinary than before, he decided to test out his Violet Qi Cauldron Summoning. To his delight, several cauldrons appeared. By now, he was extremely adept at unleashing and recalling the divine ability. In his delight, he thought back to a certain magical technique he had used long ago, a magic that, technically, he had created. "Human Controlling Grand Magic!" Back in his fight with the Luo Chen Clan, he had unwittingly used the magic on Chen Heng, and it had left a deep impression on him. Over the years, his desire to perfect it had only grown. He had no cultivators to practice it on, but there were plenty of beasts in the Beast Conservatory. After a bit more thought, his excitement grew as he ran out to find some beasts to test out his Human Controlling Grand Magic on. During the following days, the jungle was quite a chaotic place. Bai Xiaochun soon found that his Human Controlling Grand Magic didn't work on anything with a very large frame, or a high cultivation base. However, when it came to small beasts with cultivation bases in the fifth level of Qi Condensation or lower, he did have some limited success. Feeling a bit depressed, but not willing to admit defeat, he thought more about his Human Controlling Grand Magic. Eventually, he came to the conclusion that this technique of using spiritual power to control an opponent's body and mind... was missing something. If he could just find what it was missing... he could make it work! Even as Bai Xiaochun worked with his Human Controlling Grand Magic, deep in the Ancient Beast Chasm was a blue eye that had opened at some point recently. It was staring out of the Ancient Beast Chasm at Bai Xiaochun, and a strange gleam could be seen deep within. Suddenly, a profoundly ancient voice murmured, "Human Controlling.... Years ago, Eccentric Frigidsect had the same idea."