

“Hahaha! Elder Sister Zhou did it! Didn't I say she would get another unprecedented first place spot!?”

“She definitely deserves to have that plants and vegetation spirit meridian. Her options for the future are endless!” “Elder Sister Zhou, we'll be waiting for you to set another record. When you get first place in all ten, the Great Spirit Stream Bell will toll to notify the whole sect!” All of the surrounding Outer Sect disciples were cheering. Although there were a few disgruntled faces to be seen, and a few sharply spoken words, they were drowned out by the overwhelming applause. Zhou Xinqi's position among the disciples here was like the sun within the sky. In fact, she was well regarded by virtually everyone on Fragrant Cloud Peak. Although she was normally quite cold, the applause of the surrounding disciples couldn't help but make her feel a bit pleased with herself, and she smiled slightly. That smile caused the cheering to grow even louder. Bai Xiaochun stood there in the crowd, feeling quite envious of her. Muttering to himself, he looked back at the first stone stele and suddenly, his eyes went wide. Then he looked back down at the jade slip with the first volume of plants and vegetation, and after closer scrutiny, he realized that in addition to the original 10,000 types of plants and vegetation, another 10,000 had been added. His heart suddenly swelled with joy. He then turned his head to look at the first stone stele, and saw that right above the magic bottle insignia was the image of a turtle. Suddenly, he felt wonderful. He had originally planned to leave immediately. But now, filled with excitement, he waited to hear the audience begin to applaud his accomplishment. However, it quickly became apparent that everyone was only paying attention to Zhou Xinqi, and hadn't even noticed what had just occurred. In fact, even Zhou Xinqi was preparing to depart. Bai Xiaochun immediately started getting nervous. Blinking, he suddenly called out in his most astonished voice: “Look! Elder Sister Zhou isn't in first place on the first stone stele anymore! Somebody else took her place! Weird! Now there's a really cool-looking turtle there. I wonder who drew that?” His voice pierced through the cheering, and as people heard the shocking nature of his words, they started to turn around to look at the stone stele. Soon, faces fell, and cries of alarm rang out. That in turn caused more people to spin around in shock. Expressions of disbelief could be seen as more and more people began to stare at the text on the first stone stele. “Th-th... somebody actually passed up Elder Sister Zhou on the first stone stele!” “That's impossible! Heavens! Somebody surpassed Elder Sister Zhou, and with that ugly-looking turtle. Who could it be?” “There's actually somebody who can pose a challenge to Elder Sister Zhou in terms of skill with plants and vegetation? This is ground-breaking!! Elder Sister Zhou just took first place on the ninth stone stele, but she still only has a total of eight first place positions!” Everyone was in an uproar, and the sounds of discussion filled the air. Moments ago, everyone had been cheering Zhou Xinqi, and could not possibly have been prepared for something unexpected like this to happen. Bai Xiaochun stood there in the crowd, so pleased with himself that he almost started laughing. However, he knew that doing so wouldn't be very appropriate, so he held himself back. Instead, he cried out in shock like everyone else around him. Actually, he had never had even the slightest clue that he could actually take first place. It was at this point that Zhou Xinqi, who had just been on the verge of leaving, suddenly trembled where she stood. After hearing the cries echoing out around her, her phoenix-like eyes turned to look at the first stone stele, and she saw the turtle in the first place spot. At first she frowned, but then her expression calmed. In fact, she wasn't even shocked at all. As far as she was concerned, when she had taken first place in the test of the first volume of plants and vegetation, it had been just after she was promoted into the Outer Sect. Back then, she hadn't tried as hard as she could have when she took the test, and that was not to mention the advancement she had made since then. “Not bad,” she said coolly. “It looks like there might be a new rising star in the sect.” With that, her body flickered as she shot toward the first stone stele. In her mind, this was a simple matter. The moment someone exceeded her, she would take back what was hers. Her movement immediately caused a ripple of excitement to run through the crowd of disciples. All of them stared in anticipation as Zhou Xinqi walked into the log cabin to take the test for the first volume of plants and vegetation. “Elder Sister Zhou is going to take back the first place spot which rightfully belongs to her! Whichever Junior Brother drew

that turtle seems pretty good. What a pity that he'll only be able to stay in first place for the time it takes an incense stick to burn." "Well, that's how it should be. He's definitely Chosen when it comes to plants and vegetation. He's just unlucky to have encountered Elder Sister Zhou." After hearing what everyone was saying, Bai Xiaochun started feeling nervous. Not only had he run out of time, but Zhou Xinqi was simply too famous. Even he himself was starting to think that maybe he belonged in second place. "Ah, that's fine too," he consoled himself. "If I get in second place, then second place it is. Men shouldn't be fighting women anyway!" He wanted to leave, but couldn't quite make himself do so. He couldn't stop wondering about whether or not he would lose out on what he had just won. Soon, enough time had passed for an incense stick to burn, and the name list hadn't changed. Bai Xiaochun was still in first place, and Zhou Xinqi was now walking out from inside the log cabin. Her expression was calm, and she was completely confident, having used eighty percent of her skill to piece together 4,000 of the total of 10,000 medicinal plants. From her perspective, she had already outclassed all the other naturally gifted disciples. However, as soon as she walked out, she realized that not a sound could be heard. In fact, all eyes were staring at her with strange expressions. There were even looks of shock. She looked around blankly, then turned to inspect the stone stele. It was at this point that she realized that the magic bottle which represented her name was still beneath the ugly turtle. Everything was dead quiet, and all the surrounding disciples, even Bai Xiaochun, were staring with gaping jaws. Bai Xiaochun then looked over at Zhou Xinqi and realized that, other than being quite good-looking... maybe she wasn't that special after all. Zhou Xinqi's eyes narrowed briefly, and then her expression returned to normal. "This person really has some talent with plants and vegetation. Now I'm a bit curious to find out who he is." Her body flickered and she once again entered the log cabin. This time, Bai Xiaochun didn't even think about leaving. He stood there in the crowd, holding his breath in anticipation. The surrounding Outer Sect disciples were no longer discussing the matter in loud voices. Instead, they were whispering in hushed tones, watching the unprecedented scene playing out in front of them. Furthermore, many of them were glancing up at the turtle mark, which now seemed utterly mysterious to them. After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, Zhou Xinqi emerged once again, and that enigmatic sensation increased. The turtle... was still on top! Bai Xiaochun's eyes went wide, and then he cried out in a loud voice to incite the other disciples: "Heavens, who is this person!?!?" Finally, the crowd, which had been silent up until now, exploded with conversation. "Elder Sister Zhou tried twice and yet didn't surpass the turtle! How could this be happening? How many medicinal plants did that person complete!?" "Did anybody see which Elder Brother it was that just took the test?" Zhou Xinqi stood beneath the stone stele, frowning. Just now, she had used all the skill she possessed to piece together 6,000 plants. She could never have imagined that she would still be stuck in second place. Her eyes narrowed, and she gave a cold harrumph as she spun and walked back into the log cabin, a very serious look in her eyes. After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, she emerged again, her expression grave. She turned yet again and went back in, and the same amount of time passed before she emerged, face pale. Expression staunch, she once again entered. Once. Twice. Three times. Four times.... The surrounding cultivators were panting as they watched Zhou Xinqi try over and over again. However, the end result was that everyone lapsed into complete silence. The scene playing out in front of them was terrifying. They could never have possibly imagined that whoever owned the turtle insignia could have pieced together so many medicinal plants, and so thoroughly surpassed Zhou Xinqi. As of that moment, everyone was completely thunderstruck by the turtle. That was especially true of Zhou Xinqi, who once again emerged, her beautiful eyes shot with blood. Everyone in the audience gasped. Bai Xiaochun couldn't help but clear his throat. Right now, he couldn't just blurt out that he was the person in first place. However, the desire to do that very thing itched in his heart like a restless cat. Actually, it was a wonderful feeling. "Now's not the time," he thought. "I'll find an opportunity in the future to make a big scene in front of everybody. I'll make sure everyone knows that the person who holds the first place spot on the first stone stele is none other than me, Bai Xiaochun!" Looking up, he realized that it was getting dark, and yawned, looking like the picture of a lonely hero. "With the snap of a finger, I, Bai Xiaochun, reduced Zhou Xinqi to nothing more than ash...." With that, he flicked his sleeve and turned, walking away through the crowd. As he departed, Zhou Xinqi gritted her teeth, and stubbornly entered the log cabin to once again take the test for the first volume of plants and vegetation.... Eventually, the moon hung high in the sky, and Zhou Xinqi stood there, completely exhausted as she stared up at the

turtle. She could never have predicted that a day like this would come, that something like this would happen. The crowds departed, and word of the turtle became the talk of Fragrant Cloud Peak. One would think that the matter was over, but the next day, as the sun shone down onto the 10,000 Medicines Pavilion, the disciples were shocked to see Zhou Xinqi return and once again go into the first stone stele's log cabin. Yet again, she failed, over and over. One day, two days, three days.... For a full three days, she never gave up. Soon, the gossip about the turtle disciple had reached a fever pitch in Fragrant Cloud Peak. There was not a single person who hadn't heard about the matter, and even the Inner Sect disciples were talking about it. Seven days later, Zhou Xinqi stood beneath the stone stele, staring up listlessly at the turtle. She had tried over and over again during the past seven days. She had held nothing back, and had even pushed herself to the point of piecing together 7,000 plants. However, she still couldn't surpass that mysterious disciple. "Just who are you?!" she murmured. Finally, she took a deep breath, gritted her teeth, and turned to leave. She would no longer attempt to compete over the first stele. However, the image of that turtle was now burned deeply into her psyche.