

Bai Xiaochun stuck his head out and saw that there outside of the spell formation shield was the big black dog. It stood there proudly, paw on the back of the vigilant black cat. The blue-eyed cat seemed very listless and in somewhat sore straits.

The black dog looked at Bai Xiaochun and then let out a proud howl. Bai Xiaochun immediately opened the spell formation, whereupon the dog charged in and leapt toward the Beastbirth Flower. Bai Xiaochun was completely taken aback, and mused that whatever illusion the black dog experienced must be extraordinary. "Is it really trying to kill itself?" he thought. With that he approached the blue-eyed cat. After a quick examination, he confirmed that it was only exhausted, and not injured in any way. Grabbing it, he walked back into the courtyard. Sometime later.... After ten contributions to the Beastbirth Flower, Bai Xiaochun finally kicked the black dog out. He was actually starting to get worried that the dog's frequent contributions of life essence ancestral awakening blood might interfere with his plan to create the most powerful of all battle beasts. What would happen if the Beastbirth Flower ended up giving birth to... a big black dog? The mere idea left him quite nervous, so he decided to accept no further contributions from the black dog. Without any further hesitation, he tossed the blue-eyed cat into the Beastbirth Flower. During the following half month, the black dog acted quite obediently. It would often come with a subdued battle beast, cry out until Bai Xiaochun opened the door, then wait eagerly to be allowed in. Bai Xiaochun wanted to refuse, but every battle beast that the dog brought left him shocked. "This dog is a god! All of these beasts are ones I had my eye on, but couldn't get. Their masters either keep them in their bags of beast raising, or in their immortal's caves." Bai Xiaochun just couldn't bring himself to refuse. The black dog had captured his heart, and every battle beast it brought left Bai Xiaochun shaken. In fact, one time it even managed to bring the battle beast of one of the Sunset Peak elders. Eventually, Bai Xiaochun realized the implications, and it left him with only a single question. "Dammit, how long was this black dog stalking me...?" Sighing, he looked over at the dog lying quietly next to the Beastbirth Flower, and realized that it really was intelligent, powerful, and very fast. Were it not those things, it would have been impossible to get all of these battle beasts. "Fine, fine. Poor guy. Considering how much I tired it out before, and how it always brings me these battle beasts, I guess letting it contribute a few more times wouldn't hurt. I can't let things go too far, though. For its own good." With that, he shook his head and turned his attention to the four mountain peaks. "I need some even more powerful battle beasts.... The spirit beast guardians of the four mountain peaks are probably the best choice." Licking his lips, he left the honor guard station and headed toward his cave by the Ancient Beast Chasm to concoct some pills. By this point, many of the north bank disciples were starting to get suspicious. Many battle beasts were starting to behave very oddly, sometimes crying out in the middle of the night. That was especially true of the black, blue-eyed cat, whose cries seemed especially loud. Sometimes, it appeared to be reminiscing about the past, dreaming of being the king of all beasts. It started to sound even more domineering when it yowled, to the point where people in the area couldn't sleep well. Its master was the most anxious of all, unsure of what exactly was happening with her own battle beast.... Such situations grew increasingly common throughout the sect.... Gradually, the north bank disciples began to run their own investigations into the matter.... A few days later, Bai Xiaochun emerged from his medicine concocting cave, loaded down with medicinal pills designed to attract wild beasts. When night fell, he hurried out toward Irispetal Peak. After reaching the summit, he looked anxiously at the cave, and then, eager to find out if his idea would work, threw a tier-3 spirit medicine inside. Almost as soon as the medicinal pill entered the cave, it shot back out at high speed, slamming into his chest with such force that, without his incredibly tough skin, it would have crushed him. His face fell as he staggered backward a few paces. At the same time, the seven-colored

phoenix stretched its head out of the cave and looked at him with a derisive sneer. Of course, it was sneering, not at Bai Xiaochun himself, but at his action of throwing the medicinal pill. Apparently, it was telling him that it didn't consume medicinal pills given to it by strangers. Bai Xiaochun's eyes went wide, and he coughed dryly. Trying to look as charming as possible, he said, "Senior phoenix, that medicinal pill is really delicious.... If you don't like it, that's fine. But if you just come with me, I'll show you a place where all your dreams can come true." However, the phoenix merely flapped its wings, shoving Bai Xiaochun back so far he almost toppled off the nearby cliff. Heart pounding, he just managed to avoid falling. The seven-colored phoenix glared at him threateningly, then slowly retreated back into its cave. "Fine, fine. This seven-colored phoenix is too grouchy. I'll head over to Sunset Peak to see the three-eyed raven. It has a much better temper." Feeling a headache coming on, he made up his mind, and immediately headed over to Sunset Peak, where he attempted to use the same tactics at the three-eyed raven's cave. However, after enough time passed for half an incense stick to burn, Bai Xiaochun's scalp tingled in fear as he took to flight. A black flash of light could be seen behind him as the three-eyed raven gave chase, driving him all the way down the mountain before proudly returning to its cave. "I hate birds! Hmph! They have such bad tempers. And Elder Zhou's bird even maligned me openly that one time!" He felt deeply wronged at how the birds had bullied him despite the fact that he had given them medicinal pills in good faith. However, he couldn't give up on his dream of raising the ultimate battle beast. Therefore, he turned his gaze toward Archway Peak. "That big lizard seems pretty well-behaved. It's pretty fat too, so that means it probably has a good appetite.... Maybe I'll have a chance there." Enlivened, he hurried over to Archway Peak. However, it didn't take long before he returned, scowling. He even had some rips and tears in his garments. The lizard had completely ignored him when he threw it some medicinal pills. After getting anxious, he'd tossed in a few more, whereupon the lizard slashed at him with its claws. He was forced to flee in terror, uninjured, but his clothing destroyed, leaving him looking very dilapidated. The final spirit beast guardian was the mountain ghost of Ghostfang Peak. Bai Xiaochun hesitated all the way until the following night. Finally, he stamped his foot angrily and hurried over to Ghostfang Peak. What he found was that the mountain ghost had the best temper of all. It ignored Bai Xiaochun as if he didn't even exist, and didn't pay the least bit of attention to the medicinal pills. After waiting half the night without any response, he left. The next night, he came back, and even a third night, before he finally gave up, virtually on the verge of tears. "All four spirit beast guardians hold me in complete contempt!" As he sat stewing in the honor guard station, the whole north bank was astir. The only exception were people who Bai Xiaochun was incapable of provoking, for example the people who kept their battle beasts inside their bags of beast raising. All the other valuable beasts had already made contributions. Even most of the elders' beasts had been brought over by the black dog. However, Bai Xiaochun met with only failure when it came to the spirit beast guardians, leaving him scowling in grief. That was especially true considering that the Beastbirth Flower was on the verge of blooming. "I want my battle beast to be unprecedentedly powerful, but the four spirit beast guardians refuse to cooperate. I guess I need a battle beast even more powerful than them. What in the sect is more powerful than... wait a second." Even as he murmured to himself about the subject, he suddenly shivered and looked toward the Ancient Beast Chasm, his eyes shining. "The only thing more powerful than the spirit beast guardians... is the sect's holy beast guardian! "The Heavenhorn ink dragon.... If I could get that dragon to contribute, it would definitely be enough!!" Panting excitedly, he began to gather his thoughts. "Now that I think about it, I'm on good terms with the holy beast guardian. I've been giving it medicinal pills ever since I got here.... Although I've never seen the old Heavenhorn ink dragon, it never stopped me from concocting medicine nearby. That means... it actually approves of me!" The more he thought about it, the more sense it made. Getting even more excited, he organized his bag of holding, took a deep breath, and flicked his sleeve, heading in the direction of the Ancient Beast Chasm. He sped along in high spirits, ready to take a risk for his dream of raising the ultimate battle beast. Soon, he was standing at the edge of the waterfall which poured down into the Ancient Beast Chasm. Down below, it was impenetrably dark, with swirling black mists everywhere. As he stood at the edge, his arms and legs prickled with coldness that seemed to come from the depths of the chasm itself. He shivered a bit. Fearful that he might fall, he backed up a few steps, then gritted its teeth and threw a medicinal pill down inside. "Senior Heavenhorn, it's me, Bai Xiaochun of the Junior generation. Remember me? I've been giving

you medicinal pills for years now. Well, um, why don't you try this new flavor I came up with?" After waiting for a while and getting no response, he started wondering if perhaps the Heavenshorn ink dragon might like a different flavor. Finally, he threw in a different tier-3 spirit medicine. It didn't take long before he'd thrown seven or eight pills in. Starting to feel a bit dismayed, he finally threw in a bunch of Aphrodisiac Pills. However, there was no reaction. "Perhaps the heavens have doomed Bai Xiaochun to fail in raising the ultimate battle beast...." Sighing dejectedly, he was about to turn and leave when, all of a sudden, the mist inside the cave churned, and a profoundly ancient voice spoke out from within. "It's not worth trying, kiddo.... I appreciate your kindness, but my fate was sealed three thousand years ago..... However, if you can find a way to get my life essence surging again, even for a moment, then I can do anything you want me to!" Bai Xiaochun's eyes went wide. Panting, he turned back around and said, "Really?"