

Before, he had felt something strange when looking at the statue, something that seemed to make him wish to fight. However, there was something deeper to it than that, something that he couldn't quite put his finger on.

Now, perhaps because of having observed the four spirit beast guardians, or perhaps because of his nearness to a life essence spirit breakthrough, he suddenly found himself observing, not the battle beast as a whole, but rather, its scales! They seemed like nothing more than scales on a statue, but as soon as he focused on them, it felt as if the Waterswamp Kingdom life essence spirit inside of him were suddenly writhing with increased power. At the same time, he could almost hear something primeval and ancient roaring in his ears. He was wondering if it was an illusion or not, and was just about to focus further, when the sensation vanished. At the same time, the life essence spirit inside of him suddenly went still. Taking a deep breath, he walked up to the statue and sat down cross-legged in front of it. Then he looked up, certain that the feeling he had just experienced was no illusion. "This statue... is very, very odd!" With that, he focused on looking, not at the statue as a whole, but at the countless individual scales. Although they seemed like nothing more than simple scales, Bai Xiaochun had only just now realized that they were very, very difficult to commit to memory. He could see them there right in front of him, but simply could not memorize their shape and image. That did not serve to discourage him, though; it caused him to grow more focused. Eyes flashing, he looked more closely at the scales. Time flew by, and soon it was evening. Considering that the trial platform was a central location on the north bank, disciples would often pass by, and soon people noticed Bai Xiaochun sitting there staring at the statue. Although it was a peculiar sight, nobody really stopped to pay him much attention. The next morning at dawn, the disciples who had seen Bai Xiaochun there the day before once again noticed him as they went past the trial platform. Apparently he hadn't moved the entire night, but had remained sitting there staring with bloodshot eyes at the statue in front of him. The astonishment of the north bank disciples grew. Bai Xiaochun was now certain that he could only make his breakthrough by means of this statue. He had already done everything else possible with regards to the life essence spirit. He had observed everything in the Beast Conservatory, as well as the four spirit beast guardians. He had even secretly observed many of the ordinary battle beasts of the north bank disciples. The life essence spirit of the Waterswamp Kingdom still had not appeared, and if he had not received any indication that it would, he might have decided to stop wasting his time with it. But he could sense that the life essence spirit was on the verge of coming to life; he just didn't know how to make it happen. So close, yet so far! That uneasy sensation was something he couldn't accept easily. Therefore, he was grasping hard to this opportunity, and his persevering personality was in full effect. He sat there with the same focus he called upon when he concocted medicine. It didn't matter that night came and went, or that his eyes were bloodshot. It didn't matter if a second day began to pass. Bai Xiaochun didn't stop. In fact, he even had the feeling that if he gave up at this moment, his Waterswamp Kingdom... might never be able to give birth to a life essence spirit. The opportunity he had now must be seized, and the life essence spirit had to break out of its cocoon! "I refuse to believe that I'll fail!" he thought, grinding his teeth. With that, he continued to observe the scales and try to commit their shape and image to memory. Without even thinking about it, he sealed himself off from the world. He abandoned all of his other senses and focused completely on his sight. Days began to pass. On the fourth day at dawn, the north bank disciples were more surprised than ever by his presence, and soon word began to spread. "Bai Xiaochun has been sitting by the trial platform statue for four days now.... What is he doing? Observing the statue?" "That trial platform statue is pretty strange. I've heard of people observing it in the past, hoping to gain something from it. However, to this day, nobody has

ever succeeded except for Eldest Brother Ghostfang!" As word spread further and further, the north bank Inner Sect disciples began to pay closer attention. People even began to gather nearby to watch Bai Xiaochun. His completely bedeviled state caused many people to gasp. "So, he's only trying to observe it and commit it to memory, not gain full enlightenment. Well, it's like I said. The trial platform statue has some profound secrets buried deep inside. Not just anybody can gain enlightenment of it." "I've read some ancient records that said the statue was pulled out of the Ancient Beast Chasm four thousand years ago. It's hard to say whether or not some members of the Senior generation ever gained enlightenment, but as for ordinary disciples.... before Ghostfang, nobody has ever succeeded." "I tried once, believe it or not. In the end, I had no choice but to give up. I never felt a single thing. Only people like Ghostfang can reach that legendary state of deep enlightenment via observation. Some people have lasted for ten days, or even fifteen. The limit is twenty, though. After that, people simply pass out." When Beihan Lie, the Gongsun siblings, Xu Song, and other Inner Sect Chosen realized that Bai Xiaochun was simply observing the statue, they breathed sighs of relief. As for the four peak lords, when they saw him beneath the statue, their eyes shone with anticipation. "I wonder if Bai Xiaochun will be like Ghostfang, and actually benefit from the statue." "It requires the right circumstances, the right personality, and the right amount of hard work. This kind of observation is like looking at a canvas randomly splashed with paint. Some people see nothing but chaos, but others see order. Some people see another image beneath the splash of paint. And some people, a vast minority, might be able to see... something completely different from everyone else." Bai Xiaochun truly was just observing, and not seeking deep enlightenment. His eyes were bloodshot as he stared at the scales, which seemed to grow larger and larger until they replaced the world around him. He saw a heaven and earth filled with floating objects that he couldn't quite see. It was like a blurry illusion, impossible to make out clearly. However, Bai Xiaochun didn't care. The only thing he wanted to do was memorize the shape and image of the scales. He wasn't even sure how many attempts he had made. A thousand? Ten thousand? Maybe more? He was completely and utterly absorbed in the process, despite the fact that he was failing over and over again. Time passed. Five days. Six days. Seven days.... Soon, ten days had gone by. His observation of the statue was drawing on his vital energy, and his body was beginning to suffer, but he persisted. On the nineteenth day, Beihan Lie and the other Chosen were completely convinced that Bai Xiaochun would only last for another day. After his vital energy grew weak enough, he would lapse into unconsciousness. "It took fifteen days for Ghostfang to enter into a state of deep enlightenment, and he awoke from his trance after twenty-seven days. His later progress with Ghosts Haunt the Night had a lot to do with that session of enlightenment!" "Bai Xiaochun has already wasted nineteen days and hasn't reached deep enlightenment. Regardless of the level of his cultivation base, he can't match up to Ghostfang in this situation." "The statue is completely enigmatic and unfathomable. Lots of people have tested it out, and if you don't succeed the first time, it's only harder after that. Tomorrow, he'll pass out. After he wakes up and restores his vital energy, though, it will be too late." Beihan Lie and the other Chosen felt that way, and so did the four peak lords, all of whom were sighing regretfully. Gradually, Bai Xiaochun's nineteenth day observing the statue passed. The sun set, and then dawn broke upon the twentieth day. As sunlight filled the sky, virtually everyone assumed that Bai Xiaochun would lose consciousness. But then, looks of shock filled their eyes as the twentieth day ended and the twenty-first began. Bai Xiaochun didn't pass out. Although he was looking a bit gaunt, he still managed to hang on. Twenty-one days. Twenty-two days. Twenty-three days.... As time passed, astonishment grew. By the time the thirtieth day passed, the peak lords were completely astonished. "I can't believe how much vital energy Bai Xiaochun has!" "At the most, ordinary disciples would last for ten days. Body refinement disciples might last for fifteen. Chosen like Ghostfang could last for twenty days at the most. Without entering a state of deep enlightenment, one's vital energy will waste away, and they will lapse into unconsciousness. But Bai Xiaochun... has lasted for so long!" "But what's the point? Even if he lasts longer, if he doesn't reach deep enlightenment, it will all have been a waste." Beihan Lie and the others were completely shocked, and were finally starting to understand how powerful Bai Xiaochun's fleshly body was. And yet, they all sighed; without achieving deep enlightenment, simply lasting for a long time would do no good. Soon, another ten days had passed, and Bai Xiaochun was still completely immersed in his attempts to commit the scales to memory. It was impossible to say how many actual attempts he had made. Perhaps 50,000, perhaps 100,000. Every

single time was a failure. The fiftieth day passed, and then the sixtieth day. Countless disciples were profoundly shaken by what Bai Xiaochun was doing. They almost couldn't believe the deep reserves of vital energy he possessed. Never could they have imagined that he would hang on for so long. Without incredible fleshly body power, it would have been impossible. Eventually, the seventieth day arrived, and Bai Xiaochun trembled. He was clearly much thinner than before, and it appeared as if his vital energy and fleshly body were reaching their limits. The audience which had gathered noticed him shaking, and immediately began to comment. "He must be about to finish. Only a few more days now, and he'll pass out." "He never reached deep enlightenment. What a waste." Although most people in the audience felt that way, by the time the amber light of evening began to spread out.... Bai Xiaochun's eyes revealed... blankness. And then, a moment later, his eyes slowly closed! Upon closing his eyes, his mind was filled with the complete image of a scale... after countless failed attempts, he had finally succeeded! In the instant the scale appeared, a rumbling like that of thunder filled his mind, and he gasped. His aura winked out, seemingly leaving behind nothing except his body. He had finally slipped into... the legendary state of deep enlightenment! As of that moment, the eyes of the audience widened. This was such an unexpected development that most people almost couldn't believe it. Bai Xiaochun had entered deep enlightenment, not by a coincidence or destiny, but simply by hard work! This chance regarding the life essence spirit of the Waterswamp Kingdom also came with a measure of enlightenment. Furthermore, his display of hard work vastly exceeded that of anyone else! Although his powers of understanding might not be on par with Ghostfang's, he had worked for five times as long to do what Ghostfang did, and that was because of his fleshly body and his vital energy. Because of his cultivation of the Undying Live Forever Technique, his strength gave him incredible reserves of energy!