

## **Within the swirling mists of the chasm, two eyes appeared that constantly flickered with different colors. The most frequent to appear was magenta.**

Just those eyes were as large as Bai Xiaochun's entire body, leaving him panting at the thought of how large the entire Heavenhorn ink dragon was. When he looked closer, he could just barely make out a horn. After looking closely at the horn for a moment, he was convinced that it really was the Heavenhorn ink dragon speaking, and he started to get excited. After a moment of thought, he gritted his teeth. "Senior, fear not. I'll work very hard to do just that!" With that, Bai Xiaochun turned, his eyes shining with focus and hope. If he could simply get the Heavenhorn ink dragon to contribute a single time, then his hopes of raising the ultimate battle beast would surely be fulfilled. "Life essence exhausted. Wants it to surge. That will require some serious stimulation. When it comes to stimulation... what could possibly compare to the effectiveness of my Aphrodisiac Pill?" Eyes bloodshot, he flew out of the Beast Conservatory toward Mount Daoseed. Considering his status, and the vast amount of merit points he had saved up, he had no trouble procuring the medicinal plants he needed. By the time he was finished, he had spent more than half of his merit points. He bought so many ingredients that he couldn't even fit them into one bag of holding. It took seven bags, all of them stuffed to the brim. The disciple in charge of selling medicinal plants stared in shock. In all the years he had been in charge, he had never seen anyone spend merit points in such shocking fashion. Naturally, the disciple recognized him. After he left, that disciple took a deep breath and mused about how god-like Bai Xiaochun was. After purchasing such a huge collection of medicinal plants, he returned to the vicinity of the Ancient Beast Chasm to begin concocting medicine. Soon his eyes were bloodshot, and he was in a state of frenzy. "I have to concoct... a Super Aphrodisiac Pill!" he said through gritted teeth. Determined to drastically increase the medicinal efficacy, he adjusted the pill formula to raise the potency by hundreds if not thousands of times. Seven days flew by. Bai Xiaochun didn't rest at all, and soon, his hair was in complete disarray. He was completely immersed in his concocting. Occasionally the black dog would come with battle beasts, whereupon Bai Xiaochun would impatiently give it a jade slip so that it could temporarily open the spell formation. The dog was very intelligent, and would use the jade slip to take the battle beast back to the honor guard station and carefully carry out the mission assigned to it by Bai Xiaochun. Apparently it was worried that if it didn't carry things out properly, it would have no more chances to return in the future. Of course, without Bai Xiaochun there to supervise it, the dog didn't exercise much control over how many times it contributed.... Over time, the north bank disciples gradually went mad. Each battle beast that went missing would return with a strange expression on its face, somehow prideful, as if it were the king of the world. It would act manic, murderous, intoxicated, and seemed to constantly be thinking about the past. Furthermore, no matter how the masters of such beasts tried to pry information out of them, it did no good. More and more battle beasts exhibited such behavior. Some of the beasts had been strictly disciplined by their masters in the past, and would never have dreamed of acting out. But after disappearing and experiencing the illusory life of being the ruler of the world, they became uncontrollable.... The north bank was in chaos. "What's happening!?!?" "There's something fishy going on. We have to figure out what!!" Eventually, even the battle beasts belonging to the elders began to act similarly. Before long, all of the disciples on the north bank were investigating the situation. Three days later, Bai Xiaochun was completely immersed in his madness. It was with complete and utter fearlessness that he hurried over to the edge of the chasm and asked for a drop of blood from the Heavenhorn ink dragon. On any other occasion, Bai Xiaochun would never have done anything so dangerous, but considering the bedeviled state he was in, he completely suppressed any urge to consider the potential consequences. After a long moment of silence from within the chasm, Bai Xiaochun impatiently said that he didn't have time to waste. A moment later, a golden drop of blood flew out, which Bai Xiaochun quickly put into a bottle. Then, he hurried back into his cave to continue his concocting work. Five days later, he had been at work for half a month, with no rest. It was

at that point that the Super Aphrodisiac Pill finally appeared in the world. That evening, rumbling sounds echoed out as Bai Xiaochun stared at the head-sized medicinal pill, then threw his head back and laughed uproariously. Not only was the pill physically large, it was extremely heavy. As soon as it appeared in the pill furnace, a strong medicinal aroma spread out in all directions. As the aroma wafted out from the cave, the black dog, which had been carrying along a battle beast, suddenly got a whiff. A tremor ran through it, and its eyes turned bright red. Howling, it ran out of the Beast Conservatory to parts unknown.... At the same time, countless excited howls could be heard throughout the jungle of the Beast Conservatory. Seeing how effective the pill was already, Bai Xiaochun began to laugh even more loudly. He was trembling with excitement, but was still worried that the pill wasn't good enough. Hurrying off to a location where he could be certain of his privacy, he produced his wok and began to perform a spirit enhancement. After the threefold spirit enhancement was completed, his Super Aphrodisiac Pill had reached a level that was virtually unheard-of in the cultivation world. A superior-grade pill! "This pill will definitely work. If it doesn't, then Bai Xiaochun will give up on pill concocting!" Spirits soaring, and bursting with self-confidence, he carried the medicinal pill over to the waterfall entrance of the Ancient Beast Chasm. Without any hesitation, he threw the pill down. The pill disappeared soundlessly into the darkness. Bai Xiaochun stood there on the edge of the chasm, waiting. Time passed. After a full hour had gone by, he was starting to get nervous, despite his confidence. "No way! I increased the medicinal efficacy by over a thousand-fold!" Another hour passed, and Bai Xiaochun was starting to sweat anxiously. Suddenly, the mist in the chasm began to swirl, and a roar echoed out that could shake heaven and earth. As it blasted out from within the mist, accompanied by a gale force wind, Bai Xiaochun backed up a few paces. Then, an enormous column of swirling black mist rocketed up into the air, twisting and turning. At the same time, an exultant voice echoed out in all directions. "At long last... I can sense my life essence surging!!" Then, the column of mist began to collapse, and a huge clawed hand reached out from within the chasm. When it grabbed onto the mountain cliff off to the side, the ground quaked. The hand was pitch black and covered with scales the size of people. The claws were razor-sharp, and glowed faintly, radiating an energy that left one trembling. An enormous, mountain-like head then emerged from within the chasm, pitch black, with a shocking horn stretching out from its forehead. The mere appearance of that horn seemed to make everything in the area blurry. One might expect a dragon's eyes to be nine meters wide, but this dragon's eyes were even larger. It radiated a profoundly ancient aura, and its head was crisscrossed with scars of all types. One could only imagine the fierce battles the dragon had fought in the past. Although it was ancient, it still radiated incredible energy and power. When it threw its head back and roared, all of the beasts in the jungle prostrated themselves and remained on the ground, completely unmoving. Bai Xiaochun forced himself to swallow. This dragon was unimaginably large, and what was most frightening was that less than half of its body had emerged from the chasm. Bai Xiaochun's knees began to go weak, and his mind was spinning. It was about then that the huge dragon glanced down at Bai Xiaochun, and then lowered its head down to his level. Bai Xiaochun immediately felt incredible pressure weighing down on him. The head in front of him filled his field of vision, obscuring everything else. More anxious than ever, he blurted, "Senior Heavenhorn, it's me, Bai Xiaochun! Remember me? I concocted that medicinal pill. It took me half a month! I very nearly worked myself to death in the process." The Heavenhorn ink dragon looked at him for a moment, and then smiled. Of course, from Bai Xiaochun's perspective, that smile was hair-raisingly terrifying. Before he could say anything further, the gigantic dragon shrank down right there in front of him. Within the blink of an eye, it was a nine-meter-long black lizard. It actually looked very similar to the lizard from Archway Peak. The lizard landed in front of Bai Xiaochun, and as soon as its claws touched the ground, everything in the area distorted. When things grew clear again, Bai Xiaochun was shocked to find that they were back in the rear courtyard of the honor guard station. "Somehow you got your hands on a Beastbirth Seed," the dragon said. "I could sense it the moment you brought it here.... It pulls you into a hallucination, extract your life force, then uses it to condense ancestral awakening blood. With this seed, my bloodline can finally be passed on." The Heavenhorn ink dragon sighed. Completely ignoring Bai Xiaochun, it approached the Beastbirth Flower, which began to tremble, and then slowly opened. The Heavenhorn ink dragon didn't resist as the flower swallowed it up. In fact, it even seemed to have an expression of anticipation on its face. Bai Xiaochun waited nervously off to the side, watching the Beastbirth Flower,

wondering what sort of illusion the Heavenhorn ink dragon was experiencing. Unlike the other beasts, which were relatively quiet, this time, roars echoed out. Bai Xiaochun felt like he was about to cry. He suddenly had the feeling that maybe he'd pushed things too far, that maybe his Beastbirth Flower couldn't handle the terrifying Heavenhorn ink dragon. Praying nervously, he waited for four hours. Finally, the Heavenhorn ink dragon flew out, expression somber. After a moment, it flew right back into the flower. Time passed. For the following nine days, Bai Xiaochun watched in shock as the Heavenhorn ink dragon surpassed the black dog's accomplishments. It contributed more than fifty times before flying away. "Illusions are nice, but they're merely the past.... I like you, kiddo. If you ever need help with anything in the future, I'll do my best to accommodate, as long as it's not too outrageous." The voice of the sect's holy beast guardian rang like a huge bell as it expressed its appreciation toward Bai Xiaochun. Just as it was turning to leave, Bai Xiaochun hesitated for a moment. From his perspective, he had just provided a great service to the sect, and had done a very good deed. Face filled with anticipation, he said, "Senior Heavenhorn, do you think you could get the spirit beast guardians from the four mountain peaks of the north bank to come contribute a bit? Maybe even the beasts belonging to the peak lords...?" "Those runts? No problem!" The Heavenhorn ink dragon grinned and then took a deep breath. Bai Xiaochun sensed heaven and earth distorting for a moment, and then, the seven-colored phoenix, the three-eyed raven, the mountain ghost and the Archway Peak lizard all appeared in front of the Heavenhorn ink dragon. Also present were the battle beasts belonging to the peak lords. The instant they appeared, they began to tremble, their eyes shining with fear. Even the three-eyed raven and the seven-colored phoenix were shivering, and the mountain ghost knelt down on the ground. The Archway Peak lizard seemed even more frightened as it prostrated itself. The peak lords' beasts were the most terrified of all. Bai Xiaochun looked on ecstatically as all of these insufferably arrogant beasts obediently complied with the instructions given by the Heavenhorn ink dragon. One by one, they entered the Beastbirth Flower to offer contributions. The following morning, they left, looking somewhat dazed. The Heavenhorn ink dragon also departed, giving Bai Xiaochun a final look of praise. Bai Xiaochun threw his head back and laughed uproariously. By this point, the Beastbirth Flower was beginning to close in on itself. It was no longer emitting any aura or fragrance, and was clearly about to give birth to the battle beast inside, to Bai Xiaochun's delight and pride. Recently, he had heard about how the disciples of the north bank were investigating the situation regarding the battle beasts, and couldn't help but chuckle proudly. "Bai Xiaochun is about to have the ultimate battle beast. Hmph! You north bank disciples should be shaking in fear! I already thought of a name for him. Bruiser! [1] "Not only did you refuse to lend me your battle beasts, you even slandered my name! Just wait until you realize what happened. Once you figure out your beasts contributed their own life force essence at my behest, then I'll slip back to the south bank and you won't be able to do anything about it. Hahahahahahahahaha!" Sticking his chin up, he waved his sleeve and assumed the pose of a lonely hero, doing nothing to cover up the look of pride on his face. However, in that very moment of beauty, he suddenly felt as if someone were watching him. Shocked, he turned around and saw that there next to the honor guard station, a newcomer had arrived at some point. It was none other than... the miraculously stealthy, long-eared rabbit! After gaping in shock for a moment, he shrieked, "Y-y-you... you damned talking rabbit! What are you doing here!?!?" The rabbit gaped in shock and then shrieked, "Y-y-you... you damned talking rabbit! What are you doing here!?!?" With that, it turned tail and vanished in a blur, moving faster than the black dog ever could. 1. 1. In Chinese, the name Bai Xiaochun picks is supposed to sound tough, but comes across as funny and somewhat low class. It's the kind of name that will provoke a chuckle from Chinese readers, and I think this English version captures roughly the same feeling as the original.