

As he was escorted back to the Spirit Stream Sect, Bai Xiaochun maintained his silence. Occasionally he would look over his shoulder in the direction of the cave where Du Lingfei had gone missing.

Li Qinghou issued orders for the Spirit Stream Sect and the cultivator clans to search for Du Lingfei. However, not a single clue turned up. It was as if she had vanished into thin air. This strange turn of events was taken seriously even by the higher echelons of the Spirit Stream Sect's leadership. Because of the disappearance of Du Lingfei, Bai Xiaochun lost all excitement at having reached Heaven-Dao Foundation Establishment. The sect held a grand ceremony, and Bai Xiaochun's name gradually came to be known throughout the entire cultivation world of the eastern Lower Reaches. News spread about the fierce fighting over heavenstring energy in the Fallen Sword World, and soon, people were saying that Bai Xiaochun had surpassed Master Limitless. However, Bai Xiaochun didn't really care much about all of that. He received a hefty reward from the sect, and when the other disciples looked at him, their eyes shone with respect. Even the prime elders and the patriarchs gazed upon him with admiration. And yet, his heart was filled with disappointment. During the grand ceremony thrown by the sect, Bai Xiaochun revealed the corpses of the disciples who had lost their lives in the Fallen Sword World. Everything went quiet. The peak lords and the sect leader looked on sadly, as did the prime elders from Mount Daoseed. After the ceremony was over, many people realized that Bai Xiaochun seemed a lot quieter than before. It was as if he had forgotten about things such as glory and the pride. People would often see him alone on Fragrant Cloud Peak, looking lost. He was like a different person, and many of the disciples who were close to him felt horrible. Bruiser ran over from the north bank. Apparently he could sense Bai Xiaochun's dark mood, and simply sat next to him to keep him company. Big Fatty Zhang came a few times, but was never sure what to say, and simply sat there sighing. Hou Yunfei also visited to keep him silent company. Hou Xiaomei came to comfort him, as if to remind him that even though Du Lingfei was gone, she was still there. "Big bro Xiaochun, I won't go missing..." Xu Baocai came with lots of rumors. For instance, Gongsun Wan'er had gone missing, but her soul lamp hadn't burned out. Her brother Gongsun Yun had gone crazy looking for her, but hadn't been able to find her. Xu Baocai had talked to all of the disciples who came back from the three Foundation Establishment Holy Lands, and had compiled all of the information into a comprehensive report. He also had information about all of the Chosen from the other sects. "Sect Uncle Bai, you probably didn't hear that while you were in the Fallen Sword World, a Chosen unexpectedly rose up in the Primordial Spirit Hollow. He's an amazing disciple from the Pill Stream Sect! "His name is Lin Mu, and he turned out to be a real dark horse in the competition. That 'Mu' character in his name is the same character from the word 'tomb'! He actually mastered the Pill Stream Sect's most powerful grand magic, the Primeval Medicinal Daoseed Incantation! It was only later on that a lot of the Pill Stream Sect disciples realized that he had secretly planted Daoseeds in them. Eventually, he reached Earthstring Foundation Establishment with eight Tideflows! "In the Lone Hell Pocket Realm, another shocking Chosen rose up. Her name is second only to yours, Sect Uncle Bai. She's from the Blood Stream Sect, and wears a mask with a plum blossom on it. She completely stomped on everyone else in the Holy Land, and became the second person from the Blood Stream Sect after Master Limitless to reach the peak of Earthstring Foundation Establishment, nine Tideflows! She slaughtered countless other disciples. It was completely brutal. They call her Devilwitch Xuemei! [1. You may recall that Song Que from the Blood Stream Sect mentioned Xuemei in chapter 161. The name literally means "blood plum"] "Now that I think about it, it seems like there was something really strange going on in the Foundation Establishment Holy Lands. Dark horses popped up everywhere! Although, you were obviously the most shocking dark horse, Sect Uncle Bai, and the strongest of them all. You reached Heaven-Dao Foundation Establishment! "This time around, the Spirit Stream Sect really took the glory!

"Oh, by the way, before Ghostfang went into secluded meditation, he picked his legacy at the Ancestral Darktunnel, and twenty legacy shafts lit up! The entire sect was thrown into an uproar!" Thanks to Xu Baocai's detailed information, Bai Xiaochun gradually came to learn about everything that had happened in the Lone Hell Pocket Realm and the Arcane Spirit Hollow. Although none of the events in the other two Holy Lands were as brutal as the Fallen Sword World, there were still many deaths and casualties. In addition to the information about the other sects, Xu Baocai also told him about the other Spirit Stream Sect disciples from the other two Holy Lands. Zhou Xinqi, Lu Tianlei, Gongsun Yun, Xu Song, and several other disciples had all reached Earthstring Foundation Establishment. However, none of them had gotten more than six Tideflows. After returning, all of them were assigned to various positions in the sect, then went into secluded meditation to strive toward the Legacy Echelon. According to Xu Baocai, Ghostfang and Shangguan Tianyou had also chosen to go into secluded meditation. Furthermore, Beihan Lie had become even more famous and important in the sect. As for Hou Yunfei, he had been taken in as an apprentice by one of the prime elders. Everyone had acquired their own good fortune. As for the disciples from the north and south banks who had received help from Bai Xiaochun to reach Earthstring Foundation Establishment, none of them were taken as apprentices by prime elders. However, all of them were promoted, becoming elders who took the lead in administering sect affairs. The number of disciples who reached Earthstring Foundation Establishment from the Spirit Stream Sect vastly outnumbered those from the other sects, giving them much more power and influence within that stage of cultivation. As for Bai Xiaochun, because he had reached Heaven-Dao Foundation Establishment, he was named Legacy Echelon-designate. However, he didn't get much feeling from that. He was really having a hard time pulling himself out of his depression. Time passed. Half a month later, Sect Leader Zheng Yuandong walked over to the forlorn Bai Xiaochun's immortal's cave and sat down in front of him. "Xiaochun, when you were in the Fallen Sword Abyss, the founding patriarch issued a Dharmic decree. Fragrant Cloud Peak has been infiltrated by a spy!" Zheng Yuandong's words caused a tremor to run through Bai Xiaochun. The truth was that Bai Xiaochun was no fool; his mind was quick and sharp. During the half month that had passed, he had put a lot of thought into what had occurred during his time with Du Lingfei recently. Although nothing seemed out of the ordinary about her on the surface, how could Bai Xiaochun not have noticed the mixed emotions in her eyes? He also remembered that on the night she went missing, she had been the one to suggest resting, after which he had slept the whole night through. All of that told him that, most likely, Du Lingfei had left of her own volition. As for why she had left, he had the feeling there was some secret reason for it. In the end, he didn't want to think about the matter too much; he already had some guesses as to what was going on. Zheng Yuandong didn't go into any further detail about the spy. There were some things that simply needed to be mentioned to Bai Xiaochun. Talking about them too much might not be a good thing. He was fairly certain Bai Xiaochun understood the implication behind his words. After a long moment of silence, Zheng Yuandong changed the subject, and in doing so, unwittingly touched on something that had come to be a sensitive subject for Bai Xiaochun because of the events of recent weeks. "Bai Xiaochun, do you know why the Luo Chen Clan turned traitor?!" Because of what had occurred with Du Lingfei, and Bai Xiaochun's reluctance to ponder the matter, the events concerning the Luo Chen Clan had become a bit hazy. However, after hearing Zheng Yuandong's words, he looked up. Although he didn't want to think about Du Lingfei right now, the deadly events with the Luo Chen Clan were something that he would never be able to forget. Subconsciously, he reached down and rubbed the place on his arm where the jagged edge of his broken arm bone had poked out of the flesh. The wound had long since healed, but every time he touched that spot, he thought about how he'd stabbed Crown Prince Chen Heng in the neck with his own shattered bone. Originally, it had seemed that the Luo Chen Clan turned traitor because they wanted to break free from the control of the Spirit Stream Sect. They had even gone to the lengths of killing mortals to reverse the flow of their own blood for that very purpose. However, there were multiple layers to the events that had occurred. Without something deeper motivating them, they would never have done such a thing. After all, while the eastern Lower Reaches was a vast place, in some ways, it was a very small world. After betraying the Spirit Stream Sect, the Luo Chen Clan would have had a very difficult time surviving, even if they had successfully reversed their bloodlines. Bai Xiaochun had pondered the matter some in the past, but the sect had actively suppressed information about the incident, essentially sweeping the news under the

rug. However, Bai Xiaochun was an observant person, and had taken note of the frequency with which the sect dispatched Foundation Establishment cultivators to the outside. Clearly, something bigger was going on. Considering his previous speculations, the fact that Zheng Yuandong was bringing up the subject now was a bit of a shock. [1. It was hinted in chapter 64 that the sect was suppressing information about the Luo Chen Clan incident. The activity of the Foundation Establishment cultivators was also touched on] “You’re a Heaven-Dao Foundation Establishment cultivator now, and also the legacy echelon-designate. You are the pride and joy of the sect, and as such, you qualify to be privy to certain secrets that ordinary disciples are unaware of. I have four important questions to pose to you.” Zheng Yuandong’s solemn expression caused the atmosphere in the immortal’s cave to instantly turn serious. “First of all, are you aware of the nature of the world in which we live?” As he spoke the words, Zheng Yuandong’s eyes seemed to focus on something far in the distance, and even his voice quavered a bit. Bai Xiaochun shivered. He understood a bit about the world thanks to his own research into the sect’s ancient records. However, even those explanations weren’t very clear. “The world in which we live is huge,” Zheng Yuandong continued. “In the very middle of it, there exists a vast sea, which is golden in color, and is filled with enormous rolling waves. According to the legends, there is an island in the middle of that sea, which is the location of the passage that spans the gap between heaven and earth. “That is why the sea is called the Heavenspan Sea. Furthermore, the world we live in is called the Heavenspan Realm, or sometimes, the lands of Heavenspan! For years and years on end, countless almighty beings have sought to cross the sea and set foot onto that island. Unfortunately, no one has ever succeeded. “There are four mighty rivers which connect to the Heavenspan Sea. They stretch out to the east, west, south and north. It’s hard to say whether the rivers exist because of the sea, or vice versa. In any case, those four rivers are known as the eastern, northern, southern, and western Heavenspan Rivers. “The four great rivers that connect to the sea are known as the Upper Reaches. Each and every one of them eventually splits into four smaller branches which are known as the Middle Reaches. Further down the line, those branches also split into four smaller branches, which are known as the Lower Reaches. “Beyond that, the branches split up into even smaller branches, which are the delta regions. “The Heavenspan Sea and the various rivers are sort of like a tree. That is the nature of the world we live in.” Zheng Yuandong looked over at Bai Xiaochun, his eyes shining with sharp light. Bai Xiaochun took a deep breath. Zheng Yuandong’s words crashed in his mind like thunder. Slowly, his old understanding of the world shattered and dispersed, to be replaced by the new version which had just been described by Zheng Yuandong. “Second. Do you know why the four most powerful sects of the eastern Lower Reaches have the word ‘stream’ in their name? Spirit Stream Sect, Blood Stream Sect, Profound Stream Sect, Pill Stream Sect!” Zheng Yuandong smiled faintly as he thought back to the first time he had been told about the world. He had been just as shaken as Bai Xiaochun was right now.