

Two hours later, Bai Xiaochun was still fleeing, and simultaneously wallowing in self-pity. He already had his earthstring capture crystal, and all he needed was a chance to hole up somewhere and use it, but the little girl wouldn't stop chasing him.

When he thought back to the terror and danger he had just faced, his heart trembled. Around nightfall, he looked around and didn't see anyone in the area. Huffing and puffing, he finally found a cave in a mountain, where he sat down cross-legged. Looking around vigilantly, he was trying to decide if this really was the best place to make his attempt at Foundation Establishment, when suddenly the air in front of him began to ripple. It lasted only a moment, and almost didn't seem to be something happening with the world around him, but rather, his own eyes. When things returned to normal, someone was standing right there in front of him. It was none other than the girl in the white dress, staring at him with her black eyes. "Don't go, sweetie. Come play with me...." Bai Xiaochun nearly collapsed. Eyes crimson, he performed an incantation gesture, unleashing spiritual power to form a large violet cauldron which rumbled forward. Even as the ground quaked, he shot up into the air. When he looked down below, he found that the girl was nowhere to be seen. Apparently, everything from moments ago had been an illusion. "Dammit!" he growled, expression unsightly. Something about the whole situation seemed strange, and Bai Xiaochun was starting to speculate that perhaps the bizarre little girl had used some sort of magical technique on him. No longer in the mood to stay in place, he gritted his teeth and continued onward. After going along for about two hours, he saw three cultivators up ahead, engaged in fierce fighting. Suddenly, he stopped in place. A moment ago, when he'd caught sight of them, they had been alone. But now, he saw the girl in the white dress. She was staring at him with a slight smile, a smile that grew wider and wider until her mouth opened into a gaping maw as she shot toward him. Scalp going numb, he unleashed the power of his cultivation base. His right hand clenched into a fist, and the Undying Live Forever Technique erupted out. His fist strike caused everything to shake. However, the girl suddenly vanished, and the three cultivators off in the distance looked on in astonishment as Bai Xiaochun madly punched a nearby boulder. When they saw the boulder collapse into rubble, they gasped and took to flight. Bai Xiaochun stood there quietly for a moment before gritting his teeth and proceeding along. During the following two days, he saw the girl in the white dress over and over again. Even when he closed his eyes to meditate, he would see her. He was reaching a point of complete exhaustion. The situation only continued to grow worse. At first, he would see her every two hours or so. But now, it happened every three hundred breaths of time. At this rate, he would never be able to reach Foundation Establishment. During the two days which passed, he ran into other disciples, even ones from the Spirit Stream Sect. However, the girl in the white dress would always show up, although no one else saw her. On evening of the second day, Bai Xiaochun's eyes were completely bloodshot, and he could sense that he was reaching his limit. He even felt as if his life force were beyond his own control, and might float away at any time. He was light-headed, and was so dizzy he felt like he might fall over. "It's gonna happen again at any moment...." he murmured. Forgetting about fleeing, he sat down on a boulder and clenched his hands into fists. He had one more mystery pill left, and yet he didn't dare to use it on the girl. For some reason, he had the feeling that the reason he wasn't dead yet was because of that very medicinal pill. If he threw it out and the girl got it, he might meet the same fate as Lei Shan. The mere thought of that seemed to be a powerful warning to him to not casually concoct pills any more. "It's like I'm drifting between reality and illusion," he thought. "I guess I could treat it as if I've been poisoned. In that case, maybe I should make an antidote to heal myself!" Even as he sat thinking about the matter, a beam of light appeared off in the distance. As it drew close to Bai Xiaochun, it slowed to halt, and a young man appeared. "Eee?" He was from the

Blood Stream Sect, and looked very much like a silkpants. Looking over at Bai Xiaochun with an excited expression, he looked down at the Feng Shui compass he held in his hand, the needle of which was pointing toward Bai Xiaochun and glowing with a bright light. "I can't believe you already collected enough earthstring energy to form an earthstring crystal!! "Hahaha! I guess it's destiny that I, Xu Xiaoshan, will be the first to reach Foundation Establishment!" This young man was none other than Xu Xiaoshan from the Blood Stream Sect, and he was looking at Bai Xiaochun with visible excitement. Bai Xiaochun was already irritated, and based on his calculations, he knew it would only be about ten breaths of time before the girl appeared again. "Mind your own business, asshole!" "I know you! You're Bai Xiaochun, the supposed trump card of the Spirit Stream Sect. Well, you're obviously pretty weak right now. The flame of your life force looks like it might flicker out at any moment. That means Xu Xiaoshan has had a good opportunity handed right to him! "Bai Xiaochun, I know you have an earthstring capture crystal. How about we work out a deal? Let me use that crystal for a bit, okay? What do you say?" Eyes flickering with greed, Xu Xiaoshan threw his head back and laughed uproariously. Speeding toward Bai Xiaochun, he performed an incantation gesture, causing eight magical devices to appear around him. Glittering light radiated out as Xu Xiaoshan waved his hand, sending them shooting toward Bai Xiaochun. Bai Xiaochun looked up coldly at Xu Xiaoshan, and was just about to make a move when, all of a sudden, his eyes swam, and the girl in the white dress appeared, standing right next to Xu Xiaoshan. There she was, her smile widening into a gaping maw. It was at that very moment that Xu Xiaoshan suddenly screamed and backed up as fast as he could. Terror filled his eyes, and he began to tremble violently. "A sentient banesoul! Heavens! How could there possibly be sentient banesouls here? Weren't they all exterminated? Dammit! That banesoul's got its eye on you. No wonder you look so weak. You've been cursed! You're dead!" Taking a deep breath, he backed up even more, simultaneously lifting his right hand to produce an ancient jade pendant that had an orange spot on it, which almost looked like a blood stain. As soon as Xu Xiaoshan pulled it out, he breathed a sigh of relief and then fell back further. Down below, Bai Xiaochun's eyes went wide, and he cried out, "You can see her too?! Hey, what's that thing in your hand!?" Bai Xiaochun had just witnessed the girl in the white dress turning to look at Xu Xiaoshan. However, as soon as Xu Xiaoshan took out the jade piece, the girl's expression flickered, and she fled in the opposite direction. Xu Xiaoshan didn't bother to respond to Bai Xiaochun, and instead focused on fleeing as quickly as possible. However, before he could get very far, Bai Xiaochun snapped into motion. His wings appeared behind him, and he shot forward to appear directly in front of Xu Xiaoshan, where he clenched his fist as if to unleash a punch. "Xu Xiaoshan! How about we work out a deal? Why don't you let me use that jade piece for a bit? What do you say?" Hands flashing with an incantation gesture, Xu Xiaoshan summoned eight magical items, which he sent to defend himself. "You're lucky I didn't take your stuff. How dare you try to rob me! You're cursed, hanging on death's door! What gives you the guts to make a move?!" Silver light flickered around Bai Xiaochun as his fist made contact with Xu Xiaoshan's magical items. A huge boom echoed out, and the magical items cracked into pieces. Bai Xiaochun was like a gale force wind speeding directly toward the shocked Xu Xiaoshan. Xu Xiaoshan viciously waved his hand, sending his beaded bracelet off of his wrist. Instantly, it transformed into eighteen corpses, each one of which emanated power equivalent to the great circle of the tenth level of Qi Condensation. Bursting with auras of death, they simultaneously attacked. This was Bai Xiaochun's first time seeing corpse manipulation magic like this. Shockingly, all of these corpses had long gray hair that was black at the roots, as though the hair were slowly turning black. [1. In Chinese stories that have zombies or animated corpses, it's relatively common to identify their power level based on the color of their hair.] Each and every one seemed completely extraordinary. A massive boom echoed out as the big wok on Bai Xiaochun's back shattered. However, he received no injuries whatsoever. Instead, his hands waved through the air as a shocking control power appeared, filling the area, grabbing ahold of the corpses and making it impossible for them to move. They even began to tremble and emit cracking sounds. Xu Xiaoshan made a hissing sound as both of his hands waved through the air. His left hand summoned nine bronze coffins. As they flew out, they grew large and larger, emanating intense pressure onto Bai Xiaochun. His right hand caused a bottle gourd to appear, which spit out a huge blast of gravel toward Bai Xiaochun. Next, he swung his head, causing his hair to flip out. Several small bells flew into the air, which transformed into shadowy figures that sped toward Bai Xiaochun. Most shocking of all was that

he next opened his mouth and spat out a blood-colored fan. The fan waved through the air, causing a 300-meter wide blood mist to spring up. It instantly transformed into a spell formation, which emanated intense roaring sounds as countless razor-sharp talons appeared and headed toward Bai Xiaochun. "I have magical items and refined corpses! You wanna fight me, Bai Xiaochun?!" Laughing complacently, Xu Xiaoshan slapped his bag of holding to produce more than twenty bottles of high quality medicinal pills, which he swallowed in rapid succession, instantly restoring all of the spiritual energy he had just spent. If there had been a third person present to witness what was happening, that person would have been completely flabbergasted. However, it was at this point that the divine crane materialized around Bai Xiaochun, transforming into a buckler that swirled around him. Then, a black flash could be seen as black light spread out all over his body. He smacked his bag of holding, causing hundreds of paper talismans to appear, which he slapped all over himself. In the blink of an eye, over a hundred shield layers had sprung up, creating a 150-meter-thick defense. "I have plenty of defensive talismans," he said proudly. "You dare to fight me with those crappy magical items of yours?" The corpses were sent tumbling away. The blast of gravel couldn't even come close to penetrating the shields, and most of the gravel was sent rebounding away. The nine bronze coffins were also sent crashing to the ground, completely incapable of causing any damage. Xu Xiaoshan's eyes went wide as he stared in complete astonishment. When he fought people, he always relied on the large numbers of magical items and refined corpses at his disposal. This was his first time ever meeting someone like Bai Xiaochun, someone who was actually on the same level as himself. Although he wasn't using magical items, when Xu Xiaoshan thought about how valuable those hundreds of paper talismans were, his heart trembled. "The information said Bai Xiaochun was mysterious and powerful, but it never said he was rich!!" Xu Xiaoshan chuckled bitterly. He knew exactly how terrifying of a figure he himself was, so he naturally realized how terrifying Bai Xiaochun was. In fact, the sight of so many paper talismans left his eyes glowing with envy. After all, magical items required spiritual power to operate, whereas paper talismans required almost none at all. The power they needed was stored inside the talismans themselves. They were expensive, and only worked for a limited time; even Xu Xiaoshan regarded them as a bit of a luxury. Blinking, he suddenly realized that Bai Xiaochun was truly formidable. In fact, he was even worthy of admiration to some degree. After a moment of thought, he tossed the jade pendant over to Bai Xiaochun. "Dammit, Xu Xiaoshan has never given in to anyone. You're the first, Bai Xiaochun. I know you need this thing, so go ahead and take it. But it's not a gift! You have to give it back when you're done!"