

“Don’t tell me... he's the little turtle!?!?” The crowd was in an uproar.

Of course, most flabbergasted of everyone was Xu Baocai, who was staring at Bai Xiaochun with eyes so wide they seemed to be on the verge of popping out of his head. Moments ago, he had despised Bai Xiaochun for not thinking much of having mastered three volumes of spirit creatures, but now, he clearly had every right to have that attitude.... “Mastery of plants and vegetation and mastery of spirit creatures.... Bai Xiaochun was clearly just messing with me!! But this is simply unbelievable. He's only been in the sect for a few years! Could it be... that he really is the little turtle?” Gasping, Xu Baocai pulled out his little notebook and began to write down the new developments. Inwardly, he was rejoicing that he had chosen to smooth things out with Bai Xiaochun, and was also rejoicing that he hadn't said anything too derisive earlier. Even as everyone was giving voice to their shock, Bai Xiaochun walked out of the passageway, sighing. Actually, if there had been a way to conceal his accomplishments regarding the ten stone steles, then he would have. After all, there were still Inner Sect disciples among Zhou Xinqi's fans. Unfortunately, there was nothing that could be done about it. He couldn't just give up on the promotion. Despite the fact that he had been forced to reveal the truth, when he saw how excited the crowds were, and when he heard people calling out his name, he was actually quite moved. “What wonderful fellow disciples. Ah, if only everyone were like that!” Sighing emotionally, and under the eyes of everyone in the audience, he selected a pill furnace and sat down. Elder Xu looked thoughtfully at Bai Xiaochun. A smile flickered across his face, but quickly vanished. After recovered his composure, he calmly said, “The bag in front of you has ten sets of medicinal plants, which you can use to concoct ten tier-1 spirit medicines, specifically, Inkspirit Incense! “You will be judged based on your success rate, with a minimum of two successes being the requirement to pass. Whoever has the most successes... will be awarded 5,000 merit points! You may begin immediately.” The Outer Sect disciples in the audience instantly began to buzz with excitement in response to Elder Xu's explanation. “This time the test is to concoct Inkspirit Incense!” “Inkspirit Incense isn't the most difficult tier-1 medicine to concoct, but it's not easy.... It's not like Spirit Condensation Incense or other spirit medicines like that, which many apprentice apothecaries have experience with.” “Hmph. They're only refining the ways to test one's qualifications in medicine concocting. Can't you see what's happening? Before, they required four volumes of plants and vegetation, now it's five. They even increased the level of difficulty of the spirit medicine to be concocted. Presumably, things will only continue to get harder in the future.” As everyone discussed the matter, the group sitting in front of the pill furnaces in the square had very serious expressions on their faces. Although some of them smiled bitterly when they heard that the test involved Inkspirit Incense, they didn't allow themselves to be distracted, but instead opened the bags and began to inspect the medicinal plants. Xu Baocai had mentioned the matter of the 5,000 merit points earlier. Now that Bai Xiaochun heard confirmation from Elder Xu, his heart was thumping. He was already running low on merit points, which he needed to get medicine formulas and medicinal plants. “If I can get those 5,000 merit points, it will save me a lot of time and effort.” With those thoughts on his mind, Bai Xiaochun opened the bag, within which were the ten sets of medicinal plants, plus a jade slip, which was none other than the medicine formula for the Inkspirit Incense. He didn't immediately begin to concoct the medicine, but instead settled his qi and cleared his mind, then began to study the formula. He took his time, which was how he had grown accustomed to concocting medicine. Even the slightest question about anything needed to be analyzed completely until he felt completely confident. His initial research alone took him two hours. By that time, Du Lingfei and everyone else had already finished inspecting the plants, and were beginning to actually concoct the medicine. In fact, most of them were more than half finished with their first batch. It didn't take long before everyone except Bai Xiaochun was already in the middle of medicine concocting. Bai Xiaochun was the only one who was sitting there, looking thoughtfully at the jade slip. That sight left Xu Baocai somewhat shocked. By now, the first batches of spirit medicine were coming out. Rumbling sounds began to emanate from the pill furnaces of everyone except Bai Xiaochun. Most of them had long faces

as black smoke rose up, indicating that their first batches were failures. Han Jianye, on the other hand, threw his head back and laughed loudly. His pill furnace was trembling, and a medicinal aroma began to spread out. Shockingly, a three-inch-long stick of Inkspirit Incense appeared. The surrounding Outer Sect disciples all craned their necks to look. "He succeeded with his first batch!" "This Han Jianye sure has talent in medicine concocting!" An excited expression appeared on Han Jianye's face as he glanced around at the other test-takers. His gaze lingered for a moment on Bai Xiaochun, and when he realized that he was still studying the medicine formula, a look of disdain appeared in his eyes. Finally, he pulled out the second set of plants and began concocting a second batch. Du Lingfei and everyone else all had unsightly expressions on their faces, and gritted their teeth as they began to work on a second batch. Time passed. By the time the fourth hour of the test had passed, most of the group was finished with their second batch. Muffled rumbling could be heard as... not a single test-taker succeeded. It was at about this time that Bai Xiaochun put the jade slip down. His mind was now permeated with the medicine formula for Inkspirit Incense. However, just when everyone thought he was about to begin, they were stunned to see him take out one of the medicinal plants and begin to study it closely. "What is Bai Xiaochun doing? He already studied the medicine formula for four hours! What's the point of studying the plants?" "I know this is a test, but does he really have to go so slow...?" Xu Baocai's eyes were wide with disbelief as he watched everyone else starting their third batches. The audience waited in befuddlement as the sixth hour of the test arrived. By now, eighteen of the test-takers had all consistently failed. Soon eight hours had passed, then ten. Eventually, four people succeeded in concocting the Inkspirit Incense, including Du Lingfei, Chen Zi'ang, and Zhao Yiduo. The aura of the incense spread out in all directions. Han Jianye was chuckling proudly at being the first person to concoct a second stick of Inkspirit Incense. Looking around proudly, his contempt for Bai Xiaochun grew. At this point, Bai Xiaochun was studying the fourth of the medicinal plants. Occasionally he would even tear a perforation into the plant itself, which left the audience shocked. Even Elder Xu had noticed. Time flew by. Soon, twelve hours had passed. Everyone failed in their sixth batch of spirit medicine, except for Han Jianye, who was the only person to succeed. That caused quite an uproar, and even elicited a slight nod from Elder Xu. "This Han Jianye has already concocted three sticks of incense! Nobody else even has more than one!" "In tests past, two successes meant you passed the test, and four successes made you a Chosen. All Han Jianye has to do is concoct one more stick to become a Chosen!" As everyone discussed the matter, a gleam of self-confidence could be seen flickering in Han Jianye's eyes as he murmured, "I'll definitely concoct a fourth stick of Inkspirit Incense. I'm going to be Chosen, and I'm going to be the top journeyman apothecary!" Swishing his sleeve in grand style, he began to work on his seventh batch. Du Lingfei's face was ashen as she gritted her teeth and began working on her own seventh batch. When the fourteenth hour arrived, Du Lingfei's eyes shone with elation as a medicinal aroma began to spread out from her pill furnace. Even as black smoke rose up from everyone else's seventh batches, she produced the only success! "I've met the minimum, but mere promotion is not enough!" Du Lingfei constrained her excitement, taking a deep breath as she, along with the ashen-faced Han Jianye, began work on another batch. In the sixteenth hour, more rumbling sounds could be heard as yet again... everyone met with failure. As of this moment, of the nineteen other people besides Bai Xiaochun who were taking the test, Han Jianye had three successes, Du Lingfei had two, Chen Zi'ang and Zhao Yiduo both had one, and everyone else... had nothing but failures. As for Bai Xiaochun, he was studying the last of the medicinal plants. "This test is so hard...." That was the thought running through the minds of the Outer Sect disciples in the audience. They could feel the anxious pressure building up. Most of the test-takers only had two sets of ingredients left. With the exception of Du Lingfei and Han Jianye, who had already met the minimum requirement, and Chen Zi'ang and Zhao Yiduo, who both had one success already, the other test-takers had to succeed with both sets of ingredients, otherwise they would fail completely. Those remaining disciples were now extremely nervous. Essentially, this ninth batch was the most crucial batch; if they failed, then Elder Xu wouldn't allow them to waste the ingredients set aside for the tenth batch. If that ninth batch failed, then... their test-taking effort would be a complete failure. Filled with apprehension and nervousness, everyone focused completely on their ninth batches.... Each and every step received complete and utter attention; those who had already met the minimum requirement wanted to get a better final score, and for those who hadn't met the minimum, they had to do everything

they could right now to pass. Bai Xiaochun, on the other hand... was sitting there holding the final medicinal plant. Apparently, he was considering some important question about that plant, as his brow was furrowed thoughtfully. By now... few people were paying attention to him. The eighteenth hour seemed to pass very slowly. This was the moment everyone had been waiting for. Soon, rumbling sounds echoed out. As for the disciples who had not succeeded at all, they rose to their feet, faces pale, chuckling bitterly. After clasping hands to Elder Xu, they dejectedly left the square. One by one, the disciples left, until soon, only six people remained concocting medicine. Soon, rumbling sounds echoed out from the six test-takers' pill furnaces, and yet a medicinal aroma emitted from only one of those furnaces, the one belonging to Zhao Yiduo. Zhao Yiduo's hands were clenched tightly into fists, he was panting, and his eyes were completely bloodshot. He was more excited right now than he had ever been before; he had met the minimum requirements. With two successes, he passed! Some people were excited, some were depressed. Five people had failed, two of them being disciples who hadn't succeeded a single time. Sighing, they rose to their feet and left. Chen Zi'ang couldn't be more on edge. He was glaring at Zhao Yiduo, heart filled with bitterness and anxiety. Then he looked with bloodshot eyes at the final set of medicinal plants. Du Lingfei frowned, then closed her eyes to think. Han Jianye felt the least pressure of all, and yet, he wasn't happy to be stuck with only three successes. He wanted to break through to become Chosen. "The last batch!" People took deep breaths as they looked out at the square, and the five people left behind. Han Jianye. Du Lingfei. Zhao Yiduo. Chen Zi'ang. And of course... Bai Xiaochun. Three of them had already met the minimum requirements. Chen Zi'ang had one chance left to do so. As for Bai Xiaochun... people weren't even paying attention to him, and were actually beginning to wonder why he had even come. After eighteen hours, all he had done was study the medicine formula and the medicinal plants. Some people were even wondering... if he had just come to be a part of the excitement. It was with unprecedented seriousness that Du Lingfei and the others began to focus completely on their tenth and last batch of spirit medicine. As everyone looked on with fixed gazes, the twentieth hour slowly passed. Rumbling sounds could then be heard from Zhao Yiduo's pill furnace, after which black smoke rose up. He sighed. He had failed in the final batch, but at least he still met the minimum requirements. In almost the exact same instant that Zhao Yiduo failed, Chen Zi'ang's pill furnace began to emit a medicinal aroma. His wasn't the only one. Medicinal aromas were also spreading out from Du Lingfei's and Han Jianye's! In that instant, all three of their faces lit up with joy as they realized that they had succeeded! "I did it! Four sticks of Inkspirit Incense! I took the top spot!!" Han Jianye shot to his feet and his excited laughter began to ring out in all directions. Du Lingfei sighed in relief. Although she hadn't reached the level of a Chosen, three successes was still astonishing. Chen Zi'ang felt almost as if he had been resurrected from the dead, and began to laugh heartily. As of this moment, the feelings that the four of them had been suppressing for the last two hours finally erupted out. "What a difficult test! The fact that Han Jianye could succeed four times despite this level of difficulty shows that he really is a Chosen!" "Du Lingfei got three successes, Chen Zi'ang and Zhao Yiduo both got two.... They all met the requirements to be promoted. I bet if the test wasn't so hard, they all would probably have been able to get four successes!" Even as everyone began to discuss the matter, as the friends of the test-takers were cheering in support, as Elder Xu nodded approvingly at Han Jianye and was about to announce that the test was over... Bai Xiaochun moved.