

**During the past thousand years, the south bank had always been outdone by the north bank. In all of the Outer Sect Chosen battles which had been held, the majority of the final top ten were north bank disciples. The south bank had never been able to achieve dominance, much less take the first place spot, which went to the north bank each and every time.**

One reason was that the north bank had four mountain peaks, while the south bank only had three. More than a thousand years ago, things had been different. Whether it was in terms of spirit enhancement or medicine concocting, the disciples of the south bank had been the pillars of the sect, and no one had ever dared to tangle with them. As for the sword cultivators of Green Crest Peak, they gave their mountain peak the reputation of being the strongest in the entire Spirit Stream Sect. But now, for various reasons, everything had changed, and the north bank was the most dominant. They continuously secured victory in the Chosen battles, and as such, earned vast cultivation resources, which ensured that their battle prowess only continued to grow. Furthermore, their practice of cultivation differed somewhat from the south bank, so different that many of the outside cultivator clans had come to view the north bank as the dominant force within the Spirit Stream Sect, and its effective leader. In the Spirit Stream Sect, the south bank used magic to control inanimate objects, while the north bank controlled living beasts! For example, upon joining the sect, Bai Xiaochun had learned the Violet Qi Cauldron Control Art. In contrast, the introductory art for north bank disciples was the Heavenspan Elephant Control Art! During the Chosen battles held over the past thousand years, the south bank had suffered defeat over and over again. That was especially true of the battles fought thirty years before, in which only one disciple from the south bank had ended up in the top ten. That, of course, infuriated the elders and peak lords of the three mountain peaks of the south bank. Afterward, they personally went out to look for new talented disciples, which was how Shangguan Tianyou and the other top Chosen came to join the sect. Shangguan Tianyou, Lu Tianlei, and Zhou Xinqi were the trump cards of the south bank. They were the apprentices of the peak lords, and had been meticulously trained until their cultivation bases reached the pinnacle of the eighth level of Qi Condensation. In terms of battle prowess, they were already in a position to be able to defeat many disciples of the Inner Sect. Shangguan Tianyou was the most impressive of them all, adept with void magic, and generally accepted as the number one Chosen of the south bank. Lu Tianlei was skilled with the Dao of lightning, and was extraordinary in his own right. His lightning magic was shocking, and even his Master Xu Meixiang praised him ceaselessly, virtually guaranteeing him a spot in the top ten. Then there was Zhou Xinqi, who showed incredible skill in the Dao of medicine. Of course, as Li Qinghou's personal apprentice, she also had astonishing magical techniques at her disposal. When Bai Xiaochun learned about the overall situation from Xu Baocai, he couldn't help but feel indignant at the despotic way the north bank acted. Filled with emotion, he swore to himself: "Just wait until I reach Foundation Establishment. I'll definitely cut those north bank Outer Sect disciples down a notch or two!" As far as the south bank qualifying matches, and the subsequent Chosen battles, he wasn't the least bit interested in them. As far as Bai Xiaochun was concerned, fighting and killing weren't his style. He was a Prestige disciple, and the Junior Brother of the sect leader. He existed on a higher plane of seniority, and didn't feel that it was appropriate for him to be competing with members of the junior generation. "Besides, what would happen if I didn't win?" he thought with a dry cough. "Wouldn't that lose a lot of

face for elder Brother Sect Leader? Forget about it. I'm definitely not participating." When he thought about how much he was sacrificing just for his Elder Brother Sect Leader, he decided that he should probably go burn some incense to his Master and complain a bit about the situation. \*\* Life was great. Bai Xiaochun didn't think much about the Chosen battles. Instead, he visited Big Fatty Zhang as often as he could. Every time Big Fatty Zhang would try a spirit enhancement, Bai Xiaochun would use his turtle-wok to turn it into a success, which led Big Fatty Zhang into new realms of excitement. At a certain point, Big Fatty Zhang began to suspect that something was going on, but was so happy that he simply reveled in the feeling of success. Eventually, he got used to the situation, and came to be convinced that he really was a genius spirit enhancer. Considering the incredible level of self-confidence that he was building, his spirit enhancement magic and power of will also began to grow much stronger. Time passed. A month later, it was only three days until the qualifying round began. It was at that point that Bai Xiaochun got a notice from the sect informing him that attendance in the qualifying round was mandatory for all disciples in the eighth level of Qi Condensation. There were to be no exceptions. After scanning the jade slip, Bai Xiaochun yawned. Assuming there must be some mistake with the message, he continued his pill concocting. Three days later at dawn, bells filled the south bank, and Bai Xiaochun strolled out into the sect to see countless Outer Sect disciples hurrying along with very serious expressions. Spirits rising, he joined the crowd of moving people. Soon, he reached a certain valley behind the three mountain peaks. It was a huge place, paved with white jade, in the middle of which was a huge, open square, with four awe-inspiring columns in the corners carved with coiling dragons. Between each column was another statue depicting a fierce beast, extremely lifelike in appearance. The ferocious nature of it all made the entire valley seethe with a bleak and violent aura. On one of the valley walls was a balcony, upon which numerous notable members of the sect could be seen. Li Qinghou was there, along with Xu Meixiang and the peak lord from the third mountain. Even Sect Leader Zheng Yuandong was present. The qualifying matches for the north and south banks were not held concurrently. The south bank went first, followed by the north bank. That was to ensure that the sect leader didn't show partiality to one bank or the other. After observing the south bank's qualifying matches, he would go to the north bank to watch theirs. Li Qinghou and the other peak lords sat near Zheng Yuandong, chatting amiably. Behind them were the elders from the three mountain peaks, including Elder Zhou. Some sat quietly with their eyes closed, others conversed in low tones. A few were observing the disciples pouring into the valley. Bai Xiaochun walked along lazily until he was in the valley itself. Looking around, he realized that he had never been here before. Curious about the statues, he walked over to examine one more closely. As he neared the statue, he noticed that there was even fur on its surface, which rippled in the wind. "These creatures almost look alive. So interesting." It was at this point that the sound of voices suddenly rose up from within the audience. "Elder Sister Zhou is on the way!" "Elder Sister Zhou has been in the eighth level of Qi Condensation for a while now. She's definitely going to get into the top ten. In fact, considering her status, she'll most likely get into the top three!" A blue swath of flying silk appeared off in the distance, upon which could be seen Zhou Xinqi. She first clasped hands and bowed to the balcony, then landed off to the side, where she closed her eyes and sat down quietly. The truth was that she was inwardly nervous; after all her years of cultivation, the qualifying round had finally arrived, and she had to perform well. Up on the balcony, Li Qinghou gave her a faint smile of approval. Smiling, Zheng Yuandong said, "Qinghou, not only is Zhou Xinqi extraordinary with plants and vegetation, she also has some shocking magical techniques. I have the feeling she'll bring glory to the south bank." "There's no need for such praise, sect leader," Li Qinghou replied modestly. "My apprentice still needs some more tempering. However, her personality is of a type rarely seen among her contemporaries. She really has incredible potential." Most of the crowd looked over enviously at Zhou Xinqi, but as for Bai Xiaochun, he cleared his throat and looked at her with an expression similar to Li Qinghou's. Clasp his hands behind his back, he gazed at her with praise and approval. Before people could finish talking about Zhou Xinqi, another small uproar occurred in the crowd. People turned their heads up as the rumble of thunder echoed out. A bolt of lightning snaked out overhead, perched atop which was a young man wearing a long green robe and a haughty expression. Countless lightning bolts spread out in his wake, and thunder boomed around him. He seemed even more impressive than Zhou Xinqi, and when he landed in the square, the area for thirty meters around him turned into a lake of dancing lightning.

Sparks of electricity even arced back and forth on his skin. "It's Lu Tianlei from Violet Cauldron Peak! Elder Brother Lu has a rare lightning meridian. He's been in secluded meditation almost the entire time since joining the sect. Now he finally makes his extraordinary debut!" "Lu Tianlei is incredible. He cultivates some sort of technique that gives him control of lightning!" As the conversations continued, Lu Tianlei proudly clasped hands in greeting toward the balcony. Then his gaze swept across the crowd. Among all the Outer Sect disciples gathered there, only Zhou Xinqi was someone he considered a worthy opponent. The others weren't even worth looking at. Up on the balcony, Xu Meixiang smiled, her eyes gleaming with satisfaction. "Sect leader, what do you think of the Extreme Dao Lightning Control Magic that my disciple cultivates?" Zheng Yuandong smiled and looked a bit more closely at Lu Tianlei. "He already controls two types of lightning, and he's only in the eighth level of Qi Condensation. With skill like that, he's definitely a top Chosen among the disciples under Foundation Establishment." The peak lord of Green Crest Peak, the emaciated old man who seemed as sharp as a sword, suddenly looked up with a smile. Zheng Yuandong's face flickered, and he also turned to look in the same direction. The other elders did the same. A beam of sword light... split through the clouds, rumbling along with incredible momentum. The clouds seethed as an ancient green sword appeared, a beam that cut through everything in its path, piercing through the air as it shot toward the ground. The sword seemed primeval, forged from bronze, weathered with age and completely extraordinary. An extremely handsome young man stood atop the sword, wearing the robes of an Outer Sect disciple. His black hair whipped about in the wind, and he held his hands clasped behind his back. A faint layer of golden light flickered around him, and behind him could be seen the images of numerous green lotuses. In addition to the lotuses was a nine-meter-long fish with the head of a dragon, which swirled about, sending rainwater falling down everywhere around it. Even before the young man arrived, the rain water was splashing down onto the square. Countless disciples looked up in awe, gasping at the incredible sight. "It's Eldest Brother Shangguan!" "The number one Chosen in the Outer Sect on the south bank. Shangguan Tianyou!" "According to the rumors, he has a powerful sword spirit body, and is the reincarnation of some almighty sword cultivator. For some reason, the heavens are guilty, and showered him with countless blessings. When he was three, he was walking down the road and happened to find an ancient sword; when he was seven, a baby Crimson Cloudbeast fell out of the sky and instantly accepted him as its master; when he was thirteen, he acquired a golden light shield. That is why his name is Tianyou!" [1] Zhou Xinqi looked over with a grave expression. As for Lu Tianlei, he looked up, lightning dancing in his eyes, sparks surging around him. From the look in his eyes, he was itching to fight. As the green beam of light closed in, Shangguan Tianyou clasped hands toward the balcony and called out, "I, Shangguan Tianyou, offer greetings to the sect leader, my Master, the two peak lords, and all of the various elders." As he floated down toward the square, he looked around at all the disciples and nodded. His amiable gaze and friendly nod caused countless disciples to clasp hands in greeting. Many of the female disciples batted their eyes bashfully. Sect Leader Zheng Yuandong gave a hearty laugh and looked over at the peak lord of Green Crest Peak. "Wonderful. Simply wonderful!" he said. "At only the eighth level of Qi Condensation, he can already transform sword qi into lotuses. Regardless of whether this Shangguan Tianyou really is the reincarnation of an almighty cultivator, he definitely has a sword spirit body. To accomplish what he has before Foundation Establishment is truly a rarity! "I have to say that I'm shocked by the south bank's performance so far!" Li Qinghou and the other peak lords smiled, and the other elders chuckled. All of them clearly wished to have their revenge on the north bank. Zheng Yuandong was about to continue speaking when suddenly he looked down at the square and saw Bai Xiaochun standing there next to the statue, hands clasped behind his back, looking like a member of the senior generation. Chuckling dryly, he said, "This Bai Xiaochun... really loves to indulge in his histrionics." 1. Quick reminder that "Tianyou" literally means "the heavens assist"