

The moment of the sneeze was the same moment that Bai Xiaochun woke up. His mind was still in the same state it had been when he was seriously injured and fallen into a coma, so as soon as he woke up, he subconsciously cradled his left arm and let out a miserable cry. However, as soon as that cry left his lips, he looked down in surprise at his arm, and then at the rest of his body. He began to poke and prod himself, and even opened his garments and looked at his soft, white belly.

“Eee? No injuries?” Suddenly, his eyes flickered with fear as he recalled something that the old folks back in the village used to say. Supposedly, when someone died, their soul would enter the shadows of the underworld. At the moment, he obviously had no injuries, which meant that he must only be a soul.... Shivering, he looked around and realized that everything around him was dead. Even all the plants and grass were withered up. Chen Heng’s corpse was nowhere to be seen. As he looked around, he also noticed fog everywhere. He couldn’t see much at all, and everything past a certain distance was a complete blur. A faint aura of death pulsed in the area, causing a cold sensation to wash through his body. “That’s it. It’s over.... I was so careful for most of my poor little life, only to end up losing it....” Bai Xiaochun was now even more certain that he was now a lost soul. His face twisted bitterly, and he let out an anguished moan. “I never even got to give Du Lingfei a chance to pay me back with all her heart.... Elder Brother Hou still has his promise to keep.... People still don’t know that I’m Lord Turtle, and there are still lots of spirit tail chickens to eat in the world. I... I haven’t lived forever yet....” The more he thought about it, the more it hurt inside. Tears began to well up in his eyes. However, even as he began to wail loudly... someone cleared their throat behind him. The sound came so suddenly that it startled Bai Xiaochun. “Who’s there?!” he shrieked, scrambling forward across the ground and then spinning around, a wooden sword appearing in his hand. He saw an old man standing over by where he had just been laying. He wore a long black robe and looked almost like a corpse as he stared at Bai Xiaochun in a very ghastly manner. His body radiated a strong aura of death. Coupled with the copious amounts of wrinkles which covered his pale face, he seemed like he had just climbed up out of the grave. He perfectly matched his surroundings, and looked utterly horrifying. As soon as Bai Xiaochun laid eyes on him, all the hair on his body stood on end, and he suddenly recalled countless scary stories about murderous ghosts. But then he realized that if he himself was dead, then he didn’t have anything to worry about. Sticking his jaw out, he gave a cold harrumph and then slowly rose to his feet. “Alright then. You’re a ghost. I’m a ghost. Since we’re both dead and both ghosts, then who’s afraid of who, huh?” He walked up to the old man, then circled around him with a low-pitched, quizzical whistle. “You must be a ghost who lives in these nameless mountains. No need to be nervous. I was just passing through and happened to die. I’ll be on my way in a moment. Ai. I wonder if I can continue to live forever and practice cultivation now that I’ve become a ghost. Maybe I can become a ghost that lives forever.” Suddenly, grief rose up once again in Bai Xiaochun’s heart, and he sighed. The black-robed old man looked at Bai Xiaochun and frowned. Then, he spoke in a raspy voice: “How come you’re not dead?” Bai Xiaochun started in surprise, then suddenly seemed to think of something. He bit down hard on his tongue, and when the pain coursed through him, he almost couldn’t believe it.

He bit down again, this time until tears poured down his cheeks. His expression lit with delight, and he literally began dancing up and down. He even threw his head back and laughed loudly. "I'm not dead!! Hahaha! I, Bai Xiaochun, have a matchless cultivation base! I am invincible in heaven and earth. How could I possibly die!?" He was so excited that he reached out to grab the old man's arm, except that his hand passed right through the man, and grabbed nothing but air. At the same time, his hand suddenly felt extremely cold. "Uh...." Bai Xiaochun suddenly went stiff all over. He stared blankly at the old man, eyes wide, before screaming and leaping backward. "A ghost!!" Back when he thought he was dead, he didn't think much of seeing a ghost. But at the moment, he was terrified, as the stories of murderous ghosts once again began to flash through his mind. Soon, he reached the area where the fog grew thick, where he encountered some sort of invisible barrier that he could not pass through. Backing up to the barrier, he gripped his little wooden sword and stared at the old man, countless thoughts fluttering through his mind. Finally, a miserable expression filled his face. "Sir, do you have some unfinished business in life that I could help you take care of...?" The black-robed old man had a strange expression on his face as he studied Bai Xiaochun. He couldn't help but muse that the young man standing in front of him seemed a lot different from the steel-veined fighter from before. They almost seemed like two different people. Eventually, a thoughtful expression appeared in his eyes. "Perhaps only people with personalities like this can truly cultivate the Undying Live Forever Technique...." he murmured. Feeling much more at ease, he shook his head and smiled. Then he turned and began to float off into the distance. "The Undying Live Forever Technique is divided into the Undying Codex and the Live Forever Codex. Each Codex has five volumes... what you are cultivating is the most commonly circulated first volume of the Undying Codex, the Undying Skin. You've mastered the Iron Skin, and have made headway with the Bronze Skin!" As the old man floated off, his voice echoed behind him into Bai Xiaochun's ears. "The Undying Codex breaks through the five shackles of mortality. The Live Forever Codex unravels the five seals of eternity! "Work hard at your cultivation. If you can reach the level of Undying Gold Skin, you will make contact with the first shackle of mortality. Whether or not you can break through that shackle will depend on your own good fortune. "Since we were brought together by fate, I will give you a medicinal pill. Furthermore, to help you make a breakthrough with your Undying Skin, and achieve mastery of the Bronze Skin, I will give you this jade slip. It contains... the second volume of the Undying Codex, the Undying Heavenly King! [1] "If you succeed with the Undying Live Forever Technique, you can... form a Core!" By this point, the old man was so far away he couldn't be seen. However, as his voice echoed out, two beams of light shot through the air and came to hover in front of Bai Xiaochun. Bai Xiaochun watched in shock as the old man left. At this point, he realized that the reason he hadn't died, and had in fact completely recovered, was because the old man had saved him. And the reason for that... was because Bai Xiaochun cultivated the Undying Live Forever Technique. Although Bai Xiaochun feared death, he took matters of favors and debts seriously. He knew that he had been injured so badly in the fight that he most likely should have died. A tremor ran through him, and, taking a deep breath, he clasped hands and bowed deeply in the direction the old man had disappeared. "Senior," he called out, "many thanks for the kindness you showed in saving my life. May I respectfully ask your name...?" "I am... the gravekeeper," the old man replied, his voice faint and ancient, almost as if it were floating through countless years of time. It was in that exact same moment that cracking sounds could be heard from the fog as it suddenly vanished. The area which had been separated from the rest of the world was now unsealed, and returned to its place. The wind blew, lifting Bai Xiaochun's long hair as he looked off into the distance. After a moment passed, he murmured, "The Undying Live Forever Technique.... Five shackles of mortality and five seals of eternity?" This was his first time hearing of such things. Finally, he took a deep breath and looked over at the medicinal pill and jade slip. He first took the jade slip, scanning it with divine sense. Inside was the second volume of the Undying Codex. He put the jade slip away and then looked over at the medicinal pill. Although he was already a journeyman apothecary, he was unable to determine the pill's quality. He took it in hand and began to examine it. He was a cautious person by nature, and he knew that if the old man in the black robe had wished to harm him, he could have done so in a variety of ways. As such, the medicinal pill would most likely bring only benefits, and would not harm him. Muttering to himself, he looked around, then put the medicinal pill away and began to walk. As he proceeded along, he looked around at the jungle, and sighed emotionally. When he thought about the

whole chase and battle with the Luo Chen Clan cultivators, and the danger that had been involved, he couldn't shake the feeling of fear that remained in his heart. "I wonder how Elder Sister Du and Elder Brother Hou are doing.... Did they make their escape...?" At the moment, he didn't dare to use his jade slip to try to make contact with the sect. He was worried that the Luo Chen Clan cultivators might still be around, and would detect the fluctuations of an attempted transmission. That could lead to a big problem. Patting his bag of holding, he produced Feng Yan's windsiff, and after a quick test, confirmed that it was now functional. His eyes flashed with joy. Although he had his speculations about the current situation, he wasn't anxious to leave the area, so he found a mountain cave where he could rest for a bit. There, he produced his turtle-wok, as well as the medicinal pill given to him by the black-robed old man. Soon, silver light flashed on the medicinal pill, and three spirit designs could be seen on its surface. Bai Xiaochun picked up the pill, and his eyes gleamed with determination as he popped it into his mouth and swallowed it. Immediately, his body began to thrum, as though a burning fire were giving birth to an indescribable vital energy, which then coursed through him. He began to shake, and he gritted his teeth, unleashing the Undying Live Forever Technique. Then, he slapped himself, revealing that his skin was no longer pitch black, but instead, now contained a bit of bronze. That bronze color was reaching the point where he almost looked like a statue made of the stuff. The power inside of him grew more and more intense, and he felt stronger than ever. However, the energy of the medicine had not been exhausted. After performing the threefold spirit enhancement, the medicinal pill had reached an incredible level of quality. Even in the moment in which his skin was completely bronze, cracking sounds rang out from within him, as if something were breaking. Lines spread out rapidly across the surface of his skin, constantly increasing in number until they covered his entire body. An intense pain wracked him, but he endured, and soon, those lines began to turn silver! The Undying Skin was broken up into the levels of Iron, Bronze, Silver, and Gold! Even the black-robed old man could never have anticipated that the medicinal pill he gave to Bai Xiaochun would receive a spirit enhancement, and would thus enable him to break through not just into the Bronze Skin level, but past it. Rumbling sounds echoed out from inside Bai Xiaochun for several days. More and more cracks appeared on his skin, and soon, pieces of skin began to fall off, almost as if he were molting. Furthermore, every falling piece revealed shining silver beneath it. After ten days, the last bit of skin had fallen off. He was now completely silver, and although it was a dull silver color, when he opened his eyes, they shone with a bright silver glow. He suddenly burst into motion, causing a shocking boom to ring out. He was now at least twice as fast as he had been before! His eyes shone with joy as his right hand clenched into a fist and slammed into a nearby boulder. The boulder instantly shattered, not into large chunks, but into dust! This level of power exceeded his previous level by several times! Bai Xiaochun was panting excitedly. As of this moment, he was confident that if he fought Chen Heng again, the battle definitely wouldn't be as bitter. After some more tests, something even more shocking was revealed. His defensive levels with the Undying Silver Skin were such that even his wooden sword with the threefold spirit enhancement was incapable of even scratching it. Bai Xiaochun's eyes shone with excitement. After ceasing the operation of the Undying Live Forever Technique, his body returned to its normal pure and fair state. He changed his clothes, then began to speed off into the distance, looking very pleased with himself. 1. The word here "Heavenly King" is one of those Chinese words that can be translated many different ways. One slightly more accurate rendition might be Lokapala, but I'm not a huge fan of complicated religious terms like that, especially not in the context of how it's being used here, so I'm going with Heavenly King