

Bai Xiaochun watched the dog disappearing off into the distance, a thoughtful expression on his face. The way it had slowly grown more thin and gaunt was very telling, and gave him a much better understanding of the Beastbirth Flower's growing process. He suddenly thought of the fragrant aroma the flower exuded.

"The Beastbirth Flower exudes a sort of hallucinogenic aura. Once other animals get caught up in it, their qi and blood are stirred, and some of their life essence ancestral blood is extracted by the flower. That's why the dog gradually grew thinner.... Wild beasts are slightly different, so when their qi and blood is stimulated, the illusions they experience are also different. Either way, the point of the hallucination is to stop them from resisting. "No wonder this Beastbirth Seed is virtually extinct.... In some ways, it's completely superior to all wild beasts!" Bai Xiaochun trembled at this new realization. When mosquitos suck blood, they numb the vicinity of the bite so that they can feast surreptitiously. Likewise, when the Beastbirth Flower absorbed the life essence ancestral awakening blood, it was done in secret. Seven days passed. Considering how soon the Beastbirth Flower would be blooming, Bai Xiaochun felt that if he couldn't get any more superior beasts' life essence ancestral awakening blood, it would be a huge waste of the flower. Then he thought about how the north bank disciples had been slandering him, and he ground his teeth. At that point, he slipped out of the Beast Conservatory into the dark and windswept night. "I haven't done something like this for a while. It's a bit of a loss of face considering my status... but I don't have any other choice." Eyes shining brightly, he drifted undetected through the north bank until he arrived outside of a certain residence. Inside was a beautiful peacock, currently asleep and completely oblivious to any dangers. Suddenly, a hand snaked out and clasped it by the neck. The peacock struggled as a powerful force dragged it through the night, but it couldn't make even a single sound. Complete unable to free itself, it was quickly taken away by Bai Xiaochun. Glancing around vigilantly to ensure that no one was watching him, he quickly made his way to another location. It didn't take long before he had green python in hand as well as a peacock. And yet, things weren't over. Over the course of the next hour, Bai Xiaochun toiled away. When he returned to the Beast Conservatory, he had a peacock in his left hand, a night leopard in his right, a white monkey pinned against his side, and a green python wrapped around him. "What a goldmine!" he thought excitedly. With that, he hurried back to the rear courtyard and bound up the battle beasts. Then he tossed the peacock into the Beastbirth Flower. After the peacock was swallowed up by the flower, Bai Xiaochun waited in excitement off to the side. Before long, the peacock was spat out, and although it didn't look drunk with pleasure, it seemed to be relishing some wonderful memory. Apparently, the illusion it had experienced was different from the other animals. Before it could recover, Bai Xiaochun grabbed it and then threw the green python into the flower. Then he hurried away with the peacock to return it to where he'd acquired it from. The peacock didn't cry out or struggle. In fact, when Bai Xiaochun turned to leave, it even gazed at him fawningly, almost with anticipation, as if it hoped he would take it away again. Sounding very serious, Bai Xiaochun said, "Having a bit of your life essence ancestral awakening blood extracted won't hurt you. But too much won't be good. Be a good little peacock, alright? Oh... don't tell your master about me, okay?" With that, he left. Bai Xiaochun worked hard that night. After returning the green python, he had the white monkey and the night leopard to deal with. The entire affair left him quite exhausted. However, when he thought about how content the animals looked, and how they clearly didn't wish to leave the flower behind, he knew that he was doing

a good thing. Most importantly of all, the Beastbirth Flower was looking stronger and more healthy than ever. "One simple act pleases the battle beasts, pleases the Beastbirth Flower, and pleases me! It only goes to show what a good deed I'm performing!" Overall, he was very happy. The following night when the moon began to rise, he strode out of the Beast Conservatory, chin stuck up, hair blowing in the wind. For the following several days, he went about the same routine. He picked the best battle beasts, regardless of whether they belonged to Outer or Inner Sect disciples. At the most, he chose four per night. Any more, and he wouldn't be able to return them before dawn. Because of his stealth, and the profundity of his cultivation base, not a single problem arose. The only difference was that the battle beasts which had provided contributions during the night would act very differently if they encountered Bai Xiaochun during the day. They would leap about excitedly as if they wished to please him. The masters of the various beasts were shocked; in the past, their battle beasts had never liked Bai Xiaochun very much, but now they fawned all over him. Even more strange was that not a single battle beast provided any sort of explanation, not even when asked to do so. Half a month passed, and it was with great pride that Bai Xiaochun looked at the continuously maturing Beastbirth Flower. Thanks to all of the constant additions of life essence ancestral awakening blood from the most powerful of the battle beasts, his night-time efforts were all worth it. On this particular night, thick clouds covered the moon, casting everything into pitch darkness. Bai Xiaochun had a hedgehog in one hand and a fierce bull slung over his shoulder, both of them trussed up to keep them quiet as he approached another residence. "Black, blue-eyed cat..." he murmured, his eyes shining with a strange light. He had never forgotten this particular battle beast. Just as he was about to take action, two pairs of blue eyes snapped open within the courtyard up ahead, and the low-pitched yowl of a cat echoed out into the silence of night. "So alert!" he thought, shocked. The yowl of the cat roused quite a few nearby disciples, so Bai Xiaochun quickly retreated. However, even as he did, the black, blue-eyed cat shot out to block his path. Shockingly, human-level intelligence gleamed in its eyes, as well as something like a sneer. Bai Xiaochun was instantly infuriated. On any other occasion, he could have handled this black cat easily, but now his hands were full, making this more difficult. Suddenly, wings sprouted out behind him, and he vanished before anyone could emerge to see him. Thanks to the powerful yowl of the cat, Bai Xiaochun had a very hard time making it back to the Beast Conservatory while avoiding the notice of the north bank disciples. When he finally arrived, he gritted his teeth and mentally cursed the black cat. "How am I going to handle that cat? It's simply too vigilant!" It was a real headache. Suddenly, Bai Xiaochun's expression flickered, and he lunged to the side, just as a black blur flashed passed him, accompanied by the sound of clashing teeth. "You again!!" Bai Xiaochun had been angry to begin with, but when he saw the big black dog, he got even angrier. The dog had already ambushed him twice, and normally, it would flee as soon as it failed. This time, though, it came back for a second round, brimming with madness, ferocity, and especially, hatred. Considering its agility and speed, if it tried to get away, Bai Xiaochun would normally have to use all the power he had, and also spend a significant amount of time, to be able to catch it. But it wasn't fleeing now, so Bai Xiaochun made short work of it. "I'm short on beasts tonight!" Bai Xiaochun growled. "You're in!" Holding the struggling dog by the neck, he returned to the rear courtyard. The hedgehog and the fierce bull were the first to make contributions. The last was the fiercely struggling black dog. After returning the bull and the hedgehog, Bai Xiaochun returned, bursting with rage. He had decided that the time had come to treat the black dog to an unforgettable lesson. He would make it offer contributions fifteen times in a row! The black dog was gasping for breath by the time Bai Xiaochun tossed it out of the Beast Conservatory. "If you dare to ambush me ever again," Bai Xiaochun shouted, "I'll turn you into dog jerky!" The dog struggled to its feet and then slunk out into the jungle. When it finally reached a spot where Bai Xiaochun couldn't see it, it flopped down onto the ground and stuck its tongue out to lick its lips. Unexpectedly, an intoxicated gleam appeared in its eyes. Several more days passed, and Bai Xiaochun's nighttime activities continued. However, the vigilant cat continued to be a big headache. Eventually, he prepared to attack it outright, but was shocked to find that the cat had hidden away in its master's room. Bai Xiaochun wasn't sure what to do, but wasn't willing to give up. He continued to work on the other beasts as he pondered the situation. One night, when he was heading back to the Beast Conservatory with a huge toad, he suddenly stopped in place as a black blur shot past him, accompanied by a familiar sound. It was the big black dog again, which was now standing there in front of him, trembling with eagerness, its

teeth bared as if in preparation to attack. At first, Bai Xiaochun was stunned by the dog's persistence, but then he realized that there was something strange going on. During the dog's third ambush, he hadn't thought too much about the fact that it didn't flee immediately. But now the dog was here again, and again, refrained from fleeing. Furthermore, the way it went about the ambush itself seemed a bit perfunctory. In addition to all that, its biting seemed far slower and far less ferocious than the previous occasions. "Are you doing this on purpose?" he asked, shocked. The dog had just been on the verge of lunging forward, but after hearing Bai Xiaochun's question, it stopped in place and looked at him. It didn't growl, it didn't bare its teeth, it didn't leap forward in attack. It just stood there staring at him. A strange expression appeared on Bai Xiaochun's face. Ignoring the dog, he continued on his way. As he sped along, the dog followed, all the way back to the honor guard station. As soon as it entered the rear courtyard, its tail began to wag furiously, and it... shot toward the Beastbirth Flower, completely of its own volition. Bai Xiaochun stared in shock, and the expression on his face grew even more odd. After the dog finished its contribution and emerged from the flower, it didn't leave, but rather, jumped right back in. It continued to do the same thing over and over again. By the following evening, it had offered a total of seven or eight contributions. "That's... that's... so much life essence ancestral awakening blood! Are you trying to kill yourself? Dammit! Just what kind of fantasy are you experiencing in there?" In the end, he grabbed the crazed dog and threw it out the door. As the dog hobbled off, Bai Xiaochun prepared to start threatening it, but then his heart thumped as an idea occurred to him, and he changed tactics. "I know you can understand me," he said. "Listen up. If you want back in here, stop ambushing me! Furthermore, bring me that black, blue-eyed cat, if you can. Then I'll let you make another contribution!" The dog looked back for a moment before turning and running off into the distance. A few days later, just when Bai Xiaochun was about to go out and procure some more beasts, he suddenly heard a familiar barking outside his door....