

Li Qinghou had actually never been to the area where Bai Xiaochun's residence was located. After all, it was in a somewhat remote part of the mountain. As he proceeded along, the courtyard residence soon became visible off in the distance.

However, before he could get very close, a fair, clear-faced figure appeared, holding a piece of roasted meat in his hand, walking and eating at the same time. He seemed to be engrossed in his eating, and was even humming a little tune. Li Qinghou's face darkened as he realized that the meat currently being stuffed into Bai Xiaochun's mouth was definitely a chicken leg. Anger instantly flared up in his heart. "Bai Xiaochun!!" he roared, his voice booming out like thunder. Bai Xiaochun, who was in the middle of sucking on the chicken bone, very nearly jumped up into the air in fright. "Peak Lord Li!" he gasped, his eyes widening. Without even thinking about it, he stuffed the entire chicken bone into his mouth, then vigorously crunched it to pieces and swallowed it down, his face turning a deep purple in the process. In the entire sect, the person he feared the most was Li Qinghou, which was especially true after having eaten so many of his chickens. Bai Xiaochun actually felt a little bit guilty. Wiping the sweat from his brow, he hurried over, looking extremely charming and also very sincere as he clasped hands and bowed in greeting. "Disciple offers greetings, Peak Lord." Li Qinghou looked at Bai Xiaochun, his face completely expressionless. Inwardly, he felt a bit torn. Bai Xiaochun's ancestor had truly shown him a great kindness, and Li Qinghou was the type of person who valued such things deeply. Despite what Bai Xiaochun had obviously done, he couldn't forget about what had happened all those years ago. The peak lords from Green Crest Peak and Violet Cauldron Peak had come to speak with him about the matter of the spirit tail chickens. Although the chickens weren't necessarily very expensive, Li Qinghou couldn't allow other people to criticize his own disciple, so he compensated them with several times more than the chickens' actual value. Now, he looked at Bai Xiaochun, feeling even more irritated than ever at how he wasn't living up to expectations. Li Qinghou snorted and then said, "You've been an Outer Sect disciple for a little more than half a year, but your cultivation base has only progressed from the third level of Qi Condensation to the fourth. Pleased with yourself?" Bai Xiaochun blinked, then cleared his throat, unsure of how to respond. However, he continued to put on the charming face, reassuring himself that as long as he maintained the right attitude, things should work out fine in the end. However, when he thought about the fact that he had just been munching on a spirit tail chicken leg, he couldn't help but sweat. Li Qinghou felt a headache coming on. After a moment of thought, he coolly continued, "Considering how you've been fooling around, you obviously have a lot of time on your hands. In that case, why don't you join the competition for fourth and fifth level Qi Condensation disciples in three months? It will be right here on Fragrant Cloud Peak." Bai Xiaochun's heart immediately began to pound. He had heard about the competition Li Qinghou was referring to. He knew that there were prizes to be won, but he had also heard that the fighting was fierce. If you weren't careful, it was even possible to get injured. Bai Xiaochun scowled. "Peak Lord, I'm only at the fourth level of Qi Condensation. If I join in the competition, what happens if one of them ends up beating me to death? What would I do then...?" Li Qinghou completely ignored his question. Looking very serious, he said, "It's not a request. You will join the contest. Plus, if you don't place in the top 5, then I'll..." Bai Xiaochun sighed. "I know, you'll expel me from the sect, right...?" Li Qinghou glared at him. Knowing how mischievous Bai Xiaochun was, he realized that the threat of being expelled from the sect probably wasn't enough to keep him in place. Remembering how much Bai Xiaochun feared death, he suddenly swished his sleeve, sweeping Bai Xiaochun up from the courtyard and then flying toward the top of the mountain. Bai Xiaochun's heart began to thump madly. Li Qinghou's expressionless face gave him a very bad feeling. The wind buffeted his face as they flew along, and before he had time to even analyze

the matter, Li Qinghou had taken him to a location behind Fragrant Cloud Peak. It was a place considered to be a restricted area, a place few disciples ever visited. The first thing he noticed was the thick vegetation everywhere. As they flew down toward the area, Li Qinghou pulled Bai Xiaochun along until they were in a valley. Almost immediately, a sinister aura could be sensed, and the various plants in the area brightened in color, and even began to rustle. Bai Xiaochun's heart raced as he looked at the plants, and a sensation of deadly crisis rose up in his heart. He was just about to speak when, all of a sudden, a crimson viper raised its head, flicking its forked tongue as it stared icily at Bai Xiaochun. "Snake!" Bai Xiaochun had no choice but to follow Li Qinghou into the valley, and when he did, his scalp went numb as he realized that the ground, the plants, and even the trees in this place were filled with countless snakes. All of them were brightly colored, making it obvious that they were vipers. Furthermore, all of them were staring at him with cold, beady eyes, forked tongues flicking in and out of their mouths. Bai Xiaochun started trembling. He had always been scared of snakes, and the way these ones were looking at him left him terrified. Although they didn't actually seem like they were going to attack him, their long fangs dripped with venom in a very frightening fashion. It was at this point that Bai Xiaochun suddenly remembered that he had his Undying Skin, and that these vipers probably wouldn't be able to bite through it. Considering that, even if there were more snakes than there already were, to him they were about as dangerous as feeble chickens. In the end, they weren't really very scary at all. However, his eyes then turned up in thought, and he realized how risky it would be to not look scared. If that happened, Li Qinghou might take him to an even more dangerous place. Therefore, he immediately let out a shriek, and tried to look as frightened as possible. Li Qinghou let out a cold snort, then unleashed his cultivation base. The wriggling snakes slowly moved out of the way to make a small path, at the end of which was a pitch-black cave that emanated a noxious odor. "Uncle Li, s-spare me, please!" Bai Xiaochun called out in a quavering voice. "I didn't break any sect rules!" Li Qinghou's face was completely expressionless as he grabbed Bai Xiaochun and dragged him over to the cave. Once they reached the cave mouth, he waved his sleeve, causing the darkness to fill with a bit of light. Bai Xiaochun could instantly see that the cave was filled with numerous vipers, some of them very large. The hissing sounds they made seemed to contain some strange, mesmerizing power that instantly caused Bai Xiaochun's eyes to go wide. A sensation of crisis rose up, and he began to pant as he realized that the cultivation base power of these vipers was unexpectedly high. There was even one four-colored viper that was comparable to the fifth level of Qi Condensation. The stares of the snakes made Bai Xiaochun feel as if a cold wind were blowing down his back. Then he thought about his Undying Skin and realized that he wouldn't last for very long against these snakes. This time, he didn't need to pretend, he really was scared. "This is 10,000 Snakes Valley," Li Qinghou said, voice cool, "where we harvest venom here on Fragrant Cloud Peak. Each one of these snakes is extremely venomous. In fact, a single drop of their venom is potent enough to kill a hundred oxen. "Any cultivator under Foundation Establishment bitten by one of these snakes, who doesn't get the antidote in time, will die. Deep in the cave is the snake king, who is in the great circle of Qi Condensation. Get bitten by that snake, and even I would have a hard time saving you. "If you don't get in the top 5 in the Outer Sect's competition, don't worry. I won't expel you from the sect. I'll just bring you here and have you harvest venom." Li Qinghou looked over at Bai Xiaochun. "Um... uh... Uncle Li, don't worry, it's just a little sect competition, right? Only the top 5, you said, right? I'll definitely pull it off!" Bai Xiaochun's tongue felt as if it were sticking to the roof of his mouth, and his face was deathly pale. When he heard that there were even more fearsome vipers in the depths of the cave, he swore to himself that he would never come back to this place again in his entire life. When Li Qinghou heard Bai Xiaochun's declaration, he smiled inwardly. However, his face remained completely expressionless, and he even snorted as he took Bai Xiaochun away. When they got back to Fragrant Cloud Peak, he tossed Bai Xiaochun onto a mountain path and then turned as if to leave. But then he stopped and looked back. Voice casual, he said, "Oh right, how were the spirit tail chickens?" Without even waiting for Bai Xiaochun to respond, he turned and flew off into the distance. Bai Xiaochun sighed, then turned and headed back toward his courtyard, frowning the entire way. As he walked along, the wind blew, rustling the leaves, which made him think about the vipers. Back in his courtyard, he sat there, gnashing his teeth and scowling. "Li Qinghou.... More like Li the Snake! Ridiculous!" "I'll definitely never go back to that 10,000 Snakes Valley. If I get bitten, I'll lose my poor little life." In that moment, Bai Xiaochun made

his decision. "I'm definitely going to go all out to get into the top 5!" "If I'm going to join that competition, then considering the level of my cultivation base, I'm definitely going to need some spirit medicine!" Taking a deep breath, Bai Xiaochun clenched his fists. A wild gleam appeared in his eyes as he glanced around. Eventually, his gaze fell upon the spiritwinter bamboo. "After I finish the spiritwinter bamboo mission and get my reward, I'll have enough merit points to get some spirit medicine. Unfortunately, the bamboo hasn't even reached fifteen meters. I'm not sure if that meets the requirements...." Having reached this point in his train of thoughts, Bai Xiaochun still wasn't certain about the bamboo. However, he didn't have any other options. After doing a few calculations, he confirmed that the appointed deadline to hand in the spirit vegetation was rapidly approaching. Bai Xiaochun scowled his way through a few more days. At dawn on the fourth day, he got up early and walked over to the bamboo. Then he wrapped his arms around one stalk after another to pull them up out of the ground. What he found was that although the bamboo did not seem to be very heavy, each and every stalk actually felt as if it were made from metal, and was incredibly heavy. The ground trembled constantly until ten stalks of bamboo were uprooted. Each one was close to fifteen meters tall, and as thick as a person. Throwing them over his shoulder, he marched out of the courtyard in the direction of the Missions Office. Unfortunately, his bag of holding wasn't very big inside, and the bamboo just wouldn't fit in it. That was why he had to physically carry the bamboo. Thankfully, he was much stronger now, having achieved the Undying Iron Skin. Otherwise, he would never have been able to pull the task off. As he walked along, he muttered to himself miserably. But then he thought about the competition, and the vipers, and possibility of his bones and tendons being snapped in the fighting. "Why am I so unlucky...?"