

It was late at night, and Fragrant Cloud Peak was blanketed in darkness. If you held your hand out in front of you, you wouldn't even be able to see your fingers. Other than the whispering wind, everything was peaceful and quiet. Not even a peep could be heard coming from the birds and beasts.

Bai Xiaochun hurried through the darkness, Zhou Xinqi's silk band tied around his arm, following the path that led to one of the spirit tail chicken farms. As he sped along, he would occasionally duck into a nearby thicket and proceed along in concealment. Soon, the spirit tail chicken farm came into view up ahead. Most of the chickens were asleep, although a few were walking about to and fro. There was even one chicken in particular which was strolling in Bai Xiaochun's direction. He crouched there in the thicket, licking his lips until the spirit tail chicken neared the fence. Just as he was pulling out his bamboo cicada, his heart flip-flopped, and a look of vigilance filled his eyes. At the same time, shouting could be heard from behind him as numerous figures charged toward him through the night. They even had flame globes which cast radiant light out into the night. "Damned chicken thief! Finally you show your face!" "We've been waiting for you here for days! Now we've got you surrounded, let's see how you try to escape!" As the cries echoed out, eight figures closed in on Bai Xiaochun, completely surrounding him. These were the disciples in charge of taking care of the chickens. Even after days of painstakingly laying in wait, they had never imagined that today would be the day when everything paid off. Their hearts were filled with righteous ardor as they prepared to immediately execute justice upon the chicken thief. When their words rang out, Bai Xiaochun was initially very nervous. But then he looked up in thought for a moment and let out a cold snort. "Shut up, you people!" he said. "Keep it down!" His words were spoken without the slightest politeness, as if justice were on his side. He did nothing to attempt to flee, but instead, arrogantly rose to his feet, making sure that the silk band on his arm was clearly visible. "See that?!" he asked. "I'm the captain of the chicken thief task force." Brow furrowed, he looked around at the eight disciples, clearly displeased. This sudden development caused the eight interlopers to stare in shock. Some of these disciples had seen Bai Xiaochun earlier in the day. After examining him a bit closer, they started to hesitate. One of the disciples seemed a bit skeptical about the situation. "Oh, it's Junior Brother Bai. Well... what are you doing here so late at night, huh?" His words caused the other disciples to stare suspiciously at Bai Xiaochun. Flicking his sleeve and frowning, Bai Xiaochun angrily said, "Elder Sister Zhou herself asked me to be the captain of the chicken thief task force, so of course I'll do everything in my power to catch the chicken thief. I've even given up my nightly cultivation routine to come here and lay in wait. However, considering how much of a racket you people are making, I'm sure the chicken thief has long since fled." He really did look like the picture of someone trying to catch a thief. The chicken farm disciples exchanged dismayed glances, and some of them even looked a bit embarrassed. As for the most suspicious of the disciples, his expression softened a bit, although he still didn't seem totally convinced. Seeing that their suspicions hadn't been completely dispelled, Bai Xiaochun gave a cold harrumph and, before anyone could ask any more questions, he decided to seize the initiative and put the onus on them. "No wonder you people have lost so many spirit tail chickens! You're completely negligent. Look over there, your fence is even broken!" He pointed over to a spot where there really was a hole in the fence, although it wasn't very obvious. It had actually been punched into the fence by a struggling spirit tail chicken that he had been in the process of stealing a while back. The chicken farm disciples looked in the direction that Bai Xiaochun was pointing, and when they saw the hole, expressions of shock appeared on their faces. It was true that they really hadn't paid much attention to tiny details like this in the past. "And look

at that spirit tail chicken. How did you plan to protect it after it walked all the way over here!?" Bai Xiaochun seemed to be getting more and more angry, and was even raising his voice, causing the chicken farm disciples' faces to flush with shame. "According to my investigation, this spot right here is the most remote location on the chicken farm. You should be guarding this place especially closely. But look, I was here for ages before any of you people showed up." The more Bai Xiaochun talked, the angrier he got. In the end, he let out a long sigh. "How do you people expect to catch a thief like this, huh? Based on my experience catching thieves, if my speculations are correct, then this is the location in which the most chickens were taken." As soon as the words left his mouth, the chicken farm disciples began to tremble inwardly. Exchanging glances, they saw the shock in each others' eyes. Based on the information they had, this was indeed the location where they had lost the most chickens. In fact, that was the reason why they had decided to stand guard here. Bai Xiaochun had hit the nail square on the head, causing the entire group to look at him with increasing admiration. Even the disciple who had been the most suspicious of him now felt that he had been in the wrong. First he thought about how Bai Xiaochun had sacrificed his cultivation time to come catch the thief, and then he remembered how enthusiastic and duty-bound he had seemed earlier in the day. Finally, the disciple took a deep breath, clasped hands and bowed deeply. "Junior Brother Bai, please don't be too deeply offended at what I said earlier. Many thanks for your sacrifice. We will repair this spot immediately, and will definitely increase the guard in this area!" Everyone else clasped hands as well, thinking about how rare it was to find someone as zealous as Bai Xiaochun. He was obviously trying to help them, and that made them even more sorry for their impulsiveness earlier. Bai Xiaochun sighed, then earnestly offered them a few more pieces of advice before turning to leave. As he walked off, the eight disciples once again clasped hands and bowed, completely moved by what he had just done. "Junior Brother Bai is such a good guy." As soon as Bai Xiaochun was out of sight, a cold wind brushed against his back, and he realized that he was sweating profusely from how close of a call it had been. However, his stomach was still grumbling, so he decided to go to the other two chicken farms to see if there was still a chance to make a move. He strolled down the mountain path, looking around cautiously as he went along to make sure he wasn't being followed. His expression was grave as he pondered how to go about stealing a chicken from the next chicken farm. As the wind blew, it fluttered the silk band tied around his arm. Meanwhile, up in dark night air, a woman stood on a blue flying silk, completely undetectable to everyone down below as she examined the situation on this part of Fragrant Cloud Peak. Suddenly, her expression flickered as she caught sight of Bai Xiaochun walking along, looking around vigilantly. Her eyes gradually began to glow with praise. "This little Junior Brother really takes his responsibilities seriously." Naturally, that woman was Zhou Xinqi, who had been inspecting the area. Earlier, there had been lots of disciples on patrol, but as the night wore on, most of them had gone back to practice cultivation. Bai Xiaochun was the only one out and about actually trying to catch the thief. "With him around, the chicken thief will definitely have to rein things in." Zhou Xinqi looked away and then headed back to her Immortal's cave, feeling much better about the situation. Two hours later, Bai Xiaochun had circled back around to his courtyard residence. Once inside, he slapped his bag of holding to produce two spirit tail chickens. Chuckling to himself, he plucked them and tossed them into the wok, soon after which, a fragrant aroma filled the air, causing him to salivate. Then, he didn't even wait for them to cool before wolfing them down ravenously. Finally, he burped, patted his belly, and then laid back, looking so content he almost seemed drunk. Another month passed, during which time Bai Xiaochun conscientiously went out at night, looking very solemn as he appeared randomly to inspect the various chicken farms. Despite that, the chickens still continued to go missing. They seemingly disappeared without a trace, which was a deep mystery. The chicken farm disciples were increasingly feeling as if they had lost all face. Filled with passion, they continuously swore oaths to not give up until the chicken thief was incarcerated. Bai Xiaochun seemed to be taking things even more seriously than them. He was completely devoted to defending the chicken farms, as if he wasn't even willing to rest until the thief was apprehended. There was even one occasion in which he stood guard at one chicken farm for four days and four nights. The hard work being put in seemed to put a lot of pressure on the chicken thief, and the rate of thievery seemed to have been reduced. However, the thief didn't disappear altogether. Eventually, nearly half of the spirit tail chickens on Fragrant Cloud Peak were now gone, and the ones left behind were mostly juveniles. In the end, even the chicken farm disciples began

berating themselves, and couldn't help but sigh emotionally. They were of the opinion that if the rest of the chicken thief task force was as conscientious as Junior Brother Bai, then the chicken thief would definitely have been caught already. Zhou Xinqi was getting particularly anxious. One afternoon when Bai Xiaochun was sitting cross-legged at one of the chicken farms, looking around vigilantly, a blue flying silk descended from above, upon which was Zhou Xinqi. After seeing who it was, Bai Xiaochun charmingly called out, "Elder Sister Zhou." When Zhou Xinqi's beautiful eyes fell upon Bai Xiaochun, she smiled and said, "Hard at work, I see, Junior Brother Bai." Soon, other disciples in the area were rushing up, clustering around Zhou Xinqi and also Bai Xiaochun. "Ladies and gentlemen, I offer my profound thanks for your assistance recently," she said softly. "I am truly grateful. However, the chicken thief is still as brazen as ever. Therefore, I will join you to stand guard." After looking around at the group, she frowned slightly and continued, "I'm wondering if perhaps the chicken thief has a connection to my Master. Otherwise, wouldn't he steal spirit tail chicken from the other mountain peaks too? Instead, he seems to be targeting only my Master's chickens!" When Bai Xiaochun heard that, his eyes began to shine brightly, and he very nearly slapped his thigh. What Zhou Xinqi said made a lot of sense, and as he thought about it, he couldn't help but look off in the direction of Violet Cauldron Peak. Slowly, his eyes narrowed to cover over the wily glint deep therein. Now that Zhou Xinqi had shown herself, many of her admirers also began to flock to the area. Soon, vast crowds had gathered at Fragrant Cloud Peak's spirit tail chicken farms. The chicken thief was now incapable of doing anything, and in the following days, not a single spirit tail chicken was lost. Even still, the mysterious and unfathomable chicken thief was already completely famous. In fact, many people had taken to calling him the Chicken-Thieving Fiend. He had caused such a stir among the disciples that he was considered to stand alongside the owner of the little turtle as one of the most mysterious figures on Fragrant Cloud Peak. In fact, even the Outer Sect disciples on Green Crest Peak and Violet Cauldron Peak had heard about him. Now that the chicken thief had apparently vanished, Zhou Xinqi felt a lot better. Although he had never been apprehended, when she thought about how hard Bai Xiaochun had worked over the past month or more, she ended up rewarding him with the jade pendant anyway, as a form of encouragement. When the matter finally came to an end, Bai Xiaochun's earnestness and devotion had caused quite a few fellow Outer Sect disciples to notice how pure, charming, and dedicated he was.