

The motion of Bai Xiaochun sticking his head out of the window instantly attracted the attention of the sallow-faced young man. Enraged, he yelled, “So, you’re the guy who took my spot!”

It was too late for Bai Xiaochun to duck his head back into the window. He immediately pasted an innocent expression onto his face and said, “No, it wasn’t me!” “Liar! You’re so skinny and short, you’re obviously a newbie here!” Xu Baocai clenched his hands into fists and stared furiously at Bai Xiaochun. He was so angry that he looked like he might explode at any moment. Feeling quite wronged, Bai Xiaochun peeped: “It really had nothing to do with me!” “I don’t care! Three days from now on the southern slope of the sect, you and I are gonna have a fight to the death! If you win, then I’ll have no choice other than to suck it up. If you lose, then I get my spot back.” Xu Baocai shoved his hand into his robe and pulled out a blood notice, which he threw onto Bai Xiaochun’s window sill. The notice was covered with countless versions of the character “DIE,” all of them written in blood. Bai Xiaochun looked down at all the “DIE” characters and couldn’t miss the killing intent roiling off of them. His heart went cold. Then he remembered that Xu Baocai had just mentioned a ‘fight to the death,’ and he gasped. “Elder Brother, this isn’t that big a deal! Why did you have to go and use your own blood to write so many characters? Didn’t it... hurt?” “Not a big deal?!” Xu Baocai roared, gnashing his teeth. “Humph! I’ve been living frugally for ages. I saved up spirit stones for seven years! Seven years, do you hear me?!? Only then could I afford to bribe the honor guard into getting me a spot in the Ovens! Then you decide to stick your foot into the door? This enmity will never be reconciled! Three days from now is the day you die!” “I think I’ll pass,” Bai Xiaochun said, picking up the blood notice gingerly between his thumb and forefinger, and then tossing it out the window. “YOU!” raged Xu Baocai. Suddenly, he felt the ground shaking, and he realized that there was a mountain of flesh standing there next to him. It was hard to say how long Big Fatty Zhang had been standing there, but there he was, off to the side, coldly measuring up Xu Baocai. “Ninth Fatty,” he said, addressing Bai Xiaochun, “you’re on dish duty with Second Brother.” Then he looked back at Xu Baocai. “As for you, stop causing such a ruckus! Get your ass out of here!” He swept his ladle through the air threateningly, causing a gust of wind to spring up. Xu Baocai’s face fell, and he backed up several steps. He wanted to keep arguing, but seeing the impatient look on Big Fatty Zhang’s face, he shot a venomous look at Bai Xiaochun, then stalked off. As Bai Xiaochun thought about it, he realized that considering the vicious look Xu Baocai had given him, he was certain to pop up again at some point. Therefore, the best thing to do in this situation would be to stay put in the Ovens. Most likely, Xu Baocai wouldn’t dare to come back there and cause trouble. Days passed. Bai Xiaochun slowly got used to working in the Ovens during the day, and cultivating the Violet Qi Cauldron Control Art at night. However, progress was slow. Eventually he got to the point where he could endure for four breaths of time, but no more, leaving him very frustrated. On one particular night in the middle of his cultivation session, he suddenly heard a big commotion among the fat Elder Brothers. “Close the gate, close the gate! Hurry up, Second Fatty Huang, close that gate!” “Third Fatty Hei, check and see if anyone is spying on us. Quickly!” Bai Xiaochun blinked in shock. Having learned from his previous mistake, he avoided the window and peeked through a crack in the door. What he saw was a bunch of fatties bustling around the courtyard so fast they were almost flying. Moments later, the main gate to the Ovens was closed tightly. Furthermore, for some reason, a light mist had sprung up, making the fatties look even more mysterious than ever. Bai Xiaochun watched the scene playing out. The fatties were now hustling over to one particular thatched hut. Despite all the mist, Bai Xiaochun could clearly see Big Fatty Zhang’s formidable frame, and he seemed to be speaking to the others. The whole scene was very odd, so Bai Xiaochun began to edge away from the door in an attempt to pretend he hadn’t seen anything at all. However, it was at that exact point that Big Fatty Zhang’s voice echoed out: “Ninth Fatty, I know you’re watching. Get out here!” Although he didn’t

speaking very loud, his voice instantly weighed down on Bai Xiaochun. Bai Xiaochun blinked a few times, then slowly walked out the door, putting on the innocent expression of a person who wasn't capable of even hurting a fly. As soon as he neared the group of fatties, Big Fatty Zhang grabbed him and pulled him over to stand among them. Almost immediately, Bai Xiaochun caught a whiff of some unique aroma, something that instantly caused a warm feeling to spread throughout his body. He looked around at the others, and saw that they all had euphoric expressions on their faces. For some reason, he also felt enlivened. It was then that he noticed that Big Fatty Zhang was holding a magical mushroom in his hand. It was about the size of an infant's hand, and as translucent as crystal; all it took was a single glance, and anyone could tell that it was no ordinary item. Big Fatty Zhang looked over at Bai Xiaochun, then held out the mushroom and gruffly said, "Come on, Ninth Junior Brother, take a bite." "Uhh..." replied Bai Xiaochun, eyeing the magical mushroom. Then he looked around at all the fat Elder Brothers, and hesitated. Big Fatty Zhang instantly got irritated. From the look on his face, if Bai Xiaochun didn't eat the mushroom, the two of them would become enemies. It wasn't just him. Second Fatty Huang, Third Fatty Hei, and all the others were all glaring at Bai Xiaochun. Bai Xiaochun swallowed hard. Even in his wildest dreams, he would never have imagined himself in a situation where people would flip out in anger if he didn't take a bite of a priceless magical mushroom, as if it were nothing more than a chicken leg. And yet, that was exactly what was happening right in front of his very eyes. Bai Xiaochun's heart was thumping as he gritted his teeth and accepted the magical mushroom. Finally, he opened his mouth and took a big bite. The mushroom instantly dissolved in his mouth, causing a wonderful sensation to fill his body, something many times more intense than what he had experienced moments before when merely smelling it. Almost instantly, his face flushed bright red. "Excellent. Elder Sun demanded that we use this hundred-year-old magical mushroom in a soup. If we all take a bite, then we'll have to sink or swim together!" Big Fatty Zhang looked extremely content as he opened his mouth and took a nibble. Then he tossed the mushroom to the next fatty in line, and soon, all of them were munching on mushroom flesh. Now that they were all chewing together, the group smiled at Bai Xiaochun as if he were now one of them. Bai Xiaochun chuckled as he realized that all these guys were essentially partners in crime. Furthermore, considering they had gotten so fat this way, it probably wasn't dangerous to join them. It was little wonder Xu Baocai had given him a challenge notice with the word "DIE" written on it so many times.... "Elder Brother," Bai Xiaochun said, "that magical mushroom was scrumptious! I feel like my whole body's on fire!" He licked his lips and looked impatiently at Big Fatty Zhang. In response, Big Fatty Zhang's eyes began to shine brightly. With a hearty laugh, he flamboyantly pulled out a sealwort flower, which he handed to Bai Xiaochun. "Now do you see how amazing the Ovens is, Junior Brother? I wasn't lying! Alright, eat up. Eat till you're stuffed!" Bai Xiaochun's eyes began to shine as he took a big bite. Next, Big Fatty Zhang pulled out some sort of natural precious material, something that looked like a golden jewel, which emanated a fragrant aroma. Bai Xiaochun needed no prompting from Big Fatty Zhang. He immediately took a bite and swallowed it down. The tangy flavor filled him with a wonderful sensation. After that, Big Fatty Zhang produced an incredibly sweet red spirit fruit. More items emerged. Magical mushrooms, various medicinal ingredients, spirit fruits and other precious items. Bai Xiaochun partook of them all, as did the other fatties. He ate so much that soon, his head was spinning. He almost felt drunk, his body hot and burning to the point where white steam rose up from the top of his head. He already felt as fat as a ball. The more he ate, the more kindly Big Fatty Zhang and the others looked at him. In the end, they slapped their stomachs and laughed heartily, and they all truly seemed like partners in crime. Head swimming, Bai Xiaochun stretched out his arms and legs. His hand landed on Big Fatty Zhang's giant stomach, and his foot landed off to the side. He began to laugh along with the others. "Other servant departments would kill to get one of their own into the Outer Sect. But we kill to make sure we stay out! Who wants to go there anyway? What's so good about the Outer Sect, huh?" Big Fatty Zhang sounded very proud of this. As he finished speaking, he pulled out a ginseng root. The root itself had countless faintly visible age rings, and was covered with numerous rootlets. Clearly, this ginseng root was very old. "Ninth Junior Brother, our cultivation bases are all strong enough that we could have become Outer Sect disciples a long time ago. However, we prefer to hide our true level. Look, there are Outer Sect disciples who would kill for the chance to get a single bite of a one-hundred-year-old ginseng root like this. Do we look scared?" Big Fatty Zhang subsequently plucked a rootlet off and popped it into his

mouth, chewed, and swallowed. Then he handed the ginseng root to Bai Xiaochun. Bai Xiaochun was so stuffed he almost couldn't see straight. "Elder Brother, I'm full.... I really can't eat another bite--" Before he could even finish speaking, Big Fatty Zhang plucked off a rootlet and stuffed it into Bai Xiaochun's mouth. "Ninth Junior Brother, you're far too skinny, so skinny that the girls in the sect won't like you. In our sect, they like guys like us Brothers, stalwart and plump! Come on, eat...." Big Fatty Zhang let out a huge burp. Then he picked up a stack of empty bowls, simultaneously pointing to two scrolls hanging on either side of the nearby thatched hut, upon which was written a couplet. "Look, we have a saying here that goes I'd rather starve to death in the Ovens than struggle up the ladder in the Outer Sect ." Bai Xiaochun looked over at the couplet and said, "Yeah, for sure! We all want to starve to death here! Uh... yeah, starve to death." Then he slapped his stomach and let out a burp. Hearing this, Big Fatty Zhang and the others all started laughing. They all were finding Bai Xiaochun to be increasingly charming. "Today is a great day," Big Fatty Zhang said. "Ninth Junior Brother, I have something important to tell you. We have certain ways of doing things here in the Ovens, and to fit in, you need to memorize a certain mnemonic. Pay attention. Fruits and herbs of a magical nature; Nibble the edges but spare the stem; Slice the meat thin when there's some to butcher; As for the bones leave some flesh on them; Spirit congee? Water it down until it's thin; Fine wine? Half a cup will do you in . "These six lines were compiled after years of suffering by previous generations. If you go about eating following these principles, then you're guaranteed to be safe. Alright, let's call it a night. Head to sleep everyone, today's midnight snack is over. The Outer Sect disciples are still waiting for their soup." As he spoke, Big Fatty Zhang began to fill the empty bowls with rice gruel. Bai Xiaochun's head was spinning, and he couldn't stop thinking about the six lines of truth he had just been told. He looked over at Big Fatty Zhang and the others filling up the bowls, let out a burp, then squatted down to examine the bowls themselves. Then, his mouth turned up into a smile. "Elder Brothers, these bowls are too nice." Big Fatty Zhang and the others looked back at him with strange expressions. Looking as charming as ever, he chuckled and said, "At first glance, they don't look very big, but can actually hold a lot of food. Why don't we make them look big, but hold less food? For example, we could make the bottom of the bowls... thicker!" Big Fatty Zhang stared in shock, as though he had just been struck by lightning. His rolls of fat then began to quiver, and his eyes began to shine brightly. The other fatties began to pant, and their fat also began to tremble. All of a sudden a loud smacking sound rang out as Big Fatty Zhang slapped his thigh. Then he threw his head back and laughed uproariously. "Yes, yes, YES! That's an idea worth passing down! Future generations in the Ovens will all benefit from this! Ninth Junior Brother, I never imagined that someone as charming as you would actually be as crafty as this! Hahaha! You were born to be a part of the Ovens!"