

THE GREAT MING IN THE BOX

Chapter 7: Where Did These Little People Come From?

Li Daoxuan suddenly discovered five additional little people in the box—yes, extra ones.

That morning, after buying food for the little people, he had specifically counted them to ensure there were exactly forty-two, not one more or less. (For those who forgot, please refer to Chapter 5.)

But now, there were forty-seven little people in the box.

These five extra little people seemed to have “squeezed in” from the edge of the scenic box.

They wore matching uniforms in a deep red color, with swords hanging at their waists and iron tools in their hands. On the backs of their vests was a white circle bearing the character “Yamen,” making them look like ancient officials.

When they “squeezed in” to the scenic box, Li Daoxuan’s attention was focused on the villagers, so he didn’t witness that exact moment. When he noticed these five little people, they had already reached the village entrance.

Li Daoxuan felt greatly puzzled: How did these five officials enter my scenic box? How strange!

This was like a person who kept only forty-two hamsters suddenly finding five extra ones in the box, and not even the same breed—it was baffling.

He circled the scenic box, looking left and right repeatedly. All four sides of the box were tightly sealed glass, with only the top cover as the possible point of entry or exit. But after placing the rice inside, Li Daoxuan had clearly shut the lid firmly.

The vents?

No, the vents were small and high up, so the little people couldn’t pass through them.

That made no sense!

While he was investigating this, he saw that the five new official figures seemed to be arguing with the villagers, so he quickly pressed his ear against the box and listened intently.

One official figure was barking and shouting angrily: “You lowly peasants, constantly evading taxes—are you planning a rebellion?”

Another official waved his iron tool back and forth: “If you don’t pay your taxes now, I’ll throw every last one of you in jail.”

The Village Chief figure stepped forward, forcing a smile: “Honorable officials, it’s not that we won’t pay taxes, but we have no money or grain. Everyone is on the verge of starving to death. Look at the weather—it hasn’t rained a drop for months, all the crops in the fields have perished...”

The official sneered coldly: “Drought is no excuse. The imperial court’s tax silver must be paid in full under any circumstances, or it’s treason.”

The Village Chief had a sorrowful expression: “Honorable officials, look at the people in our village—everyone looks pale and thin, likely to collapse at a breeze. How could we have any money? We’re dying from hunger and truly can’t pay our taxes.”

The official snapped: “Worthless wretch, I’ll search the village right now. If I find you’ve hidden grain to avoid payment, you’ll rot in jail forever.”

He shoved the Village Chief aside and swaggered arrogantly into the village.

Watching this scene, Li Daoxuan couldn’t help but find it amusing. Were these officials and villagers starting some new development?

Back when he first saw the scenic box, it had shown a script—a group of mountain bandits robbing and killing in the village, so he thought the little people were mechanical performers reenacting a preset story. He had intervened physically and killed the mountain bandits but eventually realized the little people had actual consciousness.

But the box was so small, and there were only forty-two little people inside, so he assumed no further changes would occur. Yet now, out of nowhere, five more little people appeared, acting out a plot where officials oppressed good citizens?

What exactly was happening?

Something wasn't right!

A profoundly strange and unsettling feeling rose within his heart.

This box wasn't as simple as he imagined—it surely wasn't just a case of keeping a boxful of little people.

The five official figures wreaked havoc in the village, barging into villagers' homes randomly and overturning furniture everywhere, filling the place with noise.

The Village Chief grew visibly tense. Ordinary homes weren't a worry since everyone truly had no food, but Gao Yiye's home—that was half-filled with giant rice pieces as large as millstones. If the officials found it...

The more nervous he got, the more he gave away the target.

The officials immediately noticed the villagers' gazes drifting toward a single broken house repeatedly, as if something hidden lay inside.

Every young person in the village gathered in front of that broken house, with two of them pressing their backs against the door as if afraid something might jump out when it opened.

The officials' attention instantly locked onto that broken house.

"Move aside, move aside!" one official shouted as he headed toward Gao Yiye's home.

The villagers tensed up instantly, everyone's expression changing. The Village Chief instinctively blocked the official's path.

The official pushed him hard, and he staggered to the side, nearly falling.

A group of officials darted to the front of the house: "Get lost!"

Several young men clenched their fists, but no one dared or wanted to step aside.

The official kicked out suddenly. Gao Yiye and Gao Chuwu had their backs against the door when the blow sent them tumbling aside. With no support, the wooden board door swung open, and the rice inside immediately surged out and slid toward them.

With a crash, the giant rice grains rolled everywhere. The official at the front was petrified, but lucky he had practiced some martial arts for days and was fairly agile enough to leap backward instantly. Plus, after Gao Chuwu and others had shoved the giant rice back into the house earlier, it was stacked more neatly, so its sliding force weakened. It didn't crush the official right

away under the rice pile but only buried his lower half. The other officials looked terrified too and leaped back together.

The buried official flailed his arms and legs, trying to escape. Upon seeing he was trapped under giant rice grains as large as millstones, he gasped in shock. The four other officials gaped in astonishment, unable to speak for ages.

The villagers had no idea what to say either and remained completely silent.

The scene abruptly descended into eerie quietness. After several seconds, the official buried in the rice piles finally yelled: "Stop gawking! Get me out of here."

The other four officials rushed forward, pushed aside the rice grains, and pulled him free.

One official stammered: "Such things are hidden in Gaojia Village? This... rice... what exactly is going on? Why is it so enormous?"

The Village Chief gritted his teeth: “This is divine rice bestowed upon us by the Great Deity for survival. If you dare touch it, the Great Deity will end your lives.”

The five officials exchanged glances, unsure if to believe him.

The scene froze again, with no one speaking for many seconds.

Li Daoxuan had watched all this quietly and wondered if he should intervene. The scene was bizarre. To protect his own forty-two little people, he knew he could reach in and crush these new officials now—just like he’d crushed the mountain bandits before.

But was that the best move?

Where had these five officials come from? How did they enter the box? Would more little people barge in later?

So many things remained unclear!

Acting rashly now might not be the best solution.