

We were already munching on some roasted sausages when we encountered the long, winding line formed by human bodies.

No, a line would be quite an inaccurate analogy; it was more of a human version of the Great Wall of China, with its building material constantly squirming, fanning themselves and straining their necks to despair at its length. It was a sultry mid-July at a nightmarket in Yi-Lan, where we found the breadth of the street thus reduced by the massive structure. Unable to quench our curiosity, we sent Dad as a scout to discover the source. Ere long we received the intelligence: a famous food stall selling meat buns that was crowned the best of the county. The line was so long and winding that no hint of it could be detected. Curiosity killed the cat, it is known, but it is also said that satisfaction brought it back. We were already on a family vacation, so what's the harm of giving the local food a try? It was an hour of squirming, fanning ourselves and straining our necks to peek over heads before we saw the puffs of

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steam rising into the sky of the sweltering summer night. It was another thirty minutes before we made it through the crowd of heads over which it was seen.

My history teacher once told me that "things fought over are things valuable." My tastebuds are naturally insensitive, but as I bit into the precious bun we took all the pain to procure, I thought I sensed a more layered flavor, a more unique aroma. Even though a more pragmatic — and aromantic — part of my brain claimed that it was no different from the streetside variety, I believed that it had a deeper, more complex taste that raised it above the mundanes. After all, it would not have attracted so many if it did not deserve its title, would it?

Psychology is a mesmerizing study. High demand raises the value of common objects. As humans naturally tend to avoid pain both physical and emotional, on finding out that the product falls short of expectation, we strive to justify it to lessen disappointment and humiliation. Praises of the now-worthy-enough thing proceed to pique the curiosity in more breasts and lengthen the line even more. What is the point of accusing people of being sheep or being prey to folly? After all, we are all prey to the natural tendencies that creep into our behaviors discreetly. Right under our judgmental noses.