

Gold Chapter 24

Chapter 24

The Yu Family's meals had always lacked oil. There were only two occasions when the family could eat meat; the first was during the New Year, and the second was when Yu Bo, the hope of the entire family, came home. Stewed fatty meat and cabbage [1] was Yu Bo's favorite dish during his childhood.

Yu Bo was already accustomed to eating stir-fried dishes in town, so his taste in food had changed a long time ago. However, he was unable to refuse his mother who wholeheartedly cared for him.

Madam Zhao glanced at him, then entered the west room indifferently. Zhao Meilan, who was the only daughter of a county scholar-official, held contempt for the whole Yu Family. Her mother-in-law was stingy, while her eldest sister-in-law was vulgar and lazy. Her second sister-in-law was cowardly and incompetent. Moreover, none of the children in the family were presentable.

If she had a choice, she seriously didn't want to stay in the Yu Family's house at all. However, they were her husband's family, so she still needed to give her husband some face.

By the time Madam Zhang returned from the butcher's in the neighboring village with half a catty of fat meat, Madam Liu also came back after washing the laundry. Without giving her a chance to take a break, Madam Zhang had ordered Madam Li, who was aimlessly wandering around the courtyard with a broom, "You go dry the clothes. Second daughter-in-law, you go cook!"

The entire family had unanimous approval for Madam Liu's culinary skills.

Madam Zhang personally washed the meat and cut it up on the cutting board. After that, she counted the pieces and instructed Madam Liu, "Third Son likes the dishes that you cook the most, so cook well and don't slack off. You guys help with the preparations!"

Even if Madam Zhang didn't say it, Yu Xiaocao and her sister wouldn't have let their mother do all the work alone. After she left, Xiaocao smiled and said, "I doubt Younger Uncle and Aunt like to eat 'stewed fatty meat and cabbage'. Mother, why don't I try making a couple of dishes? I have a lot of recipes in my mind that I haven't had the chance to try out!"

"You can cook, but you're not allowed to touch the meat. Your grandmother knows very clearly how many pieces there are!" When they had good ingredients, Madam Zhang would always take a count because she was afraid that people would steal some while cooking.

'Big pot mixed stew' [2] was very popular in most villages in the north. However, not all ingredients were suitable for the mixed stew. Yu Xiaocao had been craving stir-fried dishes, but she didn't have any oil. Madam Zhang was so stingy that she wasn't even willing to purchase vegetable oil.

Xiaocao looked at the fatty meat and tried to persuade her mother to make some lard with a portion of the meat. The meat can be stewed with cabbage, and she could cook with the lard.

Liu Muyun briefly pondered the idea. The meat would slightly shrink after extracting some lard, but as long as she cooked it carefully, it wouldn't look too unsightly when stewed. Today, Third Younger Brother and Third Sister-in-law came home, so one meat dish really wasn't enough. Moreover, all the other dishes were bland and tasteless. Thus, she decided to use the meat to make a small bowl of lard.

There were a lot of people in the Yu Family, so they usually used two stoves to cook. One was used to cook the bean porridge, while the other was used to make stewed vegetables and millet pancakes. Madam Zhang was very happy today, so with great mercy, she 'allowed' the pancakes to be partially made with wheat flour.

She would rather a miser and suffer herself, than let her youngest son suffer a little. She was even more unwilling to be looked down on by her youngest daughter-in-law, who was the daughter of a county scholar-official. She was still waiting for her youngest son to earn a noble title for her so that she could enjoy old age with her son's success!

Yu Xiaocao saw her mother using the usual method to stew the pork slices and cabbages, which was just throwing them together in one big pot. Afraid that the meat dish would be ruined, she quickly stopped her, "Mother, let me cook this dish. I promise it will be even tastier than the one Mother makes!"

Madam Liu was afraid that the old lady would scold Xiaocao, so she rejected the idea at first. In the end, she couldn't help giving in to Xiaocao and Xiaolian's constant pleading. However, she insisted on supervising on the side.

Xiaocao had already instructed her younger brother to borrow some chili peppers from the Zhao Family. Without a tinge of spiciness, the stewed pork and cabbage [3] would definitely taste bland.

After deciding not to use the usual method to stew the dishes, she used an oiled pan to stir-fry ginger, scallion, chili pepper, and Sichuan peppercorn. After that, she put the meat into the pan to stir-fry, while also adding some salt and soy sauce. Next, she placed the cabbage millet pancakes in the pan, and after a short deliberation, she also added some mystic-stone water inside. Xiaocao noticed that the mystic-stone water had the ability to enhance freshness! It was still the same dish, but with different cooking methods, the tastes were naturally as different as day and night.

"It smells great! Are we eating meat today?" Yu Heizi, who had been playing wildly outside for the entire day, had a keen nose like a dog. After smelling the fragrant aroma, he followed the scent and entered the kitchen.

Before he had the chance to 'sabotage' the food, Madam Zhang, who was behind him, had already pulled on his ear and dragged him out, "Eat, eat! You only know how to eat! What else can you do other than eat? Go and stay in your east room! If you dare to sneakily eat the food, I'll chop your hands off!"

After that, she glared warningly at Madam Li, who was lingering in front of the kitchen. The crafty and lazy Li Guihua hastily lowered her head. She started to sweep the floor, while repeatedly turning to look back.

Madam Zhang looked at the stew fatty meat and cabbage, sniffed it a few times, and blandly said, "Hm, your culinary skills have improved! Continue to cook this way in the future!"

Xiaocao interjected, "Grandmother, if you bring back some soybean oil, we can cook like this every day. We can't do anything without oil!"

Madam Zhang's heart ached at the thought of how much money was needed to buy oil. However, in order to maintain her own dignity, she turned to leave while cursing, "Buy oil? Should I just tear up this old body of mine to make oil for you people?"

Xiaocao's mouth twitched and grumbled, "Even if you want to, it doesn't mean we're willing to eat it. You probably can't get much oil with that dry and bony body of yours..."

"Cao'er! How can you speak in that manner to your elders? If this spread out, would you still have a good reputation? You can't act in this way in the future." Madam Liu was cleaning the pot as she disciplined her daughter.

Yu Xiaocao didn't rebut her, but she still felt indignant inwardly, 'We need to have filial piety to the elderly, but we can't be foolishly devoted to them either, right?'

Xiaocao vented her anger through cooking. Whoosh! She swiftly completed the stir-fried eggplants with garlic [4], dry fried string beans [5], fresh greens with mushroom [6], and stewed meat and cabbage.

In the other pot, an appetizing aroma was emerging from the delicious fish stew [7]. Even Madam Zhao, who was napping in her room, was inwardly surprised by the Yu Family's 'pig food'. When did it ever smell so good?

"It's time to eat!" Little Shitou, who had been dutifully helping to tend the kitchen fire, exclaimed excitedly. Second Sister's cooking skills were so amazing that he could hardly contain his saliva.

The men and women sat on separate tables for the morning meal. Today, the women's table also had the same dishes as the men's table. Four pots that emitted an appetizing aroma were swiftly served on the table. There were many people in the Yu Family, so their foods were usually served in pots.

"There's meat! We're eating meat!" Yu Heizi sniffed up his yellowish snot, while also wiping his mucus with his sleeve blackened with dirt from time to time. Instead of washing her hands, Madam Li also just wiped her dirty hands on the front of her worn-out clothes.

Madam Zhao took a look and was so disgusted that she almost puked. There was no way she could have any appetite in front of this dirty mother and son duo.

Madam Zhang, who had been closely observing her youngest daughter-in-law, followed her line of sight. She frowned, took a bowl, and grabbed some food from each dish. After that, she turned towards Madam Li and her son, "It's too crowded at the table, so you two go back to your room to eat!"

Madam Li stared at the alluring meat and tactlessly said, "We have two extra people, so it is a little crowded. Why are the little brats, who are under ten years old, sitting at the table?! Aren't you brats going to hurry up and make some room?"

As she spoke, she couldn't resist lifting her chopsticks to grab the largest piece of fatty meat. However, she was blocked midway by her mother-in-law. Madam Zhang furiously glared at her thoughtless eldest daughter-in-law and spoke with an aggravated tone, "I'm telling you to go back to your room to eat, so stop with all your nonsense! By restricting the children from eating at the table, who are you trying to mock?"