

## Stay At home 261

### Chapter 261: She Will Get Better!

The smell made Luna's mouth water. She took a look at the kids eating happily, and then took a bite of the chicken.

Her eyes widened in surprise. *The soup is scrumptious, and the chicken is so tender and soft.* She recognized fire chicken, but she didn't know how Mag had made the soup so delicious.

Luna picked up a piece of shiitake. *What's this?* An aromatic smell tickled her nose. *It looks like some kind of mushroom, but it smells so much better than other mushrooms.*

*Maybe the secret of the soup lies in this.* Luna put the shiitake into her mouth and bit into it. The soup came out; meanwhile, the shiitake tasted silky, and had a chicken-like texture.

After she swallowed, the delicious taste lingered in her mouth.

"My compliments to the chef," Luna said. *Yangzhou fried rice, Roujiamo, and tofu pudding, and now this braised chicken and rice. Every dish of his is so different; he's really talented.*

Mag smiled. "Thank you."

The kids finished their food in no time. All but two boxes were empty. A seven-year-old boy put the lids back on carefully, and asked Mag, "Can you lend me the two boxes, sir? I want to bring these home to my sister."

"Sure. These boxes are disposable. You don't need to give them back to me." Then Mag took a box of braised chicken and a box of rice from the bag. "And take these. Don't let your sister go hungry."

"But I don't want to throw them away. They're good containers. Can I keep them, sir?" Jessica asked Mag, touching her boxes.

"I want to keep them too," others echoed. They held the boxes in their arms as if they were something precious.

Mag was touched by their plight. Children as they were, the worries of everyday life were already weighing down on them; they were struggling to survive.

Mag smiled. "All right. You can keep them."

"Thank you, sir!" they cried in delight, and held the boxes over their heads as if they were prizes they had just won.

"It's getting dark. I gotta go home. Bye, Teacher Luna, mister, and Amy," a kid said, and ran away with his boxes.

The other kids said their goodbyes and left too.

"Be careful! And take the major road!" Luna reminded them as she watched them leave.

"I have to head home too, Amy. Mother is waiting for me," Jessica said. "Thank you for the food. I hope to see you and Ugly Duckling again soon." She flashed an innocent smile and touched the kitten's head.

"How is your mother, Jessica? Is she still coughing? Did her eyes get better?" Amy asked with concern.

Jessica looked a little down. "Her health has worsened..." She paused for a moment, and smiled. "But she said she would get better in winter, and that she would be able to do needlework again. Then I won't need to go out in the cold to scavenge."

*Her mother is sick? If she was ill in bed right now, I don't think she would survive this winter, Mag thought, frowning. Amy was in a similar situation to her. If her mother died, she'd be left alone.*

"Don't worry. She'll get better soon," Amy said, patting Jessica on her shoulder. Then she pulled out something from her pocket, and held it behind her back. "I have a present for you, Jessica. Guess what it is?" she said mysteriously.

"A pretty stone?"

"No."

"Heart-shaped roots?"

Amy shook her head again. "No." Then she pulled her hand from behind her back and revealed a yellow butterfly hairpin. "Yellow is your favorite color, right?"

Jessica's eyes lit up. "Yes! It's so beautiful!" She hesitated for a moment, and then shook her head. "I can't take it. It will look much better on you."

"No. It will look better on you. Let me put it on for you." Amy stood on tiptoe and put the hairpin in her hair. "It looks perfect on you, Jessica!"

She smiled. "Really?" She rolled her eyes upwards, trying to look.

"Yes." Luna smiled. She was touched by their friendship.

"Thank you, Amy!" Jessica hugged her friend and touched the hairpin lightly.

Mag pulled out a dragon coin, and secretly put it between the box of braised chicken and the box of rice.

Mag tied up the bag and handed it to Jessica. "Take this home with you. Be careful not to spill the soup."

"Thank you, mister. I'm sure mother will get better after eating this."

"I'm afraid that is not some sort of magic bullet. You must take her to a doctor."

Jessica nodded. "I will." She waved at them. "Bye, Teacher Luna, mister."

Luna smiled. "Bye, Jessica."

Then she waved goodbye to Amy and left, holding a bag and two empty boxes.

"They will grow into respectable adults," Luna said as she watched Jessica's back.

Mag nodded. "Thanks to you. You're a good teacher."

“Will her mother get better, Father?” Amy asked, worried.

Mag touched her hair with a smile. “I’m sure she will.”

## **Chapter 262: The Incident Today Is A Terrible Blow To Me**

Mag and Luna took a stroll in the sunset light, while Amy and the kitten played and giggled.

Luna told Mag that the decimal system and the multiplication table had made quite a splash among the mathematicians in Rodu. They were trying to verify their validity. They were using the decimal system too, but only for currency.

The Roth Empire mainly used the sexagesimal system, while the elves adopted vigesimal system.

They considered the decimal system too complex, so it had never got popular.

But now, everything could be changed. By memorizing the times table, even a child could do multiplication easily.

It used to be extremely difficult to do the multiplication of three-digit numbers, but now they might have found a much easier way.

Still, some people were more reluctant to embrace the decimal system than others. They preferred the old way, the traditional way. They were unwilling to change.

Mag smiled as he listened to Luna.

Luna stopped and looked at Mag solemnly. “Actually, I intended to come over to your place today. My grandfather wants you to go to Rodu to explain the multiplication table. He needs your help to convince others that it’s valid.”

“Thank you, but I’m afraid I can’t leave my business behind.” Mag looked off to the peace statue on which perched two doves. It stood in the middle of the square. “I was meant to become a cook.”

Luna looked at Mag; his hair was full of sunlight. *He’s a talented mathematician, but he’s also a genius cook.* “I’m sorry for having made such a forward request.”

“There is nothing to be sorry for. I have great admiration for your grandfather, and I’m always willing to help. He could write to me if he had any questions.” *The system would never allow me to leave; besides, Rodu is a dangerous place for me.*

Luna’s eyes lit up. “Thank you, Mag. I’ll be sure to tell him.”

They strolled on. Mag thought she would ask him to help the children, but she never did, which made Mag think even more highly of her.

It got darker. Luna took her leave, and Mag started back with Amy. On their way back, they passed by several magic screens being installed by some workers.

Mag took a look at them, suddenly excited. *They must be for the competition. I’ll show them what I’m made of.*

Several customers were looking at the notice on the doorframe. When they saw Mag and Amy, they asked if they were all right.

Mag was touched by their concern. "Thank you. We're okay. The criminals got arrested by the Gray Temple. The restaurant has been damaged a little, but we'll still be able to open tomorrow."

"I have taught them a lesson with my fireballs," said Amy.

The crowd laughed.

"We haven't eaten, Mag. Would you please make something for us to eat? We can't wait to try the new dish," a bald man said, smiling.

"Sorry, but the incident today was a terrible blow to me. I'm in no mood to cook right now, so please come back tomorrow," Mag said, and went into the house with Amy.

The customers exchanged a look.

"We should be sensitive. He's going through a hard time. I heard a dozen thugs almost tore this place apart, and there was a big explosion. They didn't stop until the Gray Temple came," said a lean old man.

"That's horrible! We should give him time and come back tomorrow."

Then the crowd dispersed.

### **Chapter 263: My Conscience Is Clear**

Under the Tree of Life in the dim cave, Irina was dressed in white, sitting cross-legged. A blue light was circling around her and the tree behind her.

Fireflies were flying around her through heart-shaped leaves. She looked even prettier in their light, and the golden moon between her eyebrows seemed to be glowing. She was calm and relaxed as if she had become one with the tree.

The cave was so silent one could almost hear the fireflies beating their wings.

The door of the cave opened a little, and in came Firis. She ran towards the tree, calling, "Princess Irina!"

The green twigs touched her, but didn't tease her like they had before.

Irina's eyes stayed closed. "What happened, Bean Sprout?" she asked calmly.

"Snarr got hurt..." Firis whispered, sad. There was a line of blood under her chin as if she had been whipped.

Irina opened her eyes. The green light disappeared, and the fireflies flew away.

She saw the line of blood under her chin. "Who did this to you?"

Firis covered her throat nervously and lowered her head. "I'm okay, my princess."

"How did he get hurt?" Irina asked.

“He got attacked by some demons. His right leg was badly injured, but he will be all right. It will take some time, though.”

“They have guts, I’ll give them that. But I don’t think it was demons that are responsible.” Irina got up slowly. The twigs parted to let her pass.

Firis looked worried as Irina walked towards the door. “My princess, my wound... I did it to myself...”

“Yeah, right.” The stone door opened completely as she approached. She walked out. Her eyes swept back and forth over the woods and stopped on a big tree. “Come out!”

The woods were silent in the moonlight; now and then, they could hear the reeee of the crickets.

Suddenly, a hole got blasted in the tree, and a shadow flew through it towards Irina.

The princess raised her left hand, and then the shadow got stopped in the air immediately.

It was an old she-elf. She was dressed all in black, hunchbacked, with a hooked nose like an old witch. Her eyes were wild with terror.

“I know you. You’re one of Helena’s dogs. That old hag! Did you bite Firis?” Irina said, frowning.

“How dare you insult Lady Helena!” Hetty roared in anger, glaring at Irina. She looked as if she wanted to kill her.

“Oh, such a loyal dog!” Irina smiled.

“You brought shame on us, you little whore! You should be crucified and die!” she said through gritted teeth.

“No! Princess Irina is the pride of elves!” Firis cried.

Irina frowned and lifted her right hand, but then stopped.

Hetty had been afraid, but now she was looking at her with gloating and contempt. “Hit me if you dare!”

“I don’t want to dirty my hand.” Irina pulled back her left hand too.

Suddenly, a twig flew out of the cave and whipped Hetty on the face.

The impact sent her flying backwards. She thumped against a tree.

She spit blood and several black teeth out, her cheek swollen with a horrible line of blood. She raised her head and scowled at the princess. “People will learn of the truth, and all the elves will know you for a whore!”

“My conscience is clear,” Irina said calmly. She looked up at the moon and raised her voice. “If anything happens to Snarr again, I will kill all of her dogs. Be a good dog and tell her that.”

Then she walked towards the cave.

Hetty looked terrified, and started shuddering despite herself.

"I don't like killing dogs, but sometimes I have no choice," Irina said after she walked inside. The stone door closed slowly.

The overwhelming sense of terror was too much for Hetty. Although many of her bones had been broken, she hurriedly crawled away from this dangerous cave.

#### Chapter 264: Mag Got Into Character

Amy and Ugly Duckling were lying in her crib while Mag was reading the files about elves. "Can you tell me a story, Father?"

Mag put the files down and walked over to her with a smile. "Sure." Normally, he didn't have time to tell her stories; he felt he was not a good father. "Do you want to listen to the story of Snow White?"

Amy nodded. "Yes. But is Snow White made of snow?"

"No. She's a princess with skin as white as snow," he answered, smiling. "Many many years ago, there lived a king and a queen. They prayed to God for a child every day.

"A year later, the queen gave birth to a lovely princess that had skin as white as snow, lips as red as blood, and hair as black as ebony. They named her Snow White..."

Mag told the story in a low voice, from the wicked new queen to the seven dwarves and the poisoned apple.

Amy and Ugly Duckling listened to the story attentively. They looked worried when Snow White was in danger, and relieved when she got help.

"In the end, the prince and Snow White lived happily together, and the wicked queen was dead." The story ended, but Amy didn't look sleepy at all. Mag touched her hair. "If a stranger gave you an apple, would you eat it?" he asked.

Amy thought a moment. "Would I be poisoned if I just took a bite?"

"Yes. The poison would probably kill you." Such a little foodie!

"Then I wouldn't eat it," she said, disappointed. "You won't find a wicked mother for me, right, Father?"

Mag's heart ached. He smiled and shook his head. "No. I won't."

"Thank you, Father." Amy smiled and fell asleep.

The kitten snuggled up to her and went to sleep too.

I never thought about finding her a new mother. Mag tucked them in and kissed her hair. He looked for a while at her sleeping face with fond eyes, and then got back to the files.

Most of the information in the files was useless, but at least he found out the elven princess had been living with the Tree of Life since three years ago. Maybe I can find out more information about her from Sally.

I don't think she has anything to do with that incident. Maybe she is imprisoned there. Mag put the files in the safe and went to lie in his bed.

What's she like? Mag wondered. I should find her for Amy. After all, she's her mother.

The next morning, Mag was woken by the alarm. He turned it off and looked at Amy. She was still sleeping; Ugly Duckling was struggling to keep itself from falling off the edge of the bed. He picked it up and put it beside Amy.

"Meow," it cried out with gratitude.

Mag washed up, brushed his teeth, and went downstairs.

More dishes meant more work, but he had got stronger, and the food he ate every day was helping him build up his strength.

At six AM, Mag went upstairs to wake Amy up. "I ate a poisoned apple. Only a kiss can save me," she whispered.

Mag quickly got into character as well. "I've come to save you, sweetheart." He crouched down and kissed Amy on the forehead.

Amy giggled and opened her eyes. She threw her arms around his neck and kissed his cheek. "You saved me, Father!"

### **Chapter 265: Could She Be His Wife?**

After breakfast, Mag packed food for Krassu and wheeled the bike out.

Ugly Duckling hesitated a long while between home and the bike. It chose the bike at last. Mag didn't understand why it didn't like staying home by itself.

As Mag locked the door, he took a look at Mobai's forge. It was closed, like yesterday. *Weird. I hope he won't invent anything too destructive.* He was a little worried about the safety of his restaurant.

Mag walked into the school gate with Amy. The door of the magic room was left ajar. He knocked on the door, pushed it open, and walked in.

"Good morning, Amy," Krassu said as he held a flask-like glass container, in which were three potions of different colors: red, blue, and white. They were in the same container, but they wouldn't mix.

"What is that, Master Krassu?" Amy asked curiously.

Mag was also intrigued. *The magic potion made by this old magic caster must be very powerful. Maybe it's some kind of magic barrier that can protect Amy.*

"Prepare to have your minds blown!" Krassu said, smiling enigmatically. He shook the glass container vigorously. The three potions swirled and intertwined with each other. Suddenly, a three-colored rose appeared from the mouth of the container. Krassu plucked it and handed it to Amy. "Do you like it?"

Amy smiled a big smile. "Wow. That's really amazing, Master Krassu. This flower is so beautiful!"

Mag gave a wry smile. Apparently, he had never seen this coming. *Didn't he go a little far just to impress his disciple?*

"Did you bring braised chicken and rice and tofu pudding for me, Mag?" the old man asked with anticipation.

Mag nodded. "Yes." He put the bag on the table.

"That will be 1,050 copper coins, Master Krassu," Amy said, holding out her hand. "And I had a braised chicken and two bowls of rice and a tofu pudding this morning. That's also 1,050 copper coins." She smiled.

Krassu couldn't help but smile. "Okay." He and Urien might be the only two masters who had to pay for their disciple's everyday meals.

Mag felt a little bad for the old man, but he took the money anyway.

"Oh, I can't bring Amy back this afternoon. You have to come pick her up at 4:30," Krassu said as he opened the bag carefully.

"All right." Mag stroked Amy's hair and left.

When he got back, a few people were already waiting in line. They greeted him and gazed wonderingly at his bike.

Mag smiled back, opened the door, walked in with Yabemiya and Sally, and closed the door again.

The people outside started chatting.

"That beautiful elf went in as well, why?"

"Could she be his wife?"

"Maybe. I've never seen his wife."

"No. She can't be. She looks around 18, but Mag's daughter is already four."

"A 300-year-old elf can look as young as her. They can live up to 800 years, don't forget. And those who can use life magic are able to stay young forever."

"She's a new waitress, I think. If she were his wife, she would have keys, but she was waiting outside with Yabemiya."

...

Mag put the bike away. He took a look at the dizzy kitten, and then turned to his waitresses. "It's your first day working here, Aisha. Just relax and take it slow. Try not to make too many mistakes."

"Do you need my help with the fire chickens?" Yabemiya asked.

"No. I bought chicken drumsticks. You two can have some rest." *She's really a good worker.*

"Okay," she said, a little disappointed.



“Maybe we can dance a little...” Sally suggested in a whisper. Some of the dance moves were too sexy for her, but somehow she couldn’t get the dance out of her head. She had even practiced a lot by herself last night.

“Can we?” Yabemiya asked Mag, excited.

“Sure.” Mag took out the music box and turned it on. *I may be an exploitative boss, but I let them do whatever they want when there is no work.*

The people outside were still chatting, but they had changed the topic.

“Something happened to the restaurant yesterday.”

“What? Mag went out to find ingredients, didn’t he?”

“Yes. But in the afternoon, I heard someone attacked the restaurant, and completely leveled it. There was even a crater a dozen meters deep in the ground!”

“Oh no! Who would have done such a frenzied thing?!”

### **Chapter 266: I’ll Give It One Star!**

“A golden dragon, a 10th-tier demon, and a band of ferocious forest trolls,” said an old man. “The restaurant was gone in an instant. It was a horrifying sight.”

“Good God!”

“That’s horrible!”

The people in line gasped in shock at the news.

“Mag and his daughter, are they all right?”

“What happened later?”

They were totally intrigued.

“And then, believe it or not, Mag stormed out with his daughter in one arm. He fought with them using his kitchen knife. It was an epic fight,” said the old man.

“Did he win?” a girl asked, anxious.

“Of course. Mag is really strong. After he killed the dragon and the demon, those trolls started to flee like hell,” the old man said excitedly as if he had seen everything with his own eyes. “But they had no chance to escape Mag. He took them out one by one. Who would have thought that the owner of a restaurant could slay a dragon? His kitchen knife is also his weapon!”

“I believe it’s just a story you made up, Carl,” a young man said, smiling. “You’re the storyteller at the peace statue. That’s how I knew you.”

“I like to listen to your stories, but today’s story is not a true story, I’m afraid.”

Carl was pretty famous around here. He had started telling stories at the peace statue 10 years ago. He didn't charge money, and he told stories whenever he felt like it.

He never told a story twice, and his stories were always interesting and vivid; thus, he had garnered himself many fans. Many people liked to wander around the peace statue, hoping to run into him telling a story.

"Stories are not necessarily true, but they need to be interesting," Carl said calmly.

They laughed.

"One more, Carl!"

"No. One story a day. That's my rule," said the old man. "Besides, if I tell another story now, I may have no time to eat."

They looked disappointed. Carl's stories could have served as a great way to kill time. The sweet tofu pudding people and the savory tofu pudding people decided it was too early to argue; they tended to do it at dinner after a strenuous day.

"I can't wait to see what the new dish is."

"I saw him come back with a fire chicken yesterday. It's probably a chicken dish."

"I love chicken soup!"

"By the way, the food competition starts today. Did Mag sign up?"

"He did," said a young demon with horns. "I found his five dishes on the list. The new dish is called braised chicken and rice. But, he registered the sweet tofu pudding and the savory tofu pudding as two different dishes. Aren't they just two different flavors of the same dish?"

"How can they be the same dish? The sweet tofu pudding is disgusting!"

"No! It's the savory one that is inedible!"

They glowered at the demon. The air suddenly got tense.

The demon lowered his head in fright. "Sorry..."

"The top four spots should go to Mag. And the savory tofu pudding will never make the list!"

"I don't mind Mag taking the top four spots, but I'll definitely give the sweet tofu pudding one star!"

"Yeah, that's what it deserves!"

"F\*ck you! I'll give the savory tofu pudding one star!"

It sounded like they were on the brink of fighting.

"That's not good..." Mag sighed before opening the door. *Their hatred towards each other may lead to my loss in the competition.*

Mag opened the door with a smile and welcomed them in.

Yabemiya and Sally stood on either side of the door, the former smiling, and the latter expressionless.

“Who is this, Mag?” Harrison asked as he looked at Sally, surprised.

“This is Aisha. Our new waitress.”

Harrison gave him a thumbs-up. “Hats off to you for finding such beautiful waitresses!”

“This braised chicken and rice is much too expensive!” a voice said, looking at the menu. “Does this use roosters that can lay eggs?”

Some customers were not rich; they came here only once or twice a month. They could barely afford Yangzhou fried rice, but this new dish was even more expensive.

### **Chapter 267: 100 Gold Coins**

“800 copper coins can buy four bowls of tofu pudding,” a woman whispered.

“I secretly saved 500 copper coins, but clearly it’s not enough,” said a young man.

*It’s not very expensive for me, but I’ll wait and see what this is,* Harrison thought, and was not in a rush to order it.

The chicken was giving off a wonderful aroma, but no one was ordering it because of the price.

“I’d like a braised chicken and rice please,” Carl said as he seated himself.

“Okay. Coming right up!” Mag said. He smiled encouragingly at Sally, and strode into the kitchen.

“Don’t worry. You’re doing great,” Yabemiya whispered to Sally, and started taking orders.

“You don’t seem to be bothered by the price, Carl,” said Jimmy, who listened to the old man’s stories growing up. His family owned a little shop.

Now, most people who wanted to order the new dish decided to wait and see if it was worth the money.

“I trust Mag. The higher the price, the better the food. He wouldn’t risk losing customers,” Carl said.

Jimmy nodded his agreement. Still, his monthly pocket money was only a couple thousand copper coins, so he wasn’t willing to spend 800 on a dish.

Mag was not worried. He was only able to make 48 bowls of braised chicken in the morning, and he was convinced he could sell them all out. *If they are willing to pay 600 for a Yangzhou fried rice, another 200 isn’t too much to stop them.*

After they all sat down, some people started chatting in whispers, and others were admiring the pretty waitresses. The sweet tofu pudding guys and savory tofu pudding guys stopped arguing; they didn’t want to ruin everyone’s appetite.

Many people ordered tofu pudding, and then waited for Carl’s braised chicken and rice.

“What do you think of this braised chicken, Gjergj?” asked Harrison.

“Mag doesn’t cook anything but delicious food, and I heard chicken soup is very nutritious. Miranda has a good appetite these days, maybe because of Yangzhou fried rice. I was going to buy some fire chicken for her. But, if this braised chicken has soup too, I won’t need to have our cook make chicken soup. She doesn’t like our cook’s cooking.”

“Your marriage is so sweet, it will give me diabetes!” Harrison said, envious.

By then, Yabemiya had walked out with a tray, on which were a brown earthenware bowl and a bowl of rice.

The braised chicken was giving off delicious aroma as she moved between the tables.

“Smells good!”

“Yeah, and the smell is so strong! I never made such aromatic chicken.”

“I think I smelled something strange but intoxicating.”

The customers were all staring at the braised chicken on the tray.

“Your braised chicken and rice. Enjoy your meal,” Yabemiya said, putting the food in front of Carl.

Carl’s eyes were glued to the dish. The inviting smell from the brown chicken and the thick soup made him close his eyes and take a deep sniff.

“It has shiitakes in it?!” Carl said, looking at the shiitake sticks in the bowl.

The other customers looked confused.

“Shiitakes? What is that?” Jimmy asked.

“It’s a precious ingredient,” Carl said, excited. “It’s divine. Many years ago, I was lucky enough to eat shiitakes in the Wind Forest. It was my first time, but I still remember the taste! Then I tried to buy them from elves, and occasionally, if I was lucky, I could buy one or two. Considering the time and effort that went into buying them, I think it’s safe to say that each one cost me around 100 gold coins. I use only a piece when making soup.” He picked up a shiitake stick. “But the shiitakes I bought are nothing compared to this!”

The other customers gasped in surprise. They were wondering who this storyteller really was.

Of course, what surprised them even more was that the shiitakes that Carl had been eagerly looking for were right here!

They had been cut into sticks, but apparently there were more than one shiitake in the bowl. They were rare to find, and their rarity made them priceless.

Carl’s remarks brought a smile to Mag’s lips. *Never thought he would recognize the shiitake; he must be a foodie. I should have priced it higher since shiitakes are so rare in this world.*

“Let me try it,” Carl said, and brought a piece of shiitake into his mouth while the others were gazing at him.

**Chapter 268: Hold On A Second!**

Their mouths started watering despite themselves as they watched Carl put the shiitake into his mouth.

His eyes widened after he bit into it and the tasty soup seeped out.

The taste of the soup and the shiitake melded together, stimulating his taste buds.

*The shiitakes have been dried, but they taste tender and soft,* Carl thought to himself. *They have made the soup even better! Shiitakes and chicken are a perfect match!* He savored the bite, and then swallowed.

“The shiitakes I ate before can’t compete with this,” said Carl. “Mag is a genius. His shiitakes are definitely of high quality, and he knows the best way to cook them. If he had launched this dish sooner, I wouldn’t have had to go to great lengths to look for shiitakes.” He put another piece of shiitake into his mouth, took a bite of rice, and chewed slowly with a blissful smile.

Now the sound of swallowing saliva could be heard in the room.

They knew Carl wasn’t collaborating with Mag to rip them off, because he was rich. People enjoyed his stories, and they gave him money every time he told a story, but he asked them to take their money back. When they didn’t, he always gave the money to those homeless kids. Of course he was rich; otherwise, he wouldn’t have spent a gold coin on a shiitake.

“Excuse me, I’d like a braised chicken and rice.”

“Me too!”

“Same here!”

Mag smiled. His food was selling itself.

As more bowls of chicken were set on the tables, the aroma became even stronger, which was enticing more people to order this dish.

“The braised chicken takes a long time to cook, sir. You’ll have to wait half an hour,” Yabemiya said to a customer with her kind smile.

“Waiting half an hour for a gourmet dish? That sounds good enough to me.” The customer laughed.

“Can I have a braised chicken and rice to go?” Gjergj asked Yabemiya. He had almost finished his braised chicken. There wasn’t much soup in the dish, but he was confident his wife would like it, and he liked the warm feeling inside after eating it.

“I need to check with my boss first,” Yabemiya said.

“One person can have up to one braised chicken and rice to go,” Mag said in the kitchen door, smiling at Gjergj. “I hope your wife will like it.” He knew Gjergj had three sons and that his wife was in the sixth month of her pregnancy.

“Thank you, Mag. I’m sure she will,” Gjergj said gratefully.

Miranda had been suffering from loss of appetite and vomiting until Mag's Yangzhou fried rice, but her appetite had come back with a vengeance, and she didn't feel feeble anymore. Even the doctor had been surprised at her rapid recovery, and had told her the baby was healthy.

Mag had basically saved them.

Mag started cooking again. *Gjergj's boy and Amy are classmates, if not friends. I'm glad I could help.*

"Check, please," said a demon.

"That's 10 gold coins." Sally sounded indifferent.

"Why don't you smile? Yabemiya always smiles her kind and warm smile. Come on, smile for me," said the other demon who looked hideous.

"There you go. 10 gold coins," said the first demon hurriedly. He pulled his friend up and dragged him towards the door, whispering, "What were you doing harassing her? Are you out of your mind?!"

"I didn't harass her. I was just talking to her!"

"Yeah. You were talking to her with a lascivious smile."

"Your smile is lascivious!"

The purple light around Sally's hand disappeared. She looked at their backs and picked up the coins on the table. Suddenly, a thought occurred to her. "Hold on a second!" she shouted.

The other customers looked confused. They thought the two demons had somehow irritated her.

The two demons exchanged a worried look. They turned around, and the hideous-looking demon said, "I apologize. I should have never asked you to smile. Please don't ban us..."

"Um, I need you to fill this out," Sally said, pulling out a ballot from under the tray.

### **Chapter 269: It's Totally Disgusting!**

"Oh..."

The two demons suddenly understood. This food competition was already a few dozen years old. It was a monthly event, and people living here were more than familiar with it. Today was the first day of the competition.

"Okay," they said. They were glad they didn't get banned. They each took a ballot and sat back down at their table.

"Mag signed up for the competition," a man said.

"I want him to win, but if he won, this place would become even more popular, and we would have to wait longer in line," said a second voice.

"Yeah. It would be terrible if he told us he had sold out after we waited a long time."

Sally was standing at the table, watching as the two demons sat straight with pens in their hands like students.

The five dishes and their prices had already been written beautifully on each ballot. Customers needed only tick the dishes they had ordered. The rankings were based on four elements: overall impression, taste, environment, service. They could grade on a scale from one star to five stars, with one star being not at all satisfied, and five stars being extremely satisfied. They could even leave comments in the comment section.

“Overall impression: five stars; taste: five stars; environment: five stars; service...” The two demons looked up at Sally and raised their voices. “Five stars!”

After they wrote “The food here is really very good.” in the comment section, they put down their pens and smiled at Sally. “Will this be enough?”

Sally nodded. “Yes.”

“Then we can leave now?”

“Sure.”

The two demons were much relieved. They strode towards the door and didn’t allow themselves to relax until they were outside.

“That waitress is scary!” said the hideous-looking demon.

“It’s your own damn fault. Let’s go find some quests to do,” his friend said.

“Her service isn’t worth five stars.”

“Go ahead and change it to three or two if you want.”

The other demon looked back at the restaurant. “Do you take me for a fool?”

Sally cleared the table, and then used her water magic to clean it. The customers nearby were left dumbfounded.

*Even waitresses are so powerful nowadays?* they wondered.

“Study harder, or you won’t even find a job as a waiter!” a father warned his son.

The little boy nodded obediently. “Yes, Father!” He was more determined to become a model student now.

Sally’s eyes swept around the room, and all the customers quickly dropped their gazes to their food.

*Why do I get the feeling that they are afraid of me?* Sally wondered. *I’m still not kind enough?* Normally, she rarely spoke to men, but today she was trying really hard to be friendly to them.

Yabemiya smiled encouragingly at her and gave her a thumbs-up as she walked past her with two bowls of braised chicken.

Sally smiled back and felt confident suddenly. She quickened her pace and put the dishes in the dishwasher. She had already learned how to use this magical machine.

Actually, she had offered to wash the dishes with her magic, but Mag didn't want her to use too much of her magic power.

"You're doing a great job. Keep up the good work," Mag said to Sally with a smile. *I won't force her to smile as long as she doesn't make the customers feel uncomfortable.*

Sally nodded. "Thank you, Boss." She worked faster. When she heard someone calling out for the check, she walked out quickly.

With Sally working here, Yabemiya didn't have to rush around anymore; she was able to give everyone a warm morning smile. Sally, on the other hand, made them feel cool; they filled out the ballots as she asked.

"Five stars for all the dishes but sweet tofu pudding. It's totally disgusting!" a customer said, and gave the sweet tofu pudding one star.

"Oh yeah? I'll give the savory tofu pudding one star!" said a second voice.

"You can do whatever you like, but we'll win in the end!"

"No, we will win!"

Sally stood uncertain, not knowing what to do. Mag had told them about the competition, and she was afraid that their doing so might result in him losing.

"Let them do whatever they want," Mag whispered to her. He was smiling on the outside, but on the inside, he was cursing these morons.

Thankfully, the mission was having one dish in the top 30. Roujiamo was the most commonly ordered in his restaurant, and he was confident it could make the top 30.

Sally nodded, relieved, and went back to her work.

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"We're finally here—Chaos City. I heard it's the safest city. Do you think they will follow us here, Lulu? Also, I heard there's a lot of good food here!" a brown-haired girl in her early 20s asked as she had her arm around a man's waist at the entrance of the Aden Square.

## **Chapter 270: Masochists**

The girl was very pretty, with beautifully arched eyebrows. She had tied her brown curly hair up with a black piece of cloth. Her dress was long and white, with grass patterns on the waist and sleeves. She was looking up at the man beside her, smiling, her light golden eyes full of love.



Lulu looked around 30, and was a head taller than her, his face square and kind, his hair brownish black and short. He was wearing a brown bear-skin shirt, and looked as strong as a bear. He carried a beautiful bamboo basket on his back; it was quite full, but it was difficult to tell what was inside it.

His eyes were the same color as hers. He looked fondly at her as he brushed a lock of hair from her forehead. "It may be a safe city, Xixi, but I don't think it's safe for us—they will probably follow us here. We should never let our guard down."

Xixi looked depressed. "Why won't they leave us alone?"

"Don't worry. Go eat whatever you like. I'll always stay by your side," he said, touching her head with his big clumsy hand, his eyes full of love.

Xixi's face lit up. "I know you will. Let's go get something to eat!" She rubbed her head against his hand, and walked into the Aden Square.

Lulu looked around warily, his face suddenly grim, and then walked behind her.

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"Excuse me, could you bring me the check, please?" Carl said, putting down his spoon. He had eaten every bite of his braised chicken and rice. He burped, satisfied.

"That will be eight gold coins," said Sally.

"There you go." He pulled out a dragon coin and paid his check. Then, he walked over to the kitchen door. "Can you tell me where you got so many shiitakes, Mag?"

"I'm sorry, I can't." *If I told him and the elves found out, they would kill me.*

"Don't worry. I won't steal your customers."

"I really can't tell you. Sorry."

"Okay. But, this braised chicken is really good, and well worth the price. I counted four or five shiitakes in it."

"Thank you." Mag got back to cooking, feeling good as he listened to them commending the food.

All 48 bowls of braised chicken had been ordered in a short time, even if some had to wait for an hour.

After breakfast hours were over, Mag shook his tired wrists. Although his physical strength had improved, doing so much work in an hour and a half was exhausting. He felt like Superman.

Also, Sally had got better at collecting money. The customers had come to like her indifference.

After meticulous observation, Mag found that some people even loved her cold manner—they were masochists, in other words.

Of course, most people were normal; they liked her keeping her distance and her elegance.

The restaurant was running more smoothly with Sally working here.

Mag didn't plan on hiring many waitresses. *Too many waitresses would make things too noisy*, he thought. *But we will get even busier; I hope the two girls can handle the work.*

Sally cleaned the whole restaurant with her water magic, told Mag she would be back before lunch, and left.

*She is working hard*, Mag thought. *She could easily make much more money by doing quests, but the Chaos Guild would probably find out who she really is. Poor girl.*

"Go get some rest, Miya," Mag said, untying his apron. Now that Sally was here, Yabemiya needed not worry about the cleaning work, so she had nothing to do after opening hours were over.

"I'm not tired. Let me massage your shoulders."

Mag nodded. "Thank you." *It's not nice to turn her down; besides, my shoulders and arms are really sore.*

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Before the magic screens in the middle of the square, some people from the Catering Association were sorting and counting ballots.

The rankings were updated every day. Now, the screens were displaying last month's rankings. If there were no dark horses, the rankings wouldn't need to be changed much, which would reduce the staff's workload.

"Where do you think the last restaurant we went to yesterday will rank tomorrow?" Arvin whispered as he moved tables with Rood.

"341 restaurants entered the competition this month, so it will probably rank 340," Rood smiled.

"Not 341?"

"A restaurant which doesn't open yet also signed up, remember? The owner said it was for advertisement. That one may rank last, I think." Rood laughed.

"Maybe they'll both rank last," said Arvin, laughing.