

The Quest 37

Chapter 37: Beef

The next day, Mo Shan left the house and returned in the evening with a large bundle on his back, filled with wild mountain ox meat.

"I went to Old Zhao, he had a lot left. Nobody was buying the meat, and he couldn't eat it all, so I took it all back," he said.

Liu Ruhua soaked the meat to remove the blood, then marinated it with spicy and aromatic seasonings.

These seasonings were harvested and sun-dried by Liu Ruhua herself, a method she learned from a neighbor's aunt. It's a common practice among independent cultivator families in Tongxian City, but Liu Ruhua's spices smelled particularly good.

After marinating overnight, the meat was placed in the stove the next day to cook. After simmering for half a day, Liu Ruhua removed the meat, drained the water, and added fresh water and spicy seasonings. She boiled it on high heat first, then reduced to a simmer, stewing it for another day and night.

By the evening of the third day, she finally extinguished the stove fire and lifted the pot lid.

Steam surged out, and the aroma of meat mixed with the seasonings filled the entire house.

Liu Ruhua took a small knife, cut a slice of meat, and placed it thinly sliced on a plate on the table, then waved Mo Hua over: "Hua'er, come and try this."

Mo Hua picked up his chopsticks, took a piece, and after chewing a few times, felt the meat was tender and flavorful, leaving a fragrant aftertaste in his mouth. The slight gaminess was also balanced by the spiciness, creating a unique flavor.

"Mom, this is the best meat I've ever eaten!"

Mo Shan also tried a piece, his eyes lighting up, and he praised his wife: "It's even better than what those chefs make at the tavern."

Liu Ruhua smiled, tasted a piece of meat herself, and thought it was still not perfect: "The flavor is still a bit off. The spices should be milder, the spicy flavor stronger, and the fire higher..."

Mo Hua thought it was already delicious. In his ten-plus years of life, he had never eaten such tasty meat. As for whether he had in another life, he couldn't remember.

The taste of the wild ox meat was excellent, giving them confidence to open the eatery. Liu Ruhua cut some of the beef into small boxes for Mo Shan and Mo Hua to share with neighbors and friends.

Mo Shan distributed it to the neighbors and friends from the demon hunter team.

Mo Hua carried a box first to Mr. Feng of the Xinglin Medical Hall, to thank him for treating his mother, and then to Master Chen, since the stove was made by Master Chen, and the beef stewed in it deserved to be tasted.

Mr. Feng, skilled in dietary health, usually abstains from meat, but couldn't resist trying a few slices of the beef Mo Hua brought, and he couldn't stop praising it.

Master Chen, needless to say, shared half of the beef with Da Zhu and his disciples, stowing the rest away for himself to savor slowly with his drinks.

Mo Hua also delivered some to the Meng family home.

The Meng family members all share the surname Meng, but the three boys—Da Hu, Shuang Hu, and Xiao Hu—are not biological brothers.

The Meng family was once thriving, with three generations under one roof. The old man had three sons, each of whom had a son; these were Da Hu, Shuang Hu, and Xiao Hu.

However, the good times didn't last. Shuang Hu's father died while hunting demonic beasts, and his mother succumbed to depression and illness soon after.

Xiao Hu's father got involved with another female cultivator while on a business trip and never returned. There were rumors that he had changed his name and started a new family or had been bewitched by a nefarious demoness, his essence drained and turned into a human pill.

In any case, he was not coming back. Embarrassed, Xiao Hu's mother remarried.

The old Mr. Meng had hoped his descendants would thrive for generations, perhaps producing a Foundation Building cultivator, making them a minor renowned family in Tongxian City. But in a blink, he lost two sons, and overwhelmed by grief, he soon passed away.

With only the eldest son left as the pillar of the Meng family, he never complained, raising his brothers' children as his own. They shared meals when food was plentiful and hunger when it was not. When the children misbehaved, he disciplined them equally.

As the three boys grew, so did their appetites, stretching the already modest means of their family even further.

When Mo Hua arrived with the beef, the Meng family was having dinner.

Da Hu, Shuang

Hu, and Xiao Hu were munching on steamed buns and pickles. Hearing that Mo Hua had brought beef, their eyes widened. As Mo Hua opened the food box and the aroma wafted out, they drooled in anticipation.

Aunt Meng scolded the boys, "Before you eat what others give, thank them first!"

Shuang Hu was the first to pound his chest and declare, "Mo Hua! Between brothers, there are no strangers. Anyone who bullies you, I'll beat up for you!"

Da Hu and Xiao Hu also chorused, "Me too! Me too!"

Aunt Meng tapped each of the three boys on the head with her chopsticks, annoyed, "All you know is fighting. If the three of you together were half as sensible as Mo Hua, I'd be thankful!"

After she spoke, seeing the three kids looking pitifully at the meat, she softened and said:

"Go on, eat. But remember to help your Uncle Mo and Aunt Liu with some chores, and don't just freeload."

The three boys nodded vigorously, then each took a piece of meat and put it in the bowls of Uncle Meng and Aunt Meng before they started on the remaining meat themselves.

As soon as the beef was in his mouth, Xiao Hu's eyes widened, "This meat is so delicious!"

Da Hu and Shuang Hu, mouths full of meat, nodded continuously.

Pleased that his mother's cooking was praised, Mo Hua was also very happy.

Uncle Meng and Aunt Meng tasted the meat, nodding continuously, then picked the remaining pieces for the three boys.

Aunt Meng said enviously to Mo Hua, "Your mother's cooking skills are really good!"

Mo Hua also praised, "Aunt Meng's cooking is great too!"

Aunt Meng laughed, pulling Mo Hua's hand, "I don't know how such a well-behaved and sensible child was born."

Uncle Meng tasted the beef and curiously asked, "Is this wild ox meat? It doesn't taste like it."

"It is wild ox meat, it was cooked for a very long time."

"No wonder," Uncle Meng nodded, then told Mo Hua, "I heard your family is opening an eatery. If there's anything we can help with, just tell your uncle and aunt, and we will definitely help."

"Thank you, Uncle Meng!"

After a few more pleasantries, Mo Hua got up to leave. Aunt Meng packed some freshly steamed buns and some wild fruits for Mo Hua to take home.

"We don't have much at home, but take these buns and fruits back with you."

Mo Hua did not refuse, packing the buns into the food box, munching on the wild fruits as he walked home.

The beef stewed in the stove for a long time was praised by everyone who tasted it.

Liu Ruhua further perfected her cooking and seasoning skills, adjusted the stewing heat, and even made several bowls of beef noodles for Mo Hua to try. The broth was rich, the noodles were chewy, and the beef was fragrant, making Mo Hua happily squint his eyes.

Additionally, Liu Ruhua added some other beverages and snacks to the eatery for sale.

Alcohol was indispensable, but the independent cultivators were poor, and the grains used for brewing were of low quality, so the taste was not very good. However, Liu Ruhua's own brewed alcohol was different.

She added some flowers, fresh fruits to the brew, which had a lower alcohol content, and the rich aroma of different fruits added a sweet and lingering taste that Mo Hua particularly liked.

Besides beef, the meals also included some pastries, fruits, pine nuts, and beef noodles.

With the help of neighborhood friends, preparations were complete, and the eatery opened on the first day of the month.

Initially, according to the street naming tradition, the eatery was to be called "Mo's Eatery," but at Mo Hua's suggestion and with Mo Shan's approval, it was finally renamed "Liu's Eatery."

Liu Ruhua, unable to resist her son and husband, agreed.