

I'M THE CULINARY GOD

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Chapter 1 - 001: Acquiring a restaurant! Perfect Level lottery!

"You have successfully reached Welcoming Spring Street. Please find No. 34 Welcoming Spring Street within 5 minutes. Upon completion, you will be rewarded with one Perfect Level noodle main dish lottery draw."

Lin Xu had just emerged from the Welcoming Spring Street subway station exit when the system's notification sounded in his mind.

Lottery? Remembering his experience last night, drawing sixty times in a game by that notorious developer without winning anything, a look of speechlessness flashed across Lin Xu's handsome face. *Hopefully, the system's lottery wouldn't be as scammy as theirs.*

He glanced at the numbering sequence on both sides of the street, then strode forward, beginning his search for shop No. 34.

「An hour earlier.」

Lin Xu had been lying on his dormitory bed, sending out résumés through job-seeking apps, when he was suddenly bound to a system called the Cooking God. After the successful binding, the system granted him three months' use of a shop. For the next three months, he could use the shop free of charge. However, after three months, if he didn't pay rent, the landlord would reclaim it. The shop was located on Welcoming Spring Street. He had hurried over by subway to see if this rewarded shop was real.

Welcoming Spring Street wasn't long, but it had a significant flow of people. Even at two o'clock in the afternoon, there was a constant stream of passersby. Lin Xu followed the street numbers and finally found shop No. 34 in the middle section of Welcoming Spring Street.

The shop was exquisitely decorated. The doors and windows were made of large panes of highly transparent glass, which, along with the aluminum composite panels on the exterior walls, gave it a very high-class appearance. Looking at the "Lin Ji's Food" sign above the door, Lin Xu felt like he was dreaming.

Just an hour ago, he had been taking advantage of the time before leaving school to send out résumés online, racking his brains for ways to become an employee at one of those big companies. Unexpectedly, an hour later, he had transformed into a restaurant owner.

Ah, fate really is unpredictable! he sighed. The books he had recently crammed, like "Guide to Slacking Off at Work," "Office Loafing Bible," and "Say No to Overwork: 99 Slacking Off Tips Not to Be Missed by Workers," were now all useless. *What a pity...*

The shop door wasn't locked. He gently pushed it open. Just as he was about to enter, the system's notification sounded again in his mind: "Having accurately located shop No. 34 within the allotted time, you've earned one Perfect Level noodle main dish lottery draw. Would you like to draw now?"

"Lottery draw!" Lin Xu silently affirmed. *He was somewhat apprehensive though.* His luck had been quite poor lately. Ever since the autumn recruitment season last year, various unexpected incidents had occurred every time he prepared for job hunting, leaving him still without a suitable job.

Soon, a circular wheel appeared in his mind, filled with the names of noodle dishes: Oil-poured Noodles, Dan Dan Noodles, Hot Dry Noodles, Shacha Noodles, Noodles With Black Bean Sauce, Yangchun noodles, Beef Noodles, Wonton Noodles, Sliced Noodles, Crab Yellow Noodles, Mutton Stew Noodles, Anhui Flat Noodles, Scallion Oil Noodles, Shandong noodles...

The dazzling array of various noodle dishes made Lin Xu involuntarily swallow. *Just looking at it made him hungry...*

As he watched, the wheel gradually began to spin, its speed increasing. A "Stop" button appeared beside it. *I can draw now!*

Lin Xu silently prayed, seeking blessings from the Jade Emperor, Tathagata, Wutian, Jesus, Ultraman, Pleasant Goat, the Boonie Bears, King Kiki, and various other deities to grant him good luck. After praying, he pressed the stop button. The wheel's speed began to decrease, eventually coming to a gentle stop.

"Congratulations to the host for obtaining the Perfect Level noodle main dish—Tomato Egg Noodles."

"This system categorizes dishes, techniques, and kitchen tools into four levels, from lowest to highest: Qualified Level, Excellent Level, Superior, and Perfect Level. Please explore the specific promotion criteria on your own."

As soon as the notification ended, a flood of experience related to Tomato Egg Noodles poured into Lin Xu's mind.

How did I end up drawing this? In his mind, the so-called Tomato Egg Noodles were nothing more than boiling some noodles and topping them with stir-fried tomato and egg. Very simple.

But only after absorbing the experience did he realize that making this noodle dish delicious was actually quite complicated and meticulous.

First, one had to make handmade noodles. This way, the texture would be chewier and smoother, and the noodle aroma more intense.

When making the topping, one first needed to blanch the tomatoes in hot water to remove their skins before dicing them. Blanching not only allowed the tomatoes to release more juice when stir-fried but also enhanced their texture.

To increase the umami and fragrance, a spoonful of specially-made chicken oil was to be drizzled over the finished topping. Under high heat, the umami from the chicken oil would infuse into the topping, making its flavor even more enticing. The chicken oil would also make the noodles smoother and more delicious.

After absorbing all the experience, Lin Xu pushed open the door and went inside, taking a look around the store. The interior adopted a neo-Chinese decorative style, with extensive use of wooden strips. Combined with warm-colored light strips and pure solid wood dining tables and chairs, it created a comfortable and warm ambiance upon entry.

In the spacious semi-open kitchen, all kinds of kitchenware and appliances were readily available. The cashier's desk also held the store's permits and licenses, all fully certified.

He estimated that, including decorations and equipment, the entire store must have cost over five hundred thousand yuan.

What a big spender! Lin Xu sighed inwardly. Compared to this luxuriously decorated restaurant, he, the owner, seemed much more destitute. He only had a few hundred yuan on him, not even enough to cover the store's petty cash.

I need to hurry up and make money!

Today at noon, the counselor had posted a notice in their group: all graduating students had to move out of the student apartments by next week, or they would be forcibly

cleared out by the dormitory management office. Leaving school meant renting a place, but the cash Lin Xu had on him wasn't even enough to co-rent a place outside the sixth ring road.

He checked the time. It was 2:20 PM. There were nearly three hours until dinner time at 5 PM.

Three hours... that should be enough time to prepare, right?

Now that he had the Perfect Level recipe for Tomato Egg Noodles and a ready-made shop, Lin Xu's first thought was to make money quickly. With money, he could rent a comfortable and spacious house and, in games, draw as many times as he wanted.

After making this decision, he locked the shop door, went to the market to buy some ingredients, then changed into a chef's uniform, put on a chef's hat, and meticulously washed his hands. He began to make the dough.

The dough for handmade noodles needed to be mixed in advance and allowed to rest; this made the noodles tastier. While making the dough, he also needed to add salt and eggs in the proportion of five grams of salt and one egg per pound of flour. This would make the noodles chewier and also give them an eggy aroma.

Lin Xu used to be completely clueless about these things. However, after receiving the experience granted by the system, he performed each step quickly and proficiently, with neatness and efficiency. He moved almost like a lifelong noodle master who had spent years working around the cutting board.

「At 5 PM.」

The dough had rested properly, and the tomato and egg topping was also ready. Lin Xu took an electronic blackboard with the price list written on it and placed it by the entrance.

It read: "[Main Dish: Handmade Tomato Egg Noodles, Large bowl 28 yuan, Small bowl 25 yuan. Welcome to come in and taste!]"

Chapter 2 - 002: Triggering the Quest! So Delicious! I Want to Eat Three Big Bowls!

"Brother Qiang, a new restaurant has opened."

The electronic blackboard hadn't been up for long when, from the direction of the subway station, a few sparsely-haired programmer bros approached. Today, they finally didn't have to work overtime. They were all very excited, planning to go back to their rented apartments, dig out the discounted games they'd bought on Steam, and have a good, long gaming session.

In programmer circles, having less hair meant more reverence. The less hair one had, the higher their status. Take Li Qiang, for example. Despite being close to bald, he was the team leader of the company's project group and also the leader of these friends, so everyone respectfully called him Brother Qiang.

"The decor seems high-end, and they're selling Tomato Egg Hand-Rolled Noodles... How about we go in and try it?" Li Qiang's suggestion gained everyone's agreement.

"Let's try it."

"If it's not good, we leave."

"Right, we can't delay tonight's gaming."

The group walked into the restaurant. They discovered the interior was nicely decorated. It was elegantly simple without losing style, giving off a cozy and comfortable feeling as soon as one entered. Clearly, a lot of thought had gone into the decor.

"Welcome!" Lin Xu had just put the water on to boil. Seeing customers come in, he promptly greeted them.

Li Qiang looked over. *WOW! This owner is even younger than I am. Can his noodles possibly be any good?*

As someone from a coal-producing province, Li Qiang had an extraordinary love for noodle dishes. What he couldn't stand most were chefs who made terrible noodles. He liked the style of this shop, but such a young chef...

Li Qiang was hesitating about whether to leave when he saw Lin Xu take out an incredibly long rolling pin from the storage room. It was over 1.6 meters long.

His eyes lit up immediately.

Goodness gracious! To dare wield such a long rolling pin, this young owner must have some serious skills. Just for this rolling pin alone, it's worth staying to try the noodles.

He immediately said to Lin Xu, "Give us four big bowls of hand-rolled noodles!"

As soon as he finished speaking, Lin Xu heard the system notification in his mind:

"Host has successfully sold four bowls of hand-rolled noodles, triggering the main quest [Grand Opening]: Please sell 1,000 bowls of hand-rolled noodles before the weekend. Completion will reward a Perfect Level Braised Snacks lottery draw."

"The Host's restaurant has successfully opened, triggering a sub-quest [Customers Galore]: Please win the favor of one hundred returning customers within two days. Completion will reward a Perfect Level Hand-Rolled Noodle Topping lottery draw."

"The Host's restaurant has successfully opened, triggering the time-limited quest [Word of Mouth]: Acquire active promotion from ten customers before closing time. Completion will reward an Excellent Level Seasoning Technique lottery draw."

TSK! Three quests at once. You really think highly of me, don't you!

Lin Xu muttered to himself, then got busy with what needed to be done. The restaurant had just opened, and he was so busy he barely touched the ground. He didn't have time to worry about any quests.

After Li Qiang had ordered, he didn't look for a place to sit. Instead, he stood outside the semi-open kitchen to watch Lin Xu make the noodles. During the Spring Festival last year, when he went back to his hometown, he had bought a similarly super-long rolling pin at a rural market. At that time, it seemed like it would be very useful. However, his mom, who was usually skillful at making hand-rolled noodles, failed several times. Only then did he realize that a longer rolling pin wasn't necessarily better. Now, seeing Lin Xu use the same type of super-long rolling pin, he was curious to see exactly how it was handled.

Lin Xu put the water on to boil and took out the rested dough. He sprinkled some dry starch on the work surface, then picked up the rolling pin and started rolling the dough. He first used the rolling pin horizontally to press the dough flat, then gently rolled it into a thick disc. Finally, he wrapped the dough around the rolling pin, gradually rolling the sheet larger and thinner.

"Damn! That technique is too professional, isn't it?" Li Qiang was astonished. The super-long rolling pin seemed as flexible as an extension of the young shop owner's arm, without any stiffness or discomfort. Without a second thought, he took out his phone, planning to film it for his mom.

The other colleagues were also dumbfounded:

"Smooth and decisive movements, looks so cool."

"This isn't just rolling out dough; damn it, this is straight-up performance art!"

"Film it, film it! It's so hard to find a bowl of authentic hand-rolled noodles in Beijing these days."

"Right, let's help the boss promote it."

"..."

They all took out their smartphones. As if possessed by the spirits of great directors, they began to use their limited filming skills to capture Lin Xu rolling dough. After shooting a clip, they did a bit of editing and posted it on their respective social media timelines.

"Stumbled upon a newly opened restaurant specializing in hand-rolled noodles. We seem to be the first customers! [smug][smug][smug]"

"Discovering for the first time that rolling noodles can be so artistic [facepalm][facepalm][facepalm]"

"How many bowls of such hand-rolled noodles do you think I can eat? [energetic][energetic]"

Before long, likes and comments exploded beneath their social media updates.

"The movements are so crisp; the noodles look delicious."

"Damn! Give us the address!"

"Where is this? Give the address, I'm coming fast!"

"The guy rolling the dough is so handsome. Can you get his WeChat for me? [shy]"

"Love this kind of guy! Where can I claim one? [heart hands]"

"..."

Normally, with so many people giving likes and comments, they'd normally engage with them right away. But today, the programmer bros didn't feel like interacting. After uniformly replying with the address for Lin Ji's Food in their timelines, they put away their phones and focused their attention on Lin Xu, who was busy in the kitchen.

Before long, four large bowls of Tomato Egg Hand-Rolled Noodles were ready. As soon as Lin Xu brought the noodles over, Li Qiang and the others eagerly picked up their chopsticks. They gave the noodles a few stirs in their bowls and, without waiting for them to mix properly with the topping, took a big bite.

"WOW! This is insanely delicious!"

"So smooth yet chewy! I'm going for three big bowls today!"

"The topping is also fragrant. This umami taste even has a hint of chicken. Incredible!"

"No way, I'm coming to this place every day from now on!"

"..."

The programmer bros kept praising as they wolfed down their noodles non-stop. The weather was hot, and they worked a lot of overtime, causing their bodies to be in a sub-healthy state for a long time. They had no appetite for anything. But now they finally experienced the joy of eating heartily again. The chewy and smooth noodles, the golden and tender eggs, the tangy and appetizing diced tomatoes, and the broth rich with the savory flavor of chicken—all of it made them utterly addicted. They had never thought that such ordinary noodles could be this delicious. It was so tasty it could kill!

As they were enjoying their meal, the door was pushed open once again.

"Brother Qiang, you guys are quick, already eating!"

"I was wondering why you didn't reply to my messages. How does it taste?"

"I'm drooling just watching them eat..."

Those coming in were Li Qiang's colleagues. They commuted together by subway after work today. Their rental apartments were also in the same neighborhood. So, seeing the address Li Qiang replied with, they immediately hurried over.

"Hurry up and order, the flavor is really fantastic! I'm gonna have another bowl later!" Li Qiang couldn't stop raving about the noodles, urging his colleagues to order quickly.

"I'll have a large bowl!"

"Same for me, a large bowl!"

"I'm so tempted, I want a large bowl too!"

His colleagues hadn't felt very hungry at first. But after seeing Li Qiang and his group's voracious eating, they suddenly craved it. They were eager to taste just how delicious the noodles were.

In the kitchen, Lin Xu had just picked up the rolling pin to start rolling out the dough. These people eagerly went over to film. After filming, they began sending the footage everywhere.

Very soon, Lin Xu, who was busy cooking the noodles, heard the system's prompt:

"System: Ten customers have now voluntarily promoted the Host's restaurant. Time-limited quest [Word of Mouth] completed! Reward: One Excellent Level Seasoning Technique lottery draw. Draw now?"

This... I haven't even looked at the quest details. How did I complete one already?