

I'M THE CULINARY GOD

Chapter 13 - 013 "Son, have you been tricked into a pyramid scheme?"

In the shop, Panda was wolfing down a bowl of the newly launched Tomato Cubes Noodles. The noodles were perfectly al dente, and the sauce was incredibly aromatic. He found it immensely satisfying and didn't even notice the comments under his social media post.

Before long, he had polished off the large bowl of noodles.

"Boss, another big bowl, please! This sauce you make is just incredible. My mom can never get it right, no matter which brand of soybean paste she uses."

Lin Xu stood in the kitchen. While cooking the noodles, he said, "Don't use soybean paste; use dry bean sauce."

"Dry bean sauce? Is that different from soybean paste?"

Lin Xu nodded. "Yes, it's different. Dry bean sauce becomes more fragrant the more you fry it, while soybean paste becomes less fragrant; they're exact opposites. Mix the dry bean sauce with cold or lukewarm water until smooth,

with no lumps. After sautéing the diced meat, pour the sauce into the pan and let it simmer for a while. The fragrance will naturally emerge."

Just as he finished explaining, the customers in the shop started chattering excitedly.

"No wonder the Noodles With Black Bean Sauce I made last time with soybean paste didn't taste good; it turns out I should have used dry bean sauce!"

"Learned something new! I'll have my mom try it next time."

"My maternal grandpa loves using dry bean sauce; no wonder the gravy he makes is so delicious!"

"Boss Lin, you should share more cooking tips when you have time!"

"..."

After the noodles in the pot were ready, Lin Xu served them to the customers. Just as he picked up the rolling pin to continue making noodles, his phone in his pocket suddenly rang.

He wiped his hands, took out his phone, and looked. It was a call from his mother.

"Son, have you found a job in Beijing yet?" As soon as he answered, he heard his mother Chen Meijuan's voice on the line.

Lin Xu pinched the bridge of his nose. *He had a feeling what his mom would say next.* He responded listlessly, "I haven't found one."

"I knew it! You're just like your dad when he was young—too shy to deal with strangers. Just get your diploma and come back. The scenic area is short-staffed, and since you studied finance, you can be the cashier..."

Lin Xu's hometown was Yinzhou City in the Northern Central Plains. This city, renowned worldwide for the Yin Ruins and the Hongqi Canal, boasted rich tourism resources.

In the past two years, Yinzhou City had invested heavily in tourism development. Following the trend, Lin Xu's parents quit their jobs and took out loans of several million yuan to lease a mountain. After extensive renovations, the leased mountain was transformed into Yinzhou City's Longqi Mountain Scenic Area.

The scenic area wasn't large, but it had all the essential attractions. It featured all sorts of trendy attractions like an internet-famous suspension bridge, a popular swing, a jungle ropes course, a shouting fountain, a glass skywalk, Lover's Slope, a wishing well, an aerial walkway, and river rafting. Following the mountain path to the top, one could also offer incense, make wishes, pray for blessings, and receive fortune sticks. Beside a cliff on the mountaintop, a railing was specially built for couples to hang love locks. Right next to it was a stall selling various heart-shaped locks for 30 yuan each—no haggling.

After two years of this, Chen Meijuan and her husband had "successfully" progressed from loans of several million yuan to debts totaling seven to eight million yuan. It wasn't that the scenic area wasn't profitable. In reality, the 29.9 yuan entrance tickets still attracted many visitors. The main issue was that Chen Meijuan and her husband wanted to incorporate every trendy attraction they saw into their scenic area. Over time, their loans just kept growing.

Thinking about his parents' relentless schemes gave Lin Xu a headache. He sighed softly. "Mom, I've opened a restaurant here in Beijing. I'm not coming back."

"What? A restaurant?" Chen Meijuan's voice was filled with disbelief. "You opened a restaurant? Can you even cook? What are you selling there?"

The shop was a bit chaotic just then. Lin Xu took his phone into the storage room.

"Hand-rolled noodles."

"Besides hand-rolled noodles, what else do you have?"

Lin Xu mentally tallied the remaining flour, then said, "Nothing else. The shop only sells hand-rolled noodles."

There were only three bags of flour left; he'd need the owner of the grain and oil shop to deliver ten more bags in the next couple of days. When business was good, the flour disappeared incredibly fast.

On the other end of the phone, Chen Meijuan was still pressing, "If you're just selling hand-rolled noodles, how's business?"

"Right now, I make more than ten thousand a day."

Lin Xu was in a rush to go out and roll more noodles. If he didn't get back to it soon, the customers would leave. He was about to ask Chen Meijuan if she needed anything else, or if they could talk later, when Chen Meijuan suddenly lowered her voice and asked softly, "Son, have you been tricked into a pyramid scheme? If you have, Mom will find a way to rescue you. I heard that if you don't have money in those schemes, you get beaten up. Mom will transfer thirty thousand yuan to you first..."

Lin Xu didn't know whether to laugh or cry. "Mom, I haven't joined a pyramid scheme. I'm really running a restaurant."

He somewhat regretted not mentioning the restaurant on his social media. At the time, he only thought about how embarrassing it would be if he lost money, so it was better to keep a low profile. That way, if he did lose money, no one would know. And if it became popular, he could also establish a calm and understated persona for himself. Who knew he'd now be suffering the consequences of his understatement? His mom even suspected he was trapped in a pyramid scheme. But thinking about it, it made sense. Making ten thousand a day just by selling hand-rolled noodles—no one would believe that.

He thought for a moment, then told Chen Meijuan, "Mom, wait a second. I'll video call you so you can see for yourself."

Since words weren't enough, he might as well let his mom see the shop. He hung up the phone, opened the video call function on WeChat, and called his mom.

Soon, the video call connected. Chen Meijuan's face, weathered yet still beautiful, appeared on the phone screen.

"Son, where are you?"

"In the restaurant's storage room. I'm coming out now to show you the restaurant I'm running. There are a lot of customers waiting for me to make noodles."

After saying this, he carried his phone and pushed the door open. Chen Meijuan, on the other end of the video, was stunned. Because it really was a restaurant, and there were many customers.

Then, Lin Xu handed the phone to Panda, asking him to hold it. "My mom wants to watch me roll the noodles."

Panda took the phone and quickly greeted her, "Hello, Auntie! Boss Lin's cooking is truly fantastic! I've been treating this place as my personal cafeteria these past few days."

Facing the phone camera, Lin Xu smoothly made a bowl of hand-rolled noodles. Chen Meijuan, on the other end of the video, watched, mesmerized.

This kid's skills are even better than mine!

After the video call ended, Chen Meijuan thought it over and over, but still felt uneasy. She transferred twenty thousand yuan into Lin Xu's account and also booked a high-speed train ticket to Beijing. She planned to go to Beijing the day after tomorrow to see for herself.

"Boss Lin, your family doesn't even know you opened a restaurant?"

"They don't know. I haven't told anyone," Lin Xu said, rolling noodles while chatting with Panda.

"Damn, you're so composed! If it were me with such a booming business, I'd have advertised it so much the entire galaxy would know by now!"

After the noodles were done, Panda eagerly took them. He held the bowl with both hands, bent his head, and took a deep sniff. "This flavor is absolutely divine! If I couldn't eat this for a single day, I think I'd go crazy."

"You've actually reminded me..." Lin Xu told Panda, "I actually have to take a day off next Monday. I need to go back to school for the graduation ceremony,

take graduation photos, and get my diploma. That will officially mark the end of my university life!"