

Culinary 381

Chapter 381: The Attractiveness of Beauty and Skincare! Craving for Crunchy Intestines? Let's Go for Stir-fried Pork Intestines!

As soon as she heard that fruit vinegar could beautify the skin and keep it young, Chen Meijuan couldn't wait to get her hands on some. She felt as if every day she delayed, another wrinkle would appear on her face.

To prevent Dundun from darting into the bushes and getting lost, Lin Xu had specifically put a vest-style cat harness on it, to which he then attached a five-meter-long rope. Now, the little fellow could frolic freely outdoors.

「Driving back to the homestay area.」

After parking the car at the entrance of the small courtyard, Lin Xu opened the gate and walked into the yard. He found an unused woven bag and decided to take it along to carry more fruit.

Just as he was about to step out, he saw his mother, Chen Meijuan, pushing a small handcart out from the neighboring courtyard.

Wasn't that a bit too professional?

Lin Xu once again witnessed the dedication of middle-aged women to their pursuit of beauty.

Fortunately, his mother-in-law wasn't there, or one handcart wouldn't have been enough.

"Wow, this little cart is so exquisite! Dundun, come sit on it, I'll push you," Shen Baobao said, taking the handcart from Chen Meijuan and eagerly urging Dundun to get on. However, Dundun darted far away, seemingly afraid of being trapped in the cart.

Lin Xu tossed the woven bag into the cart bed and said, "This kind of single-wheeled handcart is hard to push. Let me do it."

Shen Jiayue, unconvinced, pushed it a few steps, and sure enough, the cart tipped over into the nearby grass.

Dundun, looking pleased, sharpened its claws on a nearby tree trunk. Then, it deliberately hopped onto the overturned cart and bounced twice, much to Shen Baobao's annoyance.

Stinky Dundun, next time you fall into my hands, if you don't call me 'Mommy,' I definitely won't let you off the hook!

"I'll do it," Lin Xu said.

He righted the cart. Just as he was about to push it forward, Dundun leaped into the cart in a single bound and even rolled around inside contentedly.

Shen Baobao became even more irritated.

When I was pushing the cart, you dodged far away. Now that it's your dad, you immediately jump in. Don't I deserve any respect?

The group leisurely made their way towards the area with wild fruits. Upon arrival, Shen Baobao skillfully climbed up a tree to start picking. Meanwhile, Lin Xu and Chen Meijuan picked berries nearby.

When they had picked enough, the family of four pushed the handcart back. Once they reached the countryside restaurant, they began the process of washing, sorting, drying, cutting, and jarring the fruits, along with other necessary steps.

They had picked a lot of fruit that day, and they filled about ten 5-liter glass jars with it.

While they were making the vinegar, Shen Baobao posted an update on her Moments. The ten-odd jars of fruit vinegar had just been started when her mother-in-law, Han Shuzhen, called. She beat around the bush, inquiring about the effects of the fruit vinegar.

Upon learning that fruit vinegar could beautify the skin and also promote blood circulation and health, Director Han was immediately interested. "Xu, could you make a bit more?" she asked.

Lin Xu naturally wouldn't refuse and readily agreed.

Following this, Shen Jiayue's older sister, Wu Kexin, Dou Wenjing, Zeng Xiaoqi (whose voice still hadn't recovered), and others also sent messages, either beating around the bush or asking directly. Their words, whether subtle or direct, all revolved around the fruit vinegar. The immense allure of 'beautifying the skin and keeping it young' was evident.

Lin Xu roughly estimated that to meet the fruit vinegar demands of the people around him alone, he would need close to fifty jars. Adding relatives from his hometown would mean even more.

Forget everything else; I might as well focus exclusively on making vinegar for the next few days.

To ensure the fruit vinegar they made was top quality, Chen Meijuan specially drove to the city and bought more than ten super-large glass jars, each with a capacity of several tens of liters.

And so, Lin Xu, who was home for vacation, became a relentless vinegar-making machine, spending the next several days engrossed in this task.

The basement of the countryside restaurant was soon filled with all sorts of bottles and jars.

「On the seventh day home.」

While Lin Xu was in the kitchen making Fried Crispy small river fish for Shen Baobao, Uncle Shi Wenming curiously asked, "How come you're not making vinegar today?"

"Can't do it anymore."

"What happened? Ran out of jars or White Vinegar?"

"Neither. The trees have been picked clean..."

The patch of woods where the wild fruits grew was now mostly bare. Apart from a few unripe fruits still on the branches, all the rest were now steeping in jars in the basement.

Shi Wenming clicked his tongue and commented, "That's how women are; they go crazy at the mention of beauty treatment. These past few days, your second aunt kept pestering me about this fruit vinegar too."

Lin Xu chuckled. As he scooped the fried fish out of the pot, he replied, "Men are the same, aren't they? If someone said that fruit vinegar had the effect of strengthening kidneys and improving back strength..."

Before he could finish, Shi Wenming asked in surprise, "Really? Does fruit vinegar actually have that effect? How should this stuff be drunk for the best results? I... I'm just asking for a buddy of mine."

As expected...

Lin Xu said, "I was just speaking off the cuff. Why did you take it so seriously?"

Just then, his uncle Chen Meide walked in with a black plastic bag. "Xu, an acquaintance just gave me some Fatty Intestines. Could you prepare them?" he requested.

Fatty Intestines? That was a fine ingredient.

Lin Xu inquired, "How would you like them prepared? Stir-fried until dry or boiled?"

Chen Meide frowned and replied, "When I eat Fatty Intestines, I don't like that soft, mushy texture. I prefer them crispy and springy to the bite. I'm not sure if you know how to make them that way..."

Crispy?

Lin Xu thought for a moment and then asked, "How about Stir-fried Pork Intestines then?"

Upon hearing the name, Chen Meide immediately said, "Exactly, that's the dish! Just stir-fry it directly. It makes the intestines crunchy and chewy, with a spicy and delicious flavor. I've had it twice in Zigong, and I could never get enough."

The last time at Fishing Platform, Lin Xu used a Perfect Level Cooking Learning Card to learn the Perfect Level stir-fry Technique from Guo Weidong.

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Now that his eldest maternal uncle was interested in Stir-fried Pork Intestines, why not make it and give it a try? It would also be a good opportunity to test how effective this flash-frying technique was. If it worked out, the future restaurant would have one more flash-fried dish in its repertoire.

Shi Wenming, who was nearby, heard "Stir-fried Pork Intestines" and curiously asked, "Flash-fry Fatty Intestines directly? How long does that need to cook?"

Back in his hometown, Fatty Intestines were usually eaten braised, or first boiled then simmered to make Braised Large Intestines; they were rarely flash-fried directly in a wok. This was because, in many people's perception, Fatty Intestines are difficult to cook thoroughly and aren't suitable for such quick cooking methods.

His uncle said, "It seems pretty fast. It's out of the wok in less than a minute. They say if it's cooked any longer, the Fatty Intestines won't be crispy and will turn tough like rubber bands. But I don't know the specifics."

Less than a minute? Shi Wenming looked toward Lin Xu. "Can it really cook through in that short a time?"

"Yes, it can. However, this dish demands precise control over the heat and high-quality ingredients. It's not something that can be made casually." In Chinese cuisine, all dishes involving flash-frying techniques are quite challenging. Dishes like Flash-fried Kidney Slices, for instance, cook for only seven or eight seconds. A second less, and they're undercooked with a rank taste; a second more, and they're

overcooked and tough. This Stir-fried Pork Intestines doesn't have such extremely demanding requirements, but it's not far off.

Upon hearing this, Shi Wenming became interested and wanted to learn. But he felt somewhat apprehensive. He couldn't shake the feeling that this dish was similar to the large intestine sashimi that Yu Qian's father in the comedy skits loved. Yet, seeing Chen Meide's eager expression and his nephew's confident demeanor, and considering his family's usual diet was quite healthy, he figured they wouldn't have a palate as adventurous as that of a Mongolian Navy Commander.

After Lin Xu fried the small river fish, he served them to Shen Baobao, who was watching a drama series in the dining room. As a reward, she gave him a sweet kiss. He then returned to the kitchen to start making the Stir-fried Pork Intestines his uncle wanted to eat.

He poured the Fatty Intestines from the bag into a basin. He then selected the thinner section of the Fatty Intestines. As he worked, he explained, "To make Stir-fried Pork Intestines, you need to use this thinner section. The thicker parts can't be used; otherwise, they won't cook through during the flash-fry." If one were to use the large intestine head (the thicker end), forget flash-frying it for tens of seconds; it probably wouldn't cook through even if stir-fried for several minutes.

After selecting the ingredient, Lin Xu took it aside to begin cleaning.

Shi Wenming said, "You should have said so earlier. I could have washed it all together."

"That won't do, Uncle. The Pork Large Intestine for Stir-fried Pork Intestines must be cleaned separately; it can't be mixed with other Pork Large Intestines."

Shi Wenming became interested as soon as Lin Xu said that. It needs to be cleaned separately? That particular, huh?

Lin Xu took a pair of scissors and, pulling at the Fatty Intestines in the basin, cut them open lengthwise. When making Stir-fried Pork Intestines, the Fatty Intestines need to be flat pieces. This allows them to cook through instantly during the quick stir-fry. If the traditional tubular form is used, the cooking speed is greatly reduced, making it easy for the dish to fail.

After splitting the Fatty Intestines open, he first tore off the excess fat from the inner side. Then, he put salt and White Vinegar in the basin and began to scrub them. This step was to remove the mucus from the surface of the Fatty Intestines. After scrubbing them for two minutes, he rinsed them thoroughly with clean water. Then, he added flour and a small spoonful of baking soda and continued to scrub. Flour has strong absorbent properties and can remove impurities from the surface of the Fatty Intestines. Baking soda, meanwhile, makes the Fatty Intestines' texture crisp, which is the source of this dish's distinctive mouthfeel.

"No wonder these can't be washed with the other Fatty Intestines," Shi Wenming exclaimed. "Usually, when cooking Fatty Intestines, the goal is for them to be tender and flavorful; adding baking soda would be counterproductive." He started to look forward to it excitedly, feeling that he was about to master another impressive dish.

After rinsing them thoroughly again, Lin Xu drained the Fatty Intestines well and placed them on the cutting board to begin cutting them. The Fatty Intestines were now flat pieces, so he simply cut them into diamond shapes.

As he cut, he said to Shi Wenming, "Uncle, could you please get me some Pickled Peppers, pickled ginger, and sour radish? This dish is flavored with pickled vegetables, and the result is typically sour, spicy, and refreshing."

Adding Pickled Peppers, pickled ginger, and sour radish wasn't just to enhance the sour and spicy flavors. More importantly, one must utilize the volatile nature of the acidic compounds in the pickled vegetables to carry away any off-odors from the Fatty Intestines. This way, the cooked Fatty Intestines won't have that peculiar smell.

When Lin Xu finished cutting the Fatty Intestines, Shi Wenming also brought the requested pickled vegetables. Lin Xu cut the Pickled Peppers directly into small segments and put them into the small basin with the Fatty Intestines. "Because Stir-fried Pork Intestines cook very quickly, the seasonings must be combined with the Fatty Intestines in advance. This allows the aromas to be released more rapidly during cooking."

After cutting the Pickled Peppers, he shredded the pickled ginger and diced the sour radish. However, not too much sour radish should be added, or its sourness will overpower the spiciness.

Once these three were ready, Lin Xu added some Doubanjiang, a pinch of Sichuan peppercorns, a small spoonful of sugar to enhance the umami, and a small spoonful of White Pepper powder to eliminate any

off-odors to the Fatty Intestines. As for salt, none was needed, since both the pickled vegetables and the Doubanjiang contained plenty of it. Adding more would make the dish too salty.

Once the Fatty Intestines were prepared, Lin Xu diagonally sliced some scallion whites into thin pieces that would easily release their flavor. Next, he diagonally sliced some Thai chilies and Hangzhou peppers. After slicing everything, he placed it all in another basin. To this, he added half a ladleful of Light Soy Sauce, which would help release their aromas during stir-frying.

With all these preparations complete, he was ready to cook.

"Shall we start now?"

Lin Xu checked the time; it was just past five in the afternoon, a bit early for dinner.

Chen Meide fetched a beer from the nearby refrigerator. He bit the cap off, and GLUG, GLUG, downed two mouthfuls before saying,

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"Let's start. I didn't eat well at the office at noon; I've been waiting for this meal... Oh, Lin Xu, remember to call your aunt later and ask her to come over by bus to help me drive."

Yeah, my nephew has been making fruit vinegar these past few days; he has a lot of pull.

Much better than if I called her myself.

"I can drop you off later."

I haven't really gone out much since returning to my hometown. Later, I'll drive Eldest Uncle's car, let Shen Baobao drive the G63, and after we drop Eldest Uncle and his car home, Shen Baobao and I can go for a drive around the area.

Can't just stay cooped up in the scenic area all the time; I need to get out and see the world beyond it too.

Once it was confirmed someone would drive him back, Eldest Uncle was so happy that he grabbed the beer bottle and downed the rest of it.

TSK... Just like the man who biked dozens of li to beat up Dad—so uninhibited!

After finishing the beer, Eldest Uncle called Second Uncle:

"I got some Fatty Intestines, and Lin Xu is making Stir-fried Pork Intestines. It'll be ready soon. If you want a taste, come over quickly, or there'll be nothing left."

Second Uncle's voice came from the phone:

"I'll be there soon. I just caught a Grass Carp over twenty pounds; I was planning on having Lin Xu cook it."

A Grass Carp?

Lin Xu looked at the ingredients prepped for the Stir-fried Pork Intestines and said with a smile,

"Then later I'll make Fried Fish Fillets as well. That dish takes even less time to cook than Stir-fried Pork Intestines; it has to be out of the wok in under twenty seconds."

Eldest Uncle got excited when he heard that:

"I was only planning to have a couple of drinks, but with such great dishes, Wenming, where's that high-proof baijiu I brought last time? Bring it out! Today, we... we won't go home until we're drunk!"

He'd wanted to say 'us brothers,' but seeing his nephew there, he quickly changed his wording.

Good thing his father-in-law isn't here. Otherwise, with him around, someone would probably start calling Lin Xu 'Brother Lin, Brother Lin' by now.

Lin Xu set up the wok and began to cook the Stir-fried Pork Intestines. The wok heated up. First, he seasoned it by swirling in some oil and then pouring it out. Then, he added two large spoonfuls of rapeseed oil and heated it over a high flame. For this type of flash-stir-fry dish, you need plenty of oil and intense heat. Even professional kitchen stoves must be turned up to maximum, with no holding back. This is because the higher the temperature, the shorter the cooking time, and the more delicious the resulting dish. When the oil in the wok was emitting dark smoke, about eight-tenths hot, Lin Xu poured in the bowl containing the Fatty Intestines and aromatics. He immediately tossed the bowl aside. Gripping the wok handle with one hand and wielding a spatula with the other, he rapidly stir-fried, ensuring the Fatty Intestines quickly spread out in the wok. In just a few seconds, the originally soft Fatty Intestines, sizzled by the hot oil, firmed up and curled into small rolls, their appearance greatly improved. Meanwhile, the Pickled Peppers, pickled ginger, and sour radishes began to release their pleasant, tangy aroma. He continued to stir-fry. The Doubanjiang released its Red Oil, which, through the rapid stir-frying, evenly coated the surface of the Fatty Intestines, lending a tempting reddish sheen to their originally pale color. After about fifteen seconds of this, the fragrance of the Fatty Intestines, the tartness of the pickles, the spiciness of the Doubanjiang, and the numbing aroma of the Sichuan peppercorns all wafted out. He stir-fried for a few more seconds, allowing the fragrances to meld. Then, he poured in the accompanying vegetables, which had been mixed with Light Soy Sauce. As soon as they hit the wok, the savory fragrance of the Light Soy Sauce was released by the heat. He continued to stir-fry for another ten seconds, just until the vegetables were cooked through, then removed everything from the wok.

When Lin Xu dished out the glistening, curled Fatty Intestines from the wok, Shi Wenming was no longer concerned about whether they were raw or cooked.

This rich, spicy, and sour aroma, these trembling Fatty Intestines dripping with Red Oil—they were simply to die for!

"This taste... it immediately reminds me of my trip to Zigong last year..." Eldest Uncle commented as he picked up a piece with his chopsticks and put it in his mouth.

He then immediately let out a satisfied exclamation,

"Mmm, even tastier than what the chefs in Zigong make! These Fatty Intestines are fragrant and crispy—so delicious! Wenming, where's the alcohol? Hurry up!"

Lin Xu picked up his chopsticks, about to taste it himself, when his phone suddenly rang.

He pulled it out and saw it was a call from Dou Wenjing.

"Boss, the new Ziqiang Shengjian branch is opening tomorrow. Do you have time to come back for it?"

...

Didn't Ziqiang Shengjian just open not long ago?

And they're already opening a new branch?

Goodness...

Have I been in this scenic area for seven days or seven years?

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The branch was opening. As the boss, I feel that, both emotionally and rationally, I have to go back. Who could have imagined that the tens of thousands of dollars I invested on a whim a few days ago would so quickly lead to a new store?

Lin Xu said, "I'll go back tomorrow. You guys can open the store as planned."

Even if I leave tomorrow morning, I won't reach Beijing until after two in the afternoon. Unlike leaving Beijing, entering the city means passing through a security checkpoint. That place gets congested easily, and if you're not careful, you can be stuck for hours.

"Okay, then we won't wait for you and the madam."

Dou Wenjing's words made Lin Xu a bit curious. "The branch is opening so soon? Won't there be any issues with the quality of the pan-fried buns?"

"No, Boss. The filling is prepared by Master Wang every day and delivered to the branch. The person in charge of the branch just needs to wrap the filling and pan-fry the buns, so the quality will be impeccable."

"Who's in charge of the branch? Is he reliable?"

"It's my cousin. He learned the skills of wrapping filling and frying buns from Master Wang. His dough-making is still a bit off, but Master Wang will deliver ready-made dough to him every day."

It was supposed to take a while longer to open a branch. After all, even if it was just learning to prepare dough, make filling, and fry buns, Yang Lin couldn't possibly master it all in just a few days. But Wang Ziqiang was always harboring a chip on his shoulder. Distressed by the storefront the company had already rented, he came up with a solution: he would make some extra dough each time he prepared it and have someone deliver it to the branch. That way, both stores could operate simultaneously.

Mmm, to avenge being swept out and to get a share of the branch's profits, the usually honest Wang Ziqiang had been spurred into action.

You think you can sweep me out and my family will go hungry? Then I'll make sure you have to close down for good!

After hearing Dou Wenjing's explanation, Lin Xu felt as though he'd missed out on a dramatic scene. Isn't this more exciting than "Boruto"?

"Thanks for your hard work, Sister Jing. I'll bring you a gift when I come back tomorrow."

"Forget the gift, Boss. Just bring some fruit vinegar."

Tsk... Sister Jing, you're pretty enough. Why are you still so anxious about your looks? Besides, the fruit vinegar has just been brewed; it needs at least a month before it's ready to drink. Even if I brought it to Beijing tomorrow, you could only look at it and sigh—it's completely undrinkable right now.

"The fruit vinegar needs a month. It's no use taking it back now. I'll bring you something else instead, something that can also enhance beauty and health."

"Really? Then, thank you so much, Boss!"

After hanging up the phone, Lin Xu dialed his mother Chen Meijuan's number. "Mom, Yueyue and I are coming back tomorrow morning. The pan-fried bun shop is opening a branch, and I need to go give the staff some red envelopes as rewards."

「At the entrance to the scenic area.」

Upon hearing this, Chen Meijuan, who was taking photos with Dundun by the newly installed 4A sign, suddenly lost her interest in photography. He only just came back a week ago, and now he's leaving again. It's so hard to see him go.

Nearby, Lin Hongqi was on the phone with Liu Zhengyu, expressing his gratitude. After the call ended, Chen Meijuan said, "Xu is going back with Yueyue tomorrow morning. Let's prepare some local specialties for him to take. There are quite a few people over there; let's have Xu take some gifts back for them."

"Okay."

Lin Hongqi, who came from a bureaucratic background, was someone whose emotions rarely showed, and he was quite reserved. But when he heard his son was leaving, a flash of reluctance still crossed his eyes. It was so nice when our son was home, with the whole family together and joyful. Once he leaves, who knows when he'll be able to come back? After all, once Lin Ji opens, he'll be busy with the business every day, and there will hardly be any leisurely times like this anymore.

He took a deep breath and said to Chen Meijuan, "Let's get up early tomorrow. You cook some delicious food for Xu, and I'll drive to pick up the two grandmas. Our whole family can have a hearty breakfast together."

Their son was leaving. As parents, they didn't quite know how best to show their care. They could only put more thought into the food.

The couple had originally planned to upload the 4A plaque to various travel platforms and update the scenic area's credentials. However, now that their son was leaving, they had no mood for such tasks. Instead, they took Dundun, boarded the nearby commuter vehicle, and headed to the restaurant. They wanted to spend more time with their child before the parting in the morning. Of course, while they said they wanted to spend time with their child, it was really about wanting their child to spend a bit more time with them.

「Driving to the farmhouse restaurant.」

Before the couple could even begin to wallow in the sorrow of impending separation, they were interrupted by Chen Meide's booming voice, "Hongqi, Meijuan! Xu just made Stir-fried Fatty Intestines! Come and try them! They taste wonderful! Even in Zigong, you'd be hard-pressed to find such delicious Fatty Intestines!"

Lin Hongqi: "..."

Chen Meijuan: "..."

They had wanted to say a few words about taking care of his health and not staying up too late, but who would have thought her elder brother would already be in the kitchen, drinking liquor. What a drinker! Still, they absolutely had to try their son's cooking. Because after tomorrow morning, if they wanted to eat it again, they'd have to take the high-speed rail to Beijing.

The couple entered the kitchen and found Chen Meiliang also there, sitting beside the workbench, delicately sipping from a wine glass. As for Lin Xu and Shi Wenming, they were by the sink, processing a large, plump Grass Carp.

"Uncle, don't throw away these Fish Scales. I'll make a spicy Fish Scales dish for you to try later on."

"Fish Scales are edible? Then you have to teach me! Around here, we always throw them away. We've never heard of eating Fish Scales."

It wasn't just Fish Scales; in the Central Plains, apart from the Southern Yu region, people in other areas barely ate fish offal either.

Lin Hongqi said, "It's too hot in the kitchen; let's go drink in the dining room. Xu, when you're done, remember to join... join us for a few drinks."

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He had initially wanted his son to join him for a couple of drinks, but when the words reached his lips, "his son" became "us." His relatives were also very concerned about his son, so he thought it would be a good idea for Lin Xu to toast them as well later on.

"Sure, Dad. You guys go ahead and drink. I'll join you once I'm done with this," Lin Xu replied.

After his eldest maternal uncle, second maternal uncle, and his parents left, Shi Wenming asked belatedly, "Normally your dad doesn't encourage you to drink. Why does he seem a bit melancholic today?"

Lin Xu said with a smile, "It's probably because I'm leaving."

"Leaving? You're going back to Beijing?"

"Yes, I'll head back after breakfast tomorrow. The pan-fried bun shop the company invested in is opening a new branch, and I..."

Before he could finish, Shi Wenming took out his phone and called his wife, Lin Hongxia, "Hongxia, bring Moli to the scenic area for a meal. Lin Xu is leaving tomorrow morning, and I'm afraid Moli won't get up in time to see him and Yueyue off."

Lin Xu said with a wry smile, "There's no need for all that, Uncle."

"Why not? That's what families do."

After saying that, Shi Wenming notified a whole circle of relatives and then fetched a silver carp from the outdoor pond, preparing to make Double Pepper Fish Head using the method his nephew had taught him.

After so many days of learning, it's time to show what I've mastered, he thought.

Soon, the relatives arrived, and the restaurant table was laden with a feast. The previous batch of Stir-fried Pork Intestines had been devoured, so Lin Xu made another.

In addition to the Stir-fried Pork Intestines, he also cooked Fried Fish Fillets, Spicy Fish Scales, Fried Crispy Fish Fillets, Boiled Fish Innards, Stir-fried Sweet Potato Leaves, and Bamboo Shoots Stir-fried with Pork Lard, among other dishes.

Shi Wenming also contributed his specialties, such as Double Pepper Fish Head, Dry-Fried Pork Intestines, Chives Stir-fried with River Shrimp, and Local Eggs Stir-fried with Leek Scapes.

After all the dishes were laid out on the table, Shen Baobao quietly asked Lin Xu, "Why have all the relatives come? Is it someone's birthday again?"

When I arrived, I knew Grandma was celebrating her seventieth birthday, so Dad had packed a pure gold Longevity Peach in my suitcase. If there's another birthday, we'll need to prepare another gift!

Lin Xu told her with a smile, "No one's having a birthday; it's because we're heading back."

Shen Jiayue: ??????? Why am I the last to know about something this important?

Everyone started eating and drinking.

Lin Xu took the opportunity to taste the Stir-fried Pork Intestines he had made.

Mm, they're springy yet crisp, with a full-bodied sour and spicy flavor—truly a divine artifact for accompanying rice or liquor.

He poured himself a full glass of wine and then toasted his eldest maternal uncle, his second maternal uncle, his paternal uncle and aunt, his second paternal aunt, his maternal aunt and uncle-in-law, and finally, his parents.

After he had made his rounds with the toasts, the atmosphere at the dining table became lively.

His eldest maternal uncle curiously asked, "Lin Xu, back when you couldn't find a job in Beijing, why did you suddenly think of opening a shop there?"

Lin Xu held Shen Baobao's hand and said with a smile, "Wasn't it to bring you a niece-in-law, Eldest Uncle?"

Shen Jiayue: !!!!!!! Was Lin Xu staying in Beijing for me?! That sneak, keeping it hidden and not telling me! Just wait and see how I deal with him tonight!

Chen Meijuan hastily finished her meal and then went to join Lin Hongxia, Lin Xu's second paternal aunt, to start preparing the gifts Lin Xu would take back with him.

The Shen Family had a lot of wealthy relatives who might not appreciate common gifts, so they decided to prepare some specialty mountain products, items that were harder to come by in the city. These included wild Honeysuckle Tea, Dandelion Tea, and Mountain Flower Tea, among others. These teas generally have a cooling effect and are beneficial for health when consumed occasionally. Besides these drinks, they also prepared some other local delicacies from the mountains.

By the time Lin Xu finished his meal and went to the car, the trunk was already crammed full.

"You shouldn't drive after drinking. Yuanyuan, drive your cousin back up the mountain," Chen Meijuan suggested.

"Okay!"

Cousin Yuanyuan, as usual, had packed some snacks—to prevent anyone from going hungry late at night, of course.

As a single person, one had to learn to plan ahead.

"Little Bro, now that you're leaving, when will you be back? Without you here, your Big Sis's food standards are going to plummet!" Chen Yuanyuan lamented on the road, slightly reluctant to see her cousin leave.

Lin Xu said with a smile, "If you ever get bored, you can take the high-speed train to Beijing to visit us. You could even come work in Beijing; you don't have to be stuck here all the time. Just say the word, and Mom will definitely support you."

Anyone could be a ticket seller at the scenic area. If Cousin Yuanyuan wanted to see more of the world, Mom would only be happy for her and would likely slip her a big red envelope too. Yes, once Cousin Yuanyuan goes to Beijing, I'll introduce her to my sister-in-law. It'll be time for my cousin and sister-in-law to sit down and discuss their 'condition'... oh no, I mean, discuss strategies for dealing with their families pestering them about marriage.

His suggestion greatly appealed to Chen Yuanyuan.

That's right! Since I don't like the elders pushing me to get married, I could go to Beijing for a change of scenery!

「The next morning.」

When Lin Xu and Shen Baobao arrived at the restaurant with their suitcases, having taken the shuttle bus, they found both his paternal grandma and maternal grandma there, playing with Dundun.

"Aiyo, my dear grandson is here!"

Lin Xu and Shen Baobao quickly went over to greet them, each helping one of the elderly women to the dining area for breakfast.

Today's breakfast was exceptionally hearty, filled with all of Lin Xu's childhood favorites. There were Fried Spring Rolls, Steamed Vegetable Pythons, Egg Cakes, Fried Vegetable Pockets, Green Peppers Stuffed with Meat, Sweet Potato Balls, Glass Noodles Meatballs, Chicken Soup Wontons, Paper-Thin Skinned Buns, and Pumpkin Porridge—the table was absolutely laden with food.

This was all a testament to his mother's profound love.

Lin Xu felt his eyes sting as if he had gotten sand in them.

He said to Chen Meijuan, "Mom, you didn't have to go to so much trouble. We'll never be able to eat all of this."

"It's alright. We can eat the leftovers. These are all your favorites; make sure to try a bit of everything."

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Upon hearing they were all Lin Xu's favorite foods, Shen Baobao immediately became interested. She had to remember these delicacies so she could tell Aunt Liu to learn how to make them. This way, Xu could enjoy the taste of home when having breakfast in the villa.

But thinking of Lin Xu having breakfast in the villa made Shen Baobao anxious again.

Would it be inappropriate to have him stay in my room? But if he stays in the guest room, how will I cuddle with him as we sleep?

I can't sleep if I can't hold my Xu!

When it was finally time to officially start the meal, she stood up and first took a serious photo.

With this photo, Aunt Liu will have a reference now.

As for sleeping... worst case, I'll sneak over in the middle of the night since the guest room is just next door, and Mom and Dad definitely won't find out!

After the meal, Madam Lin and Madam Chen gave Lin Xu some advice before heading toward the reservoir with their walking sticks.

The more someone has experienced partings, the less they want to face such scenes.

As Lin Xu was loading his suitcase into the car, his dad, Lin Hongqi, sneakily slipped a bank card into his pocket.

"There's 500,000 in this card. 300,000 is the car money your mom and I promised last year, and your grandma and granny each gave 100,000. The PIN is your lunar birth date. Remember to transfer it when you get back."

Lin Xu's eyes moistened. "I have money, and the company isn't short on funds either. You and Mom keep this money and use it."

Lin Hongqi patted his son's shoulder. "Actually, we've been saving this money for you for a while. Even when your mom and I were struggling the most, we never touched it. The tourist spot is doing well now, so we really don't need it. Take it. As parents, we can't go back on our word."

Lin Xu, feeling helpless, eventually tucked it into his pocket.

Once the car was loaded, and Dundun's litter box, its favorite scratching board, and cat toys were placed inside, Lin Xu and Shen Baobao opened the car doors and got in.

Chen Meijuan handed them a bag filled with food and drinks. "Eat these on the road. Try not to buy snacks at rest stops."

"Thank you, Mom. Take care of yourselves at home. We'll come visit as soon as we're free." Shen Baobao took the bag.

Dundun stood up from the back seat.

Lin Xu rolled down the window, and the little guy affectionately nuzzled Chen Meijuan's hand, seemingly saying goodbye to his grandma.

Once Dundun finished his farewells, Lin Xu started the car.

He then waved to his parents and relatives before driving away.

"Xu, I really love it here. I don't want to leave..." Shen Baobao said, her eyes brimming with tears as the car passed the main gate of the tourist area.

Lin Xu sniffled. "We still need to earn money to support our parents. We have to leave."

Inside the tourist area, watching the car disappear in the distance, Chen Meijuan wiped the tears from the corner of her eyes.

Although she knew their child was going off to pursue his career, and there were people in Beijing to take care of him, the pain of parting still made her want to weep.

Lin Hongqi remarked, "Don't be sad. Let the kid make the most of his youth. We should also try harder to earn more money. Xu doesn't even have a house in Beijing yet; we can't ease up now."

"Yes, we can't relax. We have to help Xu earn enough for a house, no matter what!"

The car sped along.

Dundun lay comfortably in the back seat, wrapped in his little blanket and sound asleep.

Meanwhile, Lin Xu listened to music as he drove directly toward Beijing.

At two-thirty in the afternoon, the car finally passed through the inspection station and entered the South Sixth Ring.

「The Shen Family Villa.」

Upon receiving his daughter's message, Shen Guofu immediately told Aunt Liu, "They're at the South Sixth Ring now! Hurry up and get the food and drinks ready. They skipped meals to make good time; they must be starving..."

In the living room, almost all of the Shen family's relatives were present.

The day their daughter returned to Yinzhou, all the Lin family's relatives were there to welcome her. Now that their son-in-law was coming, the Shen family couldn't be outdone in hospitality.

Shen Guofu sipped from the already cold cup of tea on the table and addressed the relatives, "Let's not bring up the topic of parting when they arrive. Yueyue mentioned that Xu cried this morning when separating from his parents. Let's not stir up his sadness again."

The relatives all nodded understandingly.

"Don't worry, we all know what to say."

"This kind of thing, which family hasn't experienced it?"

"When Chen Yan went to Fudan University, your aunt and I cried buckets."

"Lin Xu is such a good kid..."

As everyone was chatting, Chen Yan, who was sitting in the corner secretly peeling fried peanuts, curiously asked, "Uncle, did Yueyue cry when she left for Yinzhou and separated from you all?"

Shen Guofu thought carefully.

My own daughter didn't cry at all; she even laughed out loud...

He sighed softly and then asked Chen Yan, "Chen Yan, you don't have a partner yet, right? It's time to find one."

Chen Yan: ??????

Is it just because I ate two handfuls of your peanuts? Why has the topic shifted back to me?

"WU WU WU! If you all keep this up, I'm going to run away from home!"

After entering the South Fifth Ring, Lin Xu had originally planned to visit Yingchun Street. He'd been driving for a long time and needed to change his clothes. But hearing that the Shen family's relatives were all waiting, he headed towards the West Fourth Ring instead.

Well, after whisking their daughter away for a week, they might be worried that Shen Baobao was mistreated in Yinzhou. It's better to stop at the villa first and distribute the gifts.

「Half an hour later.」

The car slowly stopped in front of the Shen family's villa.

The relatives, led by Shen Guofu, all came out to greet them.

"Lin Xu, you must be tired from driving, right? Come in and rest a bit."

"Your feet must be tired. Remember to switch to slippers and unwind."

"Where's Dundun? Let me hold him for a while."

"Oh dear, this little guy is still sleeping. You're home now, darling."

"..."

Everyone warmly greeted Lin Xu and Dundun, making Shen Baobao feel like she was about to lose her mind.

AAAHHH! I'm not even married off yet, and you're already treating me like an outsider, huh?

She glanced at Chen Yan, who was looking dejected in the corner. The two girls exchanged looks, their eyes brimming with tears.

Lin Xu opened the trunk, took out the gifts and Shen Baobao's luggage, and before he even had a chance to drink water, the welcome feast started.

Just like at the Lin family's home, the Shen family's relatives were also starving while they waited.

Once the feast began, everyone sat down and started eating.

"Lin Xu, if you don't have plans after dinner, don't bother going back. You can stay here; there are plenty of rooms upstairs," Shen Guofu called out warmly.

If my son-in-law stays at our home, getting whatever he wants to eat will just be a matter of him saying so, right? After a tough week, I've finally seen the light at the end of the tunnel!

Just as Lin Xu was about to suggest visiting the Ziqiang Shengjian branch, his phone rang.

It was Dou Wenjing calling again.

"Boss, are you back yet? The branch can't operate for now. If you haven't returned, you can stay at home for a few more days."

Lin Xu was startled and curiously asked, "What happened?"

"The owner of the shop where Master Wang used to work hired someone to smash the glass at our branch. I'm at the police station handling this right now."

Lin Xu: ???????

On the way here, I fantasized about all sorts of shengjian business wars—things like mutual price undercutting, or sending the competitor's product for inspection to find quality weaknesses, and so on. Yet the real-world business battle turned out to be so surreal. That shengjian shop owner doesn't have a relative who's a manager at Meituan, do they?

Chapter 387: Of course, Dundun has to be the one to undermine someone's foundations! Spicy Chicken Strips!

"Sister Wenjing, I just arrived in Beijing. Do I need to make a trip to your place?"

Lin Xu pinched the bridge of his nose. He hadn't expected to encounter such an absurd situation as soon as he returned to Beijing.

Dou Wenjing said, "No need. A lawyer from Mr. Shen's company just came by. They're best at handling this kind of thing. We just need to replace the glass and wait for compensation."

Since a professional team was taking care of it, he decided to leave it to them.

Lin Xu then asked about the renovation progress.

"The renovation will be finished in one more week... Aren't you planning to recruit staff, Boss? You need to hurry. We must have all departmental staff in place and finalize the menu and prices three days before opening."

"Okay, I'll get the staff together as soon as possible."

After hanging up, Lin Xu felt it was time to talk to Qin Wei and Shu Yun about changing jobs. If they were willing to come over, he would start preparing their contracts. If not, he needed to quickly find someone else.

"What's wrong, Xiaoxu? Did something happen at the company?" Seeing Lin Xu step out to take the call, Shen Guofu curiously followed him.

If there was a problem his son-in-law couldn't handle, Old Shen wouldn't mind showing off his connections and influence.

Lin Xu smiled and said, "There was a minor issue, but Sister Wenjing has taken care of it. Let's continue eating, Dad. How come you seem to have lost some weight in just a week?"

It would have been fine if the weight loss hadn't been mentioned. But once it was, Shen Guofu felt an urge to cry. Being forced to exercise for two hours every night and then not being allowed to eat afterwards to replenish his strength—how could he not lose weight?

However, it wasn't without its benefits. These past few days, Shen Guofu definitely felt lighter on his feet, and his sleep quality had significantly improved. Even minor issues like night sweats had gotten better.

"Your mother-in-law supervises my exercise every night. I'm almost depressed," he lamented.

Lin Xu replied, "That's a good thing. Constantly eating lavish meals isn't good for your health. You should try to eat lighter in the evenings. Eating too much greasy food is never good."

Shen Guofu: "..."

I understand the reasoning, but who can resist delicious, savory meat?

The father-in-law and son-in-law continued their conversation as they returned to the dining room to eat.

Today's meal was sumptuous, and everyone chatted about popular topics while eating. Han Shuzhen noticed Lin Xu seemed a bit tired. Thinking it was from the drive, she suggested, "Xiaoxu, why don't you rest upstairs after you finish eating? Driving for so long must have been exhausting."

Lin Xu, who was peeling shrimp for Shen Baobao, replied, "No need. I have to go back to my apartment first, open the windows to air it out, and then make another trip to the Fishing Platform. I have two candidates for Lin Ji that I'm planning to poach."

Hearing he had important matters to attend to, Han Shuzhen didn't insist.

This morning, she'd read a message from her daughter saying her son-in-law had cried when he left, which made her heart ache. But now that he seemed to have recovered, Director Han was very relieved. The stronger her son-in-law's career drive, the more it proved her daughter had married the right man.

"Then leave Dundun here. Don't take him running around with you."

Han Shuzhen had been missing the little guy for a long time. Thankfully, Chen Meijuan sent daily updates about him; otherwise, Director Han might have had to take leave from work to visit her little darling in Yinzhou.

Lin Xu also wanted to leave Dundun behind, but this time he really couldn't. "I'm planning to poach the front desk manager from Building Two of the Fishing Platform. She adores Dundun, so I have to take this little guy with me today. Having him there might make things much simpler."

Dundun, who was eating bluefin tuna, perked up and proudly flicked his tail, as if the family couldn't function without him.

Han Shuzhen said, "Well, if you have business to attend to, go ahead. Dundun, remember to help your dad poach those people, okay? I've had a super-large Cat Castle custom-made for you, where you can have loads of fun."

Upon hearing this, Dundun couldn't help but let out a long "MEEOW!"

The relatives dining had never imagined Dundun would respond like that, as if he truly understood.

"Hey, this cat is incredibly smart, isn't he?"

"If I hadn't seen it with my own eyes, I'd never have believed it."

"Xiaoxu, have you ever thought about making videos and turning him into an internet-famous cat?"

"I've seen those internet-celebrity cats online; they all have so many fans. Some of their owners have even bought cars and houses from it."

"..."

Lin Xu laughed and said, "Many of those internet-celebrity cats are products of countless staged shoots, which can be quite torturous for them. I'm perfectly capable of earning money on my own; I don't need Dundun to support me. All that matters is that he's happy."

While at the scenic area, whether he was live-streaming or filming videos, Lin Xu never deliberately put Dundun on camera. He tried to let him live as freely as possible, without any pressure.

After the meal, Lin Xu excused himself to the relatives, bid farewell to his father-in-law, mother-in-law, and Shen Baobao, then picked up Dundun and got into the car.

He first returned to his apartment in the Yingchun Street residential complex, opened all the windows to air out the rooms, changed his clothes, and tidied his hair.

Then he drove straight to the Fishing Platform State Guesthouse.

Upon reaching the entrance, just as Lin Xu drove in, he saw Wei Qian and Qin Wei walking towards the gate, arm in arm.

This surprised him. Since when had Wei Qian become so close to Qin Wei?

"What are you two up to?" Lin Xu parked the car by the roadside, rolled down the window, and greeted them.

Wei Qian, his arm still around Qin Wei's shoulder, walked over with a cheerful smile and said, "We used our New Year's Day holiday time to swap a day off with our team leader and deputy team leader, so we're planning to go out and have some fun. We heard Shen Teng and Ma Li's new movie is pretty good and want to check it out."

Chapter 388: Of course, Dundun is the one to poach talents! Spicy Chicken Strips!

Lin Xu was speechless.

You're addicted to setting people up, aren't you?

But when I think about it, considering how Wei Qian was favored and then looked down upon by Elder He, and those people didn't tease or mock him, it felt only right for Wei Qian to set them up before leaving.

As he was contemplating this, he suddenly grasped the meaning of Wei Qian's words and looked at Qin Wei with some surprise, asking, "You went to Building One?"

Wei Qian said, "A few days ago, Chef Xie traded him for a pastry chef from Building One. It seems he also swapped the receptionist from Building Two, the pretty one with a very friendly smile, with the cheongsam girl from Building Six."

Lin Xu was utterly astounded.

Is Senior Brother arranging all this specifically so I can poach their staff?

But wouldn't doing so risk getting beaten up by Chef He from Building One and Chef Qiu from Building Six?

When I see Senior Brother later, I'll definitely have to thank him.

That way, when Senior Brother gets beaten up, I'll feel a little less guilty.

Putting his thoughts aside, Lin Xu looked at Qin Wei, who had been transferred to Building One, and asked, "Master Qin, my restaurant is about to open, and I'd like to invite you to come work for me. Would you be willing to switch workplaces?"

Since Senior Brother had arranged everything so neatly, I might as well be direct.

The moment he finished speaking, Qin Wei gave a wry smile. "I'm... already... on... on the pirate ship!"

For the past few days, Wei Qian had been dragging him along whenever he applied for leave. If Qin Wei didn't jump ship, he wouldn't be able to take a single day off for the rest of the year.

Lin Xu pushed Dou Wenjing's WeChat contact card to him and said, "I'll send you the general manager's card. Add her as a friend. Discuss your salary and benefits directly with her. Even though we're friends, don't hesitate to state your terms and ask for what you deserve."

Qin Wei nodded. "I... I don't have many... demands. As long as... as long as everyone doesn't... doesn't dislike me, that's... that's fine."

"Don't worry, Master Qin. The atmosphere in my kitchen is quite good. You know Che Zai and the others, don't you? They're all straightforward—no scheming or forming cliques."

After chatting a bit more, Lin Xu turned to Wei Qian and said, "Tomorrow night, I'm planning to make crayfish at my place and treat everyone to dinner. Remember to bring Master Qin along, alright? We'll have a small family-style meal before the grand opening."

When Lin Xu mentioned his return in the group chat last night, Zeng Xiaoqi immediately announced that her throat had fully recovered, wildly hinting at the crayfish feast he had promised her.

Lin Xu felt that he would definitely need Zeng Xiaoqi's help with publicity.

And the core team members of the restaurant should also get together beforehand, so preparing a delicious crayfish meal was a top priority.

When eating crayfish, people can't be on their phones; they can only chat.

Everyone would get to know each other after just one meal. This would make it much easier to cooperate on publicity or other matters later on.

Wei Qian's spirits instantly lifted at the mention of crayfish. "Sure, sure, sure! I still fondly remember that barbecue we had. Make sure you prepare plenty of crayfish this time!"

Qin Wei said with some difficulty, "Tomorrow night, I... I'm on duty..."

"No problem. Just swap your shift for a Spring Festival holiday. Plenty of people would be willing to trade with you."

In everyone's perception, the Fishing Platform was already the pinnacle of the industry. People were desperate to get in, and no one ever wanted to resign. That's why no one grew suspicious when Wei Qian kept swapping shifts.

Of course, Wei Qian was also quite cunning. He always found different people to switch shifts with. After confirming a swap, he would insist they keep it confidential and not tell anyone.

After chatting a little longer, Lin Xu bid farewell to the two, who left arm-in-arm to go have some fun. He then drove straight to Building Six.

Hmm, he had originally planned to visit his Senior Brother at Building Two.

But since his Senior Brother had transferred Shu Yun to Building Six, he decided to take care of important matters first.

As Lin Xu drove past Building Two, Qiu Zhenhua was in a small tea room upstairs, gazing out the window while savoring tea. He curiously remarked to Xie Baomin, who was busy with the tea set, "Isn't that white G63 your junior brother's car? Why did he drive past your Building Two without stopping in to see you?"

Xie Baomin turned his head to look and commented casually, "He's probably gone to see Old Dai. Old Dai promised to teach him how to make dry dip seasonings, and he must be eager to learn... Here, Qiuqiu, try this exquisite gold-tipped eyebrow tea."

Qiu Zhenhua put down his teacup and replied with a smile, "No more for me, no more. I need to get back and check on the dinner preparations. There's a banquet for foreign dignitaries at Building Six tonight. It's not large-scale, but it's very important. I'm worried the staff might get complacent, so I need to supervise them."

As soon as he heard Qiu Zhenhua was leaving, Xie Baomin quickly said, "Wait a moment, Qiuqiu! I have some Big Red Tangerines here, aged over fifteen years. The person who gave them to me said the quality is exceptional. Could you take a look for me?"

Qiu Zhenhua liked to drink tea. Upon hearing about fifteen-year-old Big Red Tangerines, his interest was immediately piqued. "I never thought you, Old Xie, would have such fine tea hidden away! Bring it out, bring it out, let me have a look."

Hearing this, Xie Baomin stood up and began rummaging through the drawers in the small tea room, searching for the premium Big Red Tangerines he had 'acquired' from Building Ten.

His junior brother was clearly heading to Building Six to find Shu Yun.

He absolutely had to keep Qiuqiu stalled so he wouldn't run into him.

「At the Building Six reception desk.」

Even after a week, Shu Yun still felt somewhat unaccustomed to the environment here. What she found even harder to adapt to was...

I bought a pile of little toys for Dundun, but now I can't even watch him play with them. I heard the little fellow went back to Boss Lin's hometown with him. I wonder when I'll ever get to see him again.

The thought of Dundun's adorable, clumsy appearance brought a pang of sadness to Shu Yun.

They say cats have short memories. When we meet again, he probably won't remember me, will he?

Just as she was lost in these thoughts, she saw a white G63 approaching from a distance and then stop in front of Building Six.

Chapter 389: Of course, Dundun is the one to poach talents! Spicy Chicken Strips!

This...

Isn't this Boss Lin's car?

Shu Yun was surprised for a moment. Just as she got up, she saw the car door open, and a chubby little figure dashed out first, heading straight towards her.

It was a bit hot outside, and the little guy was running with his mouth open, showing his crimson little tongue.

The adorable sight tightened Shu Yun's heart.

AAAAHHHH! Isn't this my Dundun!

It still remembers me!!!!

Shu Yun hurriedly pushed the door open. Just as she spread her arms, Dundun leaped into her embrace.

"Did you come to see me, little Dundun?"

Holding the little cutie, any grievance caused by the job transfer was instantly swept away.

Lin Xu locked the car door, came over, casually hanging his sunglasses on his T-shirt collar, and smiled as he said, "Hello, Manager Shu... I really didn't expect you to be transferred to Building Six."

Shu Yun, holding Dundun like a baby, welcomed Lin Xu inside and asked, "What would you like to drink? I'll have someone prepare it."

Worried that Qiu Zhenhua might suddenly appear, Lin Xu got straight to the point, saying, "So, Manager Shu, my new store is opening soon. It's about three or four thousand square meters, and I need to hire a lot of staff to maintain the operations..."

Shu Yun tilted her head.

Why is he suddenly telling me this?

Does he want me to help him recruit people?

She didn't interrupt Lin Xu but listened carefully.

Lin Xu discussed a bunch of ideas for the new store, then said, "The new store has many departments and various staff members, so it needs a very experienced manager to handle it... Manager Shu, are you interested in being the manager?"

Shu Yun: "..."

She never expected Lin Xu to go through such a long discussion just to invite her to be the manager.

Should I accept?

Work at the Fishing Platform was relaxed and stress-free. She just had to get her tasks done each day. Quitting, however, could mean losing such a comfortable job forever.

But staying here too long, she often felt a lack of passion.

While she was hesitating, Dundun in her arms suddenly made a soft sound:

"MEOW~~~~~"

Looking down, Dundun was rubbing his big head against her arm, his tail gently swaying, his eyes filled with longing.

That look instantly softened Shu Yun's heart. "Alright," she conceded, "I'll be your manager."

Lin Xu was about to discuss the terms when, unexpectedly, Shu Yun had already agreed.

Bringing Dundun along was indeed the right move.

Without Dundun, Shu Yun might not have agreed.

He smiled and said, "Then I'll send you the WeChat contact of the company's general manager. You add her as a friend, discuss the compensation package, and you can raise any concerns you have."

Remembering that someone had tried to poach her as soon as she transferred to Building Six, Shu Yun suddenly realized and asked, "Was this a play you and your senior brother put up? Getting me transferred first and then poaching me?"

Lin Xu shook his head and explained, "It was my senior brother who worried I'd hesitate to take action, so he specifically swapped you and Qin Wei out. It also helped to minimize the loss to Building Two."

Ha! So it was Chef Xie's cunning plan.

No wonder her well-matched partner had been transferred to Building Six; it was all to make it easier for Boss Lin to poach her.

Shu Yun smiled and then made her request, "I heard from the lady boss that you made a lot of beautifying fruit vinegar. Could you give me some?"

Lin Xu: "..."

Shouldn't you be asking for an annual salary or stock options right now?

She's normally such a rational person. How come she becomes so irrational when it comes to her appearance?

"The fruit vinegar isn't ready yet, but once it is, I'll definitely let you have enough... Tomorrow night, I plan to buy some crayfish and have a dinner party at home. I hope you can join."

Shu Yun immediately became interested. "Sure!" she exclaimed. "I actually wanted to see Dundun's little den."

After this matter was discussed, Lin Xu handed Dou Wenjing's business card to Shu Yun. Then, feeling it was about time, he prepared to leave.

Right, if Chef Qiu saw me so blatantly poaching his people, the chefs in the kitchen might not beat up Senior Brother; they might beat me up first.

"Boss Lin, will the new store still focus on hand-rolled noodles?"

Before leaving, Shu Yun curiously asked.

Lin Xu nodded. "Hand-rolled noodles are the foundation of Lin Ji," he affirmed. "We can't lose that."

"Then, may I recommend a chef to you? There's a chef in Building Six who is particularly good at making hand-rolled noodles, but not so good at making buns. He's been working here for several years and still can only manage to roll out the dough. He's not very happy about it. If we're still making hand-rolled noodles, I suggest you poach him too..."

TSK TSK TSK. Look at our new store manager's initiative. She just agreed to switch jobs and is already thinking about increasing staff.

Lin Xu was just worrying about how to free himself from making hand-rolled noodles to focus on other dishes.

Upon hearing this, he immediately asked, "Is that master chef in the kitchen now?"

Shu Yun shook her head. "He's not here; he's on leave today. I'll ask him tomorrow."

"Alright, that would be great, Manager Shu."

Hearing this new title, Shu Yun gave a gentle smile. "It's what I should do," she replied.

Having just left Building Six with Dundun, Lin Xu saw Qiu Zhenhua approaching with a fancy box of tea.

That was close!

He stopped the car and greeted Qiu Zhenhua, "Hello, Chef Qiu."

"Hello, Chef Lin. Where were you off to? Old Xie has brewed a pot of tea and is waiting for you upstairs in the teahouse."

"I went to Building Fifteen to ask Chef Song something. Since Senior Brother is waiting for me, I'll head back now. See you, Chef Qiu."

Lin Xu felt somewhat guilty as he started the car.

Hmm, I'm still not cunning enough. Not like Senior Brother, who can lie to the executive chefs without even blinking. And Master seems pretty calm when facing his female confidantes too.

As for our school's traditions, I'm still lacking in that department!

After the car left, Qiu Zhenhua muttered to himself, "Building Fifteen? Why do I feel like he just turned out from Building Six?"

But he immediately laughed. "What would he be doing in Building Six? I must have been mistaken."

「Arriving at Building Two.」

The cheongsam-clad front desk manager he had once seen in Building Six greeted him with a smile, "Hello, Boss Lin. Are you coming to work today?"

Lin Xu shook his head. "Just passing by to see my Senior Brother. I'll come to work tomorrow."

I still have an unfinished task at the Fishing Platform, one that spans twenty days. I need to hurry and complete it, as the rewards—braised dishes and elbow dishes—are desperately needed in the restaurant.

Carrying Dundun, Lin Xu headed upstairs.

Lin Xu pushed open the door of the small teahouse.

Xie Baomin, sitting cross-legged, looked up at his junior brother and asked, "You came to an agreement with Shu Yun?"

"We did. Thanks, Brother."

"We're brothers; saying that is too formal. Oh, by the way, there's a banquet for the Ministry of Commerce at Building Two tomorrow. You have to come to work. There's an extra bonus for it."

"Sure!"

The two brothers chatted for a while, discussed the new store, and around five o'clock, Lin Xu, carrying Dundun, got up to leave.

Yes, Father-in-law has already called several times, urging me to go to the villa for dinner.

Can't be late.

「He drove Dundun to the West Fourth Ring Villa.」

Shen Guofu asked, "Did you handle everything?"

"Handled everything, very smoothly."

With Dundun taking the lead, poaching was no problem at all.

"Now that everything's handled, let's get ready for dinner. Your mother-in-law insists on a vegetarian diet, and the only meat allowed is chicken breast... Lin Xu, I'm sick of eating these every day. You've got to spice things up for me."

Chicken breast?

Lin Xu said with a smile, "Chicken breast can be delicious too, good with liquor and good with rice. How about we give it a try?"

Shen Guofu looked unconvinced. "Isn't that stuff just for people on a diet? Plus, it's dry and flavorless. How can it taste good? What are you planning to do with it?"

Lin Xu recalled a very old dry-fried dish, smiling as he said, "I'm planning to make Spicy Chicken Shreds!"

Chapter 390: Can Chicken Breast Actually Be This Delicious? The TV Station's Invitation!

"Spicy Chicken Shreds?"

Shen Guofu's eyes instantly lit up. "Hey! That's a real classic dish."

Shen Baobao, who had been eavesdropping, asked curiously, "Isn't that the stage name in a comedy sketch? It's actually a dish?"

Shen Guofu said with a smile, "You wouldn't know, my girl. Back in the day, when meat was scarce, a lot of dishes were made with chicken breast, like Sauce Burst Chicken Cubes, Cold Noodle with Shredded Chicken, Cold Shredded Chicken, Spicy Chicken Shreds..." He listed a bunch of dish names as if reciting treasures from his memory.

Then, he sighed sentimentally. "It's been almost twenty years since I last ate Spicy Chicken Shreds. Time really flies!"

In the past, after closing his stall, he would order Spicy Chicken Shreds at the entrance of an alley, along with two bottles of beer, enjoying the crispy, spicy chicken with his beer. Sometimes, when bumping into Tan Yajun, they would add a plate of peanuts. The two of them would drink and chat, feeling utterly content. In a blink of an eye, so many years had passed. He could no longer find the simple pleasure of sitting on a stool at an alley entrance, enjoying beer to his heart's content.

Thinking of this, he said to Lin Xu, "There's no time to delay. Let's get started quickly and make plenty. Your mother-in-law is sure to love it too."

"Alright, Dad, I'll go get ready now."

On his way to the kitchen, seeing Shen Baobao idling around, Lin Xu suddenly remembered that it had been two or three days since he last updated his videos. Addressing the girl, he said, "Baobao, you'll film a bit later. I plan to update a video."

Now, if more than two days passed without him posting a video, the army of followers would flood the Lin Ji's Food topic page with comments like, "Grandpa, the UP host you're following forgot to update again," leaving Lin Xu speechless. He planned to take some time to shoot ten or twenty dishes in one go, to stockpile a wave of drafts for later.

Upon hearing they were going to shoot a video, Shen Baobao immediately ran gleefully to fetch the tripod, fill light, and the accompanying action camera.

As long as I can help Xu Bao, I'm really happy!

In the kitchen, Aunt Liu was preparing dinner. Seeing Lin Xu come in, she asked curiously, "Are you not satisfied with the welcome dinner today?"

Lin Xu hurriedly explained, "No, no, my father hasn't had Spicy Chicken Shreds in a long time. I'm making some for him to try."

Hmm, the part about my mother-in-law forcing me to do calisthenics should be cut out. It's best not to spread it. Otherwise, it would badly affect the image of my father-in-law as a glorious, upright, and domineering business tycoon.

The ingredients needed for making Spicy Chicken Shreds were very simple. First was a whole piece of chicken breast, then shreds of dried chili that had been vertically cut, as well as Scallion and Ginger, Sichuan peppercorns, and a coarser chili powder.

After laying out these ingredients on the table, filming began. Lin Xu introduced the ingredients. Then, holding the chili powder, he said, "Those who can handle spice can choose highly spicy dried chilies like Chili Kings, Lantern Peppers, or Bullet Heads. For those who can't handle much heat, use Northwest mild chilies."

After discussing the ingredients, he started boiling water in a pot. He then placed the prepared chicken breast in, adding the Scallion and Ginger, Sichuan peppercorns, and Cooking Wine, and began the cooking process. When making shredded chicken dishes, the chicken breast first needs to be cooked until it's just cooked through. Only then can the chicken breast be shredded into strips, or "chicken shreds."

While the chicken breast was boiling, Lin Xu took the camera and filmed several close-up shots around the pot, leaving Shen Baobao in awe. She had been desperately learning how to film recently but was still a long way off from the level of her dear Xu Bao. For example, when filming the boiling chicken breast, Shen Baobao thought a few seconds of footage of the pot and the meat inside would be enough. But Lin Xu first filmed the flames for a few seconds, then moved the camera horizontally, imitating a slider track movement to capture the flames licking the bottom of the pot. Finally, he pointed the lens at the gently simmering water in the pot and filmed for a few more seconds. This not only made the scene more dynamic, but the horizontal sliding of the camera also created a sense of time passing.

Before long, the water in the pot came to a boil, and a lot of white foam appeared. He carefully skimmed off the foam with a spoon and then continued to boil the chicken for about ten more minutes. The chicken breast shouldn't be overcooked. If it was, it would become mushy and fall apart, which would significantly compromise the texture.

After ten minutes, Lin Xu poked the chicken breast with chopsticks. No blood emerged, indicating that the meat was cooked through and ready to be removed from the pot. He scooped out the chicken breast with a slotted spoon and plunged it into an ice bath.

"Boiled chicken breast must be cooled quickly. This makes the meat more tender and improves the taste. If possible, add some ice cubes. This will make the texture even better."

In the living room, Han Shuzhen carried Dundun around the house. Upon returning, she saw Shen Guofu looking restless and asked curiously, "You went to all this effort to have Xiao Xu come over for dinner. You didn't make him cook a big feast, did you?"

"As if I would dare! You said to eat chicken breast, so we're using chicken breast for the dishes. I wouldn't dare eat anything else."

Seeing her husband looking so well-behaved, Han Shuzhen was somewhat incredulous. "Really?"

"Really. Xiao Xu is cooking with chicken breast for me right now. When it's ready, you're not allowed to fight me for it."

"Chicken breast? What's there to fight over? When it's done, you can have it all. I won't eat a single bite."

After speaking, Han Shuzhen, holding Dundun, approached the grand piano in the corner of the living room. She pressed a few keys, and the melodious notes of "Butterfly Lovers" filled the space. Listening to the sound, Dundun's eyes instantly bulged like brass bells. It couldn't believe this thing could actually make noise. It twisted its body and tapped a few keys with its paws, and the pleasant piano music immediately turned into discordant noise.