

Culinary 54

Chapter 54: The Routine of Boiled Dishes! Tired, Let's Destroy!

Do I have a wealth of experience? Lin Xu was somewhere between laughter and tears. He had spent his four years at university playing basketball, gaming, and munching on the snacks Shen Jiayue fed him; he'd even gone to the movies with his roommates. Where do you get the idea that I have vast experience?

Thinking that Panda might still be waiting for a message, he replied, "The key is to see what Wu Kexin's attitude towards you is."

No sooner had he sent it than Panda hastily tried to explain himself, even mistyping his words, "Boss Lin, don't... It's not Wu Kexin. It's a friend of mine who's pursuing someone. You'll give people the wrong idea."

「On the high-speed train.」

A certain flustered giant panda—Panda—furtively glanced at the beauty beside him. Noticing she was still engrossed in her chat, he managed to calm his racing heart a little.

"Alright, alright, so it's not Wu Kexin. But let's just assume it *is* her, okay? Let's say you *are* that friend, and Wu Kexin is the girl your friend is pursuing. In that case, what's Wu Kexin's attitude towards you?"

Lin Xu didn't have the heart to call Panda out. He could only continue the conversation in this roundabout manner.

"She's... pretty good to me, I guess. During the livestreams these past few days, we've gotten along really well. And after the streams ended at night, she even invited me to go stargazing..."

Wow, no wonder he's so antsy. I bet all the stars he saw looked like Host Wu, didn't they?

Lin Xu genuinely had no experience with pursuing girls. However, judging by the experiences of his roommate Zhou Peng and classmate Sun Minghao—who had collectively been rejected hundreds of times after confessing their feelings—a rash confession didn't seem like a good idea.

"Bro, I think you should just continue to let things develop naturally. Remember, a confession is the trumpet call announcing final victory, not the bugle call to charge. Don't rush into confessing."

The shop was still busy. Lin Xu genuinely couldn't offer any definitive guidance on the matter. After thinking for a moment, he created a small group chat on WeChat and added Panda and Shen Jiayue.

Shen Jiayue was always complaining that she had nothing to do at the audit firm. Her supervisor didn't assign her any work, and every time she asked, she was just told to familiarize herself with the office software. Lin Xu figured this little matchmaking project could help Shen Jiayue pass her otherwise boring time. He briefly explained the situation in the group chat and then set his phone aside to get back to work in the shop.

"Wow! Panda-bro, you're pursuing Wu Kexin?" Shen Jiayue posted a "shocked whale" emoji in the group chat and promptly changed the group name to "Panda-bro's Get-the-Girl Squad."

"I don't really get this stuff either. I had a crush on Xu Bao back in college, but I didn't know how to confess. All I could do was secretly give him snacks... But I can pull more people in! If we all brainstorm together, you'll definitely win her over!" With that, she added Geng Lele to the group.

"This kind of thing is too boring. I'd rather spend the time solving a few more function problems." Geng Lele, the genius girl, was clearly uninterested, which made Shen Jiayue lose a bit of face. So, Shen Jiayue quickly added Yue Liyue to the group.

"If you like someone, just give them flowers or snacks, take them to the movies, or play escape rooms or murder mystery games. Doesn't that build affection?" Yue Liyue, who had dated a few people back in school, offered her advice.

Panda was just about to ask for more details when Geng Lele, who had been lurking, suddenly tagged Yue Liyue: "@Yue Liyue, why is it that even though you're just typing, I feel like I can hear your Cantonese accent?"

Once Geng Lele mentioned it, Shen Jiayue realized she felt the same way. "Yes, yes, me too! It's so weirdly accurate!" The group then got sidetracked discussing this, successfully forgetting all about Panda's quest to woo Wu Kexin.

「In the shop.」

Lin Xu stared at the leftover knife-cut chilies from the day before, unsure what to do with them. The Crispy Meat was all gone, rendering these chilies, originally intended as a dipping condiment, suddenly redundant.

However, from what he'd learned before, a dipping condiment was just a minor application for knife-cut chilies. This seasoning's primary use was in boiled dishes popular in the Sichuan and Chongqing regions, such as Boiled Pork, Boiled Fish, Boiled Beef Slices, Boiled Tripe, Boiled Intestines, and Spicy Boiled Blood Curd.

"Worried about how to use these knife-cut chilies?" Grandpa Gao asked, noticing his apprentice staring blankly at them.

Lin Xu nodded. "I was thinking of making some kind of boiled dish for lunch, like Boiled Fish, but I'm not very good at it..."

Grandpa Gao chuckled. "Those kinds of dishes are quite simple! They don't demand intricate Knife Skills or fancy ingredients. As long as you have a basic grasp of heat control, you can make them well. If you'd like to try some, I'll whip one up for you!"

"What ingredients do you need? I'll go buy them!"

Grandpa Gao waved his hand. "I'll go. You focus on your work. It's getting close to opening, so hurry and get the shop's dishes prepped." With that, he strolled to the nearby supermarket, hands clasped behind his back, to buy the ingredients.

Soon, he returned with the groceries. He had a piece of pork loin that didn't look particularly fresh, a few stalks of Celery, a small handful of lettuce leaves, and two celtuce stems.

"I was going to buy some bean sprouts, but the ones at the supermarket had too strong a chemical smell, so I skipped them. If you want bean sprouts, I'll have your senior martial brother bring some over later. The bean sprouts used at Fishing Platform are grown in-house, without any chemicals, so their texture and flavor are quite good."

Grow their own? Would there even be enough time if a customer ordered them?

"Fishing Platform operates on a reservation-only basis. Guests usually book half a month to a full month in advance. There are people who coordinate all the dining requirements, so there's plenty of time to grow Bean Sprouts, let alone sprout them."

After explaining, Grandpa Gao began to slice the meat. Despite being over seventy, the moment he picked up the kitchen knife, he seemed to become much younger. With one hand pressing down on the loin and the other wielding the knife, which danced up and down, the piece of pork loin was quickly transformed into thin slices, each the thickness of a coin.

Once done, Grandpa Gao placed the meat slices into a bowl of clean water to soak, casually adding a bit of baking soda to the water. "After slicing the loin, you need to soak it in clean water to draw out the blood. If the meat isn't very fresh, adding a little baking soda will make it more tender."

After the meat had soaked for about ten minutes, Grandpa Gao removed it, rinsed it again, and squeezed out the excess water forcefully. Then, he began to marinate it. He added salt, Light Soy Sauce, Cooking Wine, and egg white to the meat in that order, mixing thoroughly. Then, he added a handful of dry starch and continued to mix until evenly coated. Finally, he drizzled in a little cooking oil and mixed a few more times; this would prevent the meat slices from sticking together during boiling.

While the meat was marinating, Grandpa Gao stir-fried the chopped Celery, celtuce, and lettuce leaves with segments of dried chili and a few Sichuan peppercorns until they were just cooked through. He then spread them on the bottom of a serving bowl before starting on the main dish.

"Boiled dishes, to put it plainly, follow a basic formula: ingredients are boiled in a red broth made with Doubanjiang, then topped with knife-cut chilies and a splash of hot oil. Almost any quick-cooking ingredient can be prepared this way. As long as you're generous with the seasonings, the flavor won't be bad."

Grandpa Gao scooped two spoonfuls of Doubanjiang onto the cutting board and minced it with his knife. He then explained to Lin Xu, "Mincing the Doubanjiang helps it release more Red Oil, and its savory aroma will infuse into the broth more easily." Once it was finely minced, he set up the wok, ready to fry the Doubanjiang to create the Red Oil.

「In the chat group.」

After Panda sent out two large red packets in a row, the motley crew of advisors finally remembered the original purpose of their group.

Shen Jiayue felt everyone's suggestions were too superficial, so she pulled her cousin, Chen Yan, into the group. After all, Chen Yan was Wu Kexin's boss and supposedly had a colorful dating history; she ought to be able to offer some constructive advice.

"I've only ever had one boyfriend! If you say I have a 'colorful dating history' again, I'll sue you for defamation, Little Yueyue!" Chen Yan fumed as she joined the group.

She didn't know Panda and wasn't particularly close to Wu Kexin either. So, she added Wu Kexin's agent, Weiwei, to the group, asking her to help brainstorm.

"What are you all talking about? Wu Kexin? Hang on, I'll pull her in right now!"

Seeing the group chat spiraling further and further out of control, Panda, utterly exhausted, exited the group.

So tired... Let it all burn!

Author's Note:

Brothers, I need your votes! I've been writing in a vacuum without any recommendations, and my stats are terrible. Please, lend me a hand!