

## Culinary 751

Chapter 751: The taste of these stewed lotus root with pork ribs is absolutely amazing, at least three bowls to start!

In the clay pot on the stove, Pork Ribs and Lotus Root bubbled away as they stewed.

The fresh and fragrant aroma wafted up with the steam, constantly tantalizing the nearby chefs who were busy at work.

"It's really strange. The boss didn't add any seasoning when stewing; besides Pork Ribs and Lotus Root, he only added a few slices of ginger. How come it smells so good?"

"Exactly! Is it because the boss's cooking skills are that good?"

"I didn't see any special methods either. Even when blanching the Pork Ribs, he only added some Scallion and Ginger and splashed in a little Rice Wine, which is no different from how we usually cook."

"Perhaps the boss has mastered some secret cooking technique."

Hearing the staff's quiet discussions, Lin Xu helplessly interrupted them, "Lotus Root Stewed with Pork Ribs is that simple. As long as you don't use frozen ribs, don't add all sorts of unnecessary spices, and use Hubei's mealy Lotus Root, it will always taste good, no matter who cooks it."

If I let you continue such discussions, we'd seamlessly transition into a fantasy world.

With that said, Lin Xu placed the cleaned small steam pots on the work table and began to put the cleaned pigeons inside.

These steam pots were obtained by Old Huang from a time-honored steam pot factory in Jianshui, Southern Yunnan. They were of good quality and very suitable for making soup.

The pigeons he used had also been switched from squabs to older pigeons, which were more suitable for stewing in soup.

Squab meat is tender, while older pigeon meat is more flavorful.

If you're just drinking the soup, the older pigeons yield a tastier result. Moreover, after being steamed for a long time, the meat of older pigeons, when dipped in sauce after steaming, is also more robustly flavorful and has a better texture, similar to eating Plain Chicken.

In contrast, overly tender squab is better suited for braising or making Crispy Pigeon.

He neatly arranged the cleaned pigeons in the steam pots, then added a few slivers of Red Dates, soaked Astragalus, a small amount of morels, and a slice of Ham to enhance the base flavor and add richness.

With these ingredients in place, he put on the lids.

The ingredients in the steam pots were now ready. Next, he had to set up the steam cabinet.

He opened the water tank, removed the seasoning boxes attached to its inner walls, and filled them with ginger, bay leaves, Angelica dahurica, and Codonopsis. Once filled, he reattached the boxes to the walls.

Then, he filled the water tank with natural spring water.

After filling it up, he turned on the switch to start heating the steam cabinet.

This process was somewhat slow because it required not only boiling the spring water in the tank but also flushing all the pipes with steam.

Since this was the first time using the cabinet, he had to wait a bit longer to ensure the steam pot pigeon would turn out delicious.

While waiting, Lin Xu wasn't idle. He took his phone and snapped a photo of the densely packed steam pots on the work table, then posted:

"New single-serving Steam Pot Squab debuting at noon today. Anyone interested in trying it out is welcome to come."

Although the main ingredient had been changed from squab to older pigeon, he decided it was better to keep 'squab' in the name, as those characters sounded more upscale. Besides, many people are averse to the word 'old'; including it in a dish's name could negatively affect sales.

Just after he posted the photo, Auntie Liang commented underneath, "I'll hurry and let them know, so I don't get nagged for not sharing good food with that bunch of old folks."

Old neighborhood resident Auntie Qian left a comment, "My two daughters-in-law are coming over for lunch today. Since you have such a wonderful dish there, I won't bother cooking at home. I'll take my two daughters-in-law to your restaurant to enjoy some pigeon soup."

There were many more comments of a similar nature.

After some buzz online, everyone had formed the impression that "Lin Ji products are guaranteed quality."

But thinking about it, it was natural. The new dishes at Lin Ji were always those the staff had eaten multiple times, even to the point of growing tired of them, so how could they taste bad?

It wasn't long before white steam began streaming out of the nozzles in the steam cabinet.

The steam was distributed from a single regulator, ensuring it had a consistent concentration for even cooking times.

After a while, once the steam flow stabilized, Lin Xu began placing each small steam pot onto the rack, aligning its base directly above a steam nozzle.

The steam pots he was using this time were an improved version. The central steam column inside wasn't a straight, upward-facing pipe; instead, it had openings on its sides. This meant the steam wouldn't directly hit the lid, so there was no concern about the lid being pushed up by the steam.

After placing them all inside, he closed the cabinet door to begin the steaming process.

「Meanwhile」

Shen Baobao, sitting in her car, pouted and said with exasperation, "I never expected even real estate agents to resort to deceptive photos! They don't show the messy state of the complex at all, and they conveniently forget to mention it's right next to a noisy downtown area. What's the use of just praising the house itself?"

Her Xubao, after a long day's work, needed a quiet environment when he came home, not the constant clamor from outside the window or the awkwardness of spending ages trying to find a parking spot in the complex.

She had encountered this with several houses she viewed.

One community was even more ridiculous. Because of the parking space crunch, residents had to hand their car keys to security each evening when returning home and retrieve them the following morning.

They would then need to take their keys and search the complex to find where their car had been parked. Sometimes, they'd even find their car parked along the roadside outside the community.

Upon hearing about this system, Shen Baobao didn't even bother looking at the apartment and got straight back into the car.

What a joke! While her and Xubao's cars weren't anything extraordinary, they couldn't just let strangers drive them so casually.

It turns out that buying a house can't rely solely on online research and communication.

If it weren't for an on-site inspection, she wouldn't have known about these convoluted aspects of life.

"Next, I need to check out that duplex. I might as well go early to inquire about the community. If it's not suitable, I won't waste any more time and can get back earlier for some stewed Lotus Root with Pork Ribs."

Chapter 752: The taste of these stewed lotus root with pork ribs is absolutely amazing, at least three bowls to start! \_2

If that doesn't work, we'll expand the search area and look for homes along the North Fourth Ring.

Although it's a bit more of a hassle, commuting via the North Fourth Ring is relatively convenient.

Dou Wenjing agreed. She opened the navigation app and headed towards a residential complex two blocks away.

Soon, the car pulled up smoothly to the entrance of a rather upscale residential complex.

After finding a street parking spot, they got out of the car and entered the complex to ask about its conditions.

They soon discovered that the place was quite nice: it had a good environment, plenty of parking spaces, and wasn't too densely populated.

Of course, there were downsides. The property management fees were higher than those in nearby complexes, and the parking fees were exorbitant, leading some families with multiple cars to park them outside the complex.

For others, these were drawbacks, but for Shen Jiayue, whose vast fortune made her practically 'accessible by the hundreds of millions,' they were no issue at all.

Soon after, the homeowner's housekeeper arrived, driving a Panamera.

Zeng Xiaoqi muttered quietly,

"Even the housekeeper drives a Panamera! These detestable capitalists!"

Dou Wenjing glanced at her own BMW 5 Series. Had I known, I would've driven the G-Wagon from the villa, she thought. Being outclassed like this feels awful.

Shen Baobao, however, appeared unfazed. After a simple confirmation, she followed them into the complex.

This residential complex was quite high-end; all buildings had elevators that opened directly into the apartments.

The apartment was located on the 30th floor. They took the elevator up and, after putting on shoe covers, stepped inside.

The living room and dining area were combined and very spacious—forget one grand piano, even ten would fit easily.

The structure of this duplex apartment was very similar to that of a villa.

The first floor comprised the kitchen, living room, dining room, a housekeeper's room, and a room for an elderly family member. The living room connected to an expansive balcony that offered views of not only the cityscape but also the distant suburban mountains.

The second floor housed the master bedroom, a guest bedroom, a study, and a media room.

The third floor featured a sunroom, a laundry room, a storage room, and a tatami-style tea room.

Passing through the tea room and the corridor outside the sunroom led to an outdoor terrace.

The vast, spacious terrace had been transformed into a rooftop garden.

To protect against strong winds, a perimeter of high-strength tempered glass had been installed. All fixtures on the terrace were also reinforced to prevent them from being blown away and causing accidents.

A barbecue grill sat in one corner of the terrace.

It was likely intended for hosting gatherings.

However, because no one had moved in since the renovation, the grill was unused and showed slight signs of rust.

"This house is truly perfect for my taste."

While Zeng Xiaoqi inwardly cursed the 'wicked capitalists,' she couldn't tear her eyes away from the place.

The layout and decor, both upstairs and downstairs, undeniably made it a dream house.

"You're just stating the obvious. Who wouldn't like a house worth tens of millions?"

Dou Wenjing muttered in reply.

Of all the properties they had seen today, this was the most expensive.

But it was expensive for a reason.

It was hard to find any fault with this property.

The high quality of the property also meant the homeowner stood firm: no price reductions, no installment payments. The full amount had to be paid in a single lump sum.

The homeowner's biggest concession was offering two adjacent parking spaces as a gift.

"Not bad. I like it a lot."

With that one sentence, Shen Jiayue sealed the deal.

Brother Feng immediately began discussing the property paperwork with the housekeeper who drove the Panamera. Meanwhile, Dou Wenjing took out her phone to message a few bank managers she knew, proposing they meet for coffee.

The coffee was just a pretext; the main purpose was to discuss a loan.

However, even if the funds were secured, they wouldn't purchase the property immediately. A third-party company would first be hired to inspect the apartment. This inspection would cover potential issues, such as damage to the roof or walls incurred during renovation, or any alterations made to the main structure, among other things.

All these aspects needed to be thoroughly checked.

This was to avoid discovering flaws only after the money had been transferred, at which point recouping it would be difficult.

After Brother Feng reviewed the property's five key certificates, they headed downstairs and left.

By the time they drove back to the restaurant, it was nearly eleven o'clock. The Lotus Root and Pork Ribs stew on the stove was ready, and Lin Xu was just then seasoning the soup.

Seasoning it at the end ensured the pork ribs would be more tender and the umami of the lotus root would be thoroughly infused.

Adding salt too early would have diminished the soup's umami significantly.

Based on the amount of soup in the clay pot, Lin Xu added three small spoonfuls of salt and then two small spoonfuls of pepper.

The pepper primarily served to induce perspiration and reduce the greasiness of the pork rib soup, thereby enhancing its flavor and making the lotus root taste sweeter.

After seasoning, Lin Xu ladled a few pieces of lotus root and a spoonful of soup into a bowl, planning to taste it.

He scooped a little of the pinkish broth with a spoon, blew on it gently, then sipped. An exquisite flavor instantly flooded his mouth.

Wow... this flavor is truly wonderful! he thought. It's aromatic with umami, umami with sweetness, sweet with savoriness, and the savoriness interwoven with a subtle spiciness from the pepper.

Delicious! I'll need at least three bowls of this for lunch today.

After tasting the soup, he picked up a piece of the tender, pink lotus root to try.

It's cooked perfectly—soft, with a lingering sweetness. Absolutely exquisite!

Although lotus roots grown in other parts of the country also possess a mild sweetness, they simply can't compare to those from Hubei.

Especially this type of 'powdery' lotus root used for soups; cooked without a single grain of sugar, it still yielded such a sweet flavor. It just goes to show, to truly savor regional delicacies, you have to use local ingredients.

Just as he was savoring a piece with his chopsticks, Shen Baobao's voice came from the kitchen doorway:

Chapter 753: The flavor of this lotus root stewed with pork ribs is truly exceptional, at least three bowls to get started! \_3

"Wow, you're sneaking a bite! You, the chef! We should dock your bonus."

"Just tasting the flavor. Have you picked out a house?"

Lin Xu walked over with a bowl in hand, which still had a piece of lotus root and a pork rib left, "Try it, see if you like it."

"Eh? Aren't lotus roots supposed to be white? Why did it turn pink after stewing? Making pink dishes because I'm wearing pink—tell me, what are you plotting?"

Lin Xu passed the chopsticks into her hand, "No schemes, I just want to be with you for all of eternity, that's all."

Mmm, at times like this, you couldn't say 'for this lifetime' or 'forever,' because this girl would immediately ask if the next lifetime was allocated to someone else... Such lessons.

Full marks for the response!

Shen Baobao nuzzled Lin Xu with her head, then picked up the lotus root with her chopsticks and tasted a bite nonchalantly. Surprise instantly spread across her face: "Oh my, this lotus root is so tender, sweet, and delicious."

The lotus root was still hot, but the girl couldn't stop herself, puffing while she devoured the whole piece.

After she finished, she gulped down the soup in the bowl.

"So tasty, utterly delicious, truly worthy of a dish that's the same color as my clothes—it tastes that good."

She had originally planned to share her experiences from the morning.

But upon tasting the delectable lotus root and pork rib stew, she immediately forgot about it.

"Hurry up and start lunch, I'm starving!"

"Coming right up!"

Lin Xu returned to the kitchen, carefully lifting the clay pot off the stove.

He then served the lotus root and pork ribs into several platters.

After dishing everything out, he sprinkled some washed and chopped scallions over the top to enhance the appearance of the soup.

Next up, time for the formal meal!

There were just two dishes for lunch today—Stewed Fish Entrails and lotus root pork rib soup.

After taking their seats, everyone started eating, and upon trying the lotus root, all showed expressions of amazement, as if reacquainting themselves with the ingredient.

Even Zhu Yong was a bit surprised.

He hadn't expected Lin Xu's cooking skills to be this exceptional.

He was even more 'Hubei' than him, a Hubei native.

No wonder his uncle always told him to learn more from the boss—such extraordinary talent was indeed worth learning from.

He planned to make lotus root pork rib soup himself when he had time, to see the difference between his and Lin Xu's.

"So fresh and fragrant, this flavor is really good."

"When it gets cold, you need to drink more of this kind of soup."

"I heard lotus root is also good for beauty and skincare."

"Really? Then I must eat more."

Everyone chatted back and forth. Shu Yun looked at Lin Xu and asked, "Will this soup be on the new menu in the future?"

"Yes, once the business with the pot-steamed pigeons stabilizes, we'll introduce the lotus root stewed pork ribs. We'll make a big pot each time, and serve it directly to customers who order it."

Lin Xu had a clear plan for introducing new dishes to the restaurant.

He couldn't rush into it. Everything had to be done step by step.

He took a sip of the pork rib soup from his bowl, then asked, "Did you find a good house?"

Feng Ge took over the conversation, "We found one. The boss lady is quite satisfied. I'll quickly check the details of that apartment and eliminate any risks... Last time I dined with friends from several law firms, they mentioned how these days many people rush to sell their properties before court auctions. Buyers are often desperate and can easily fall into traps—we can't afford to make that mistake."

"Then I'll leave it in Feng Ge's capable hands."

"You're too polite, Boss Lin. With such delicious food, I'd feel guilty if I didn't put in extra effort."

Dou Wenjing also indicated she would make arrangements for the funds as soon as possible.

Lin Xu felt somewhat emotional about finally having his own place in Beijing.

Just months ago, he was worried about finding work to stay in Beijing.

And now, he was about to own his own house.

It was like a dream.

He wanted to share the news with his parents but worried they might start gathering money for him, so he decided to purchase the house before telling them.

As he thought about all this, he picked up a pork rib. He gently sucked on it, and the meat fell off the bone.

The pork rib was both fragrant and fresh, melting in the mouth with its soft and succulent texture, especially the fatty part which almost reached the point of melting upon entry.

Delicious, truly scrumptious!

Today at noon, Geng Lele was accompanying her parents and grandparents, so she didn't come to the shop.

Shen Baobao posted a video and photos of lotus root and pork rib soup in the group chat, "Lele, I made lotus root and pork rib soup for lunch today, it tasted amazing! It's a pity you weren't here; I had to eat three big bowls with tears in my eyes."

Soon, Geng Lele sent a message, "I'm dining at Cuihua Building right now. Even though it's a time-honored brand, I still miss the dishes made by Brother Xu."

After eating, Lin Xu picked up his phone and sent messages to his senior fellow apprentice Xie Baomin and Old Huang, "The Drunken Crab I made a few days ago is ready; the crab roe is perfect. Professor Cui is planning to invite you two for a small drink. Do you have time to come to the shop this afternoon?"

As soon as they heard the Drunken Crab was ready, Xie Baomin and Old Huang naturally agreed happily.

Old Huang also expressed his desire to bring some high-quality Hairy Crabs for Lin Xu to help prepare some Drunken Crab, as his wife and child were returning from Southern Yunnan, and the family needed to eat something good.

Drunken Crab, a delicacy that poses a huge challenge to the stomach and intestines, is not something that everyone can handle.

However, it can be steamed before eating. Although some of the fresh flavor will be lost, it is very stomach-friendly and won't turn one into a projectile-vomiting warrior after eating.

Around eleven, the shop was visited by quite a few silver-haired old men and women.

These were all summoned by Auntie Liang, who upon entering the door, demanded the pot-steamed pigeon.

Lin Xu told Shu Yun to take good care of everyone while he and Shen Baobao went out, drove to the high-speed railway station to pick up Shen Guofu and Han Shuzhen returning from Yinzhou.

「Meanwhile, Daxing Airport.」

As the plane from Hailar gradually touched down, Chen Yan switched off airplane mode on her phone.

She flipped through the group messages, wanting to know what the little bears had been discussing while she was flying.

Then she saw the lotus root and pork rib soup that Shen Baobao posted.

What?

You guys not only had pigeon soup that beautifies and nourishes, but also lotus root and pork rib soup?!?!

You're truly not taking me, Chen Yan, into consideration, are you?

Chen Yan immediately felt a bit upset.

She felt like she missed a lot of delicious food during the week she spent traveling.

That won't do, I have to eat my way back.

Even if it means gaining a little strip of fat around my waist, I can't suffer this kind of grievance.

She rapidly sent a message to Shen Baobao, "Don't tell me all the rib soup is gone. If you say it is, then your house is gone too! Grandpa Gao specifically asked me to give you a house."

A house?

Shen Baobao, who was playing with selfies as she sat in the passenger seat of the X5, was immediately dumbfounded.

She rapidly replied, "What house? How big is it? Is it a duplex? If so, we might not need to buy one then."

Chen Yan: ????????

Good heavens! I'm offering you a house, and you're already making demands?

"It's the one you're renting now. Grandpa Gao told me to find a way through a lawyer to transfer it to brother-in-law... What did you just say? Are you planning to buy a duplex?"

"Director Yan gifted Dundun something, we can't fit it in the house, so we're planning to buy an apartment."

A gift?

It doesn't fit?

Did I leave Beijing for seven days or seven years?

Chen Yan was somewhat baffled.

But before she could figure things out, she received a message from Ren Jie, "Are you back? I have a half-day leave this afternoon and would like to invite you for coffee. Do you have time this afternoon?"

Chen Yan: "!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

How should I answer this question?

I'm waiting online, quite urgently!

Chapter 754: Ren Jie: I might not come back from this mission! Dundun: No, you will come back!

"Yueyue, hurry up and help me think of something. The young cop has asked me out for coffee."

"Then just go."

"But I lied to him—and I'm not ready to come clean yet."

"What's there to prepare? Just say it... Yan Bao, you're thirty already. Why are you acting as coy as a seventeen or eighteen-year-old girl?"

Chen Yan, who was about to get off the plane, thought, What in the world? Now you're lecturing me, you little brat? Hmph, I'll deal with you when I get the chance.

Finally, the plane came to a halt. Chen Yan, seated in first class, planned to leave the airport before replying to messages. The airport was too noisy at the moment, not a good place to think things through.

Carrying her purse and small suitcase, she walked off the plane amidst the farewells of the flight attendants and headed down the long jet bridge towards the exit.

The airport was teeming with travelers returning to the capital from other places, bustling with activity. Chen Yan, Wu Kexin, and others blended into the crowd, striding towards the exit.

She originally wanted to ask Wu Kexin for advice, but then she thought about how Wu Kexin and Panda were like peas in a pod—completely smitten with each other and thus not a useful point of reference. Moreover, when Panda had wanted to pursue Wu Kexin, Chen Yan had even contributed ideas in the group chat. In such a situation, they definitely couldn't provide any constructive advice.

Ah, I should have asked Old Master Gao that day, she mused. That veteran of love would certainly have had a proper solution. What a missed opportunity!

「Meanwhile, at the high-speed train station exit.」

Lin Xu and Shen Baobao waited a while before they finally saw Shen Guofu and Han Shuzhen dragging along several suitcases.

"Mom, over here! Be careful when you come through the gate!" Shen Baobao called out.

The two reached the gate exit, and Lin Xu and Shen Baobao hurriedly took charge of the luggage.

Shen Baobao said with a chuckle, "Congratulations to Brother Guofu and Sister Shuzhen on successfully completing your seven-day honeymoon. My in-laws treated you well, right? It was all thanks to my influence."

Shen Guofu was speechless. "..."

Han Shuzhen was also speechless. "..."

This cheeky girl was getting less and less respectful.

Just as Shen Guofu was about to scold Shen Baobao, Shen Jiayue linked arms with Han Shuzhen. "Mom," Shen Jiayue said, "you look even healthier."

"Probably because no one in Yinzhou was there to irritate me?" Han Shuzhen retorted.

Shen Jiayue was speechless. Are you implying something about me?

While the mother and daughter had their love-hate exchange, the father-in-law and son-in-law beside them were getting along much better.

"Xiao Xu, let me tell you something," Shen Guofu began. "After visiting Yinzhou, I thought the valley in the Star Sky Base was quite flat, so I'm planning to invest in building a Horse Farm."

A Horse Farm? Lin Xu was somewhat confused. He had imagined numerous scenarios of his father-in-law touring scenic attractions, like hanging love locks on Pan Stone Rock, fishing or boating in the reservoir, or even doing the butterfly stroke in a water park. But he never expected that his father-in-law would end up scouting a horse breeding project during his trip. He recalled that a famous monkey with the surname Sun had also been in charge of horses. Is Dad planning to become a modern-day Keeper of Horses...? Whoa, getting sidetracked... Lin Xu turned to Shen Guofu and asked, "Is the investment for a Horse Farm large? Could it fail to break even?"

"That won't be a problem," Shen Guofu replied. "The superior breeds we cultivate can compete internationally. If we win a championship, it could bring in tens of millions at once..."

Lin Xu didn't know much about horses or the rules and strategies involved. But the moment he heard 'tens of millions,' he couldn't help but ask, "How much is the total investment?"

"It would be several hundred million, I'd guess," Shen Guofu stated. "We still need to have professionals calculate it accurately."

Lin Xu was even more bewildered. "That's such a huge undertaking, and my parents don't know anything about it. Are you planning to manage it by shuttling back and forth?"

Deciding on a multi-hundred-million investment on a whim during a trip... if it goes under, the losses would be monumental.

Shen Guofu said, "I've already hired your Second Uncle as my fully authorized representative. He's handled large enterprises before and now lives a carefree life, like a drifting cloud or a wild crane. I think it's a waste of his talent, so I requested him to help oversee it."

Lin Xu asked again, "Is my Second Uncle up to it?"

My Second Uncle spends his days boating on the lake, and come mealtime, he's all about drinking and feasting. He's a master at curing mental stress, but managing a Horse Farm...

"He's more than capable!" Shen Guofu exclaimed. "I've even thought about making him the CEO of the group. When I mentioned my idea of opening a Horse Farm, he rattled off a whole bunch of viewpoints

and suggestions within minutes, and they were extremely insightful. Xiao Xu, your Second Uncle is a great talent. If you ever have business management issues you don't understand, you can ask him for guidance."

Lin Xu was dumbfounded. Seriously? Did you meet my Second Uncle or Zhuge Liang?

However, he was naturally happy that his relative was being praised by his father-in-law. "Alright," he said. "In the future, if I encounter any management problems, I'll ask for Second Uncle's opinion."

When they reached the parking lot, Lin Xu loaded the luggage into the trunk. Then the family got into the car and headed to Yingchun Street for lunch.

「At the same time, in the Haidian Criminal Investigation Unit.」

Ren Jie, dressed in civilian clothes, sat at his desk with a brand new shoebox on it.

Relationship issues are truly much more complex than catching criminals, he thought. For instance, now, I've bought a pair of shoes for the little kitchen helper, but I have no idea how to give them to her. I'm afraid one wrong word might sting her. In that photo I saw, she was wearing a Mongolian robe and smiling so happily. She can probably only relax like that in her hometown.

Ren Jie wasn't someone who liked to go into battle unprepared. He planned to use the break after lunch to organize what he would say when they met in the afternoon, to avoid misspeaking.

Just as he was mulling it over, Sui Fusheng hurried in from outside. "Ren Jie," Sui Fusheng said urgently, "pack your things quickly and come with me to Southern Fujian! The main suspect in last year's 7/23 kidnapping case has surfaced there. He's armed and seems to be preparing to flee the country by boat..."

Chapter 755: Ren Jie: I might not come back from this mission! Dundun: No, you will come back! \_2

Ren Jie heard the news and instantly tensed up.

This was the first case he had been involved in since joining the police force. The criminal was particularly vicious. After receiving the ransom, the perpetrator hadn't released the victim as agreed, instead choosing to kill them brutally. The blood-covered crime scene had left an indelible impression on him as a rookie officer.

After the incident, the criminal had fled, and valuable clues were scarce. It wasn't until last winter that there was a breakthrough in the case. That night, in the suburbs, they had caught a group of car thieves. One of them, attempting to get a lighter sentence, admitted to being involved in the kidnapping. Besides the July 23 kidnapping, there were several other cases in which almost no one involved had survived. This was why the police had found no leads.

Now, hearing there was news of the criminal, Ren Jie sprang to his feet and asked, "When do we leave?"

Sui Fusheng said, "Go back and pack your bags; we'll set off in two hours. Remember to go to the armory, register, and collect your handgun... I'm sorry, Xiao Jie, for ruining your date, but getting involved in cases like this is good for you."

Ren Jie was aware of this. Among so many people in the squad, he had been the one called, which in itself was a sign of being valued.

He thought for a moment and said, "I don't have much to pack; everything's in the dorm, ready to go at any time... I'm going to the shop first to pay for the sesame flatbreads I got last time, and I'll buy a couple of roast chickens while I'm at it. We might be going to catch a criminal, but we still need to eat, right?"

At the mention of roast chicken, Sui Fusheng immediately said, "Okay, okay, you go. A few days ago, your sister-in-law lined up to buy one, and it was truly delicious."

Ren Jie straightened his clothes and strode out, shoebox in hand.

He had wanted to find a quiet coffee shop to talk things over, but now it looked like he would have to wait until after this trip. Hopefully, the case wouldn't take too long and wouldn't interfere with the little sous chef's birthday celebration on October 23.

He arrived at Yingchun Street, shoes in hand, and walked into the store.

The store was still quite busy with customers, and Ren Jie noticed small steam pots on many tables. Is this a new dish they're offering?

"Hello, Officer Ren, what would you like to eat today?"

Upon seeing Ren Jie, Shu Yun greeted him with a smile.

"I've already eaten at the station... Is Chef Chen back yet?"

"Her plane should have just landed. It'll be a while before she gets back, considering how far Daxing is from here; it's quite a long drive."

Hearing that the little sous chef wasn't around, Ren Jie subconsciously breathed a sigh of relief.

He placed the shoebox he was holding on the service counter and said to Shu Yun, "I was supposed to meet her for coffee this afternoon, but I suddenly got called away on an assignment, so I won't be able to make it. I hope you, Manager Shu, can pass these shoes on to her."

So, Cinderella's Crystal Shoes have arrived? Shu Yun thought as she took the shoebox.

"Sure, I'll make sure she gets them..."

Having delivered the shoes, Ren Jie felt as if he had completed an important task.

If I can make it back, I'll confess everything to the little sous chef—everything, including my family's attitude. If I can't return... then these shoes will be my payment for the company she's given me.

While he was reflecting, Dundun, who had been sleeping soundly nearby, suddenly stirred, got up, ambled over lazily, and with a light leap, hopped into Ren Jie's arms.

"Manager Shu, this..." Ren Jie was startled, and his sentimental thoughts dissipated.

"Dundun only lets a select few people hold him. The fact that he came to you on his own means he likes you."

"Really? Thank you for liking me, little guy!"

As Ren Jie spoke, Dundun sat up in his arms and gently patted his forehead with a fluffy paw.

After the pat, Dundun hopped down and went back to his nap.

What did that mean? All that effort just to pat me? Such a playful little creature.

Ren Jie scratched Dundun's chin, then pulled out the shop's membership card and said, "I'll buy two roast chickens and some other braised items. Please add the cost of the sesame flatbreads from last time too. I feel that accepting free food isn't in line with the code of conduct for a police officer."

"Chef Chen would be heartbroken to hear you say that! She's been quite concerned about you. Last time, when I told her I'd prepared eight sesame flatbreads for you, she even grumbled that I didn't pack two more to make it a perfect ten."

Chef Chen, oh Chef Chen, I'm working so hard to score points for you with Ren Jie. If you two end up together, don't forget to thank me for the assist! Even though everyone in the group chat is all sarcastic and confrontational, at times like these, an assist is an assist. Getting even one of us settled is a win. Even if it means enduring their PDAs every day, at least it'll be a change of 'flavor' from always witnessing the boss and boss-lady's.

Ren Jie felt warmth in his heart, but he still insisted on paying.

Because he felt his return wasn't certain, he figured he shouldn't be concerned about trivial material possessions.

The roast chickens were quickly packed, still steaming hot. They also packed a generous amount of other braised dishes for him.

After paying with his card, Ren Jie said, "See you later," and left the store, purchases in hand.

Once he was far enough away, Shu Yun took a photo of the shoebox, sent it to the group chat, and tagged Chen Yan:

"Chief Chen, your Officer Ren just delivered the Crystal Shoes. He said he's going on an assignment and won't have time to take you for coffee."

What? Chen Yan, who had just collected her large suitcase at the airport, was surprised. Just as she was wondering how to reply, the conversation ended? But what kind of major assignment would a junior officer from a local police station be sent on? Don't they usually just handle disputes and other trivial matters?

Chapter 756: Ren Jie: I might not come back from this mission! Dundun: No, you will come back! \_3

Chen Yan dragged her suitcase to the side and quickly replied in the group chat, "What shoes are those?"

Shu Yun sent another picture of the brand name. "ECCO. It's a brand that specializes in comfortable shoes. The mid-heel leather shoes I'm wearing are ECCOs. I can stand all day in them without getting too tired." After saying that, she looked at the shoe box and added, "This pair you have are casual shoes. They retail for just over two thousand, but you could probably get them for around eighteen or nineteen hundred on sale."

Chen Yan sent a message: "I've never worn such cheap shoes before."

Shu Yun immediately sent a teasing emoji. "Since you despise them so much, how about I wear them?"

"If you dare touch them, I'll make your boobs swell!!!"

That young policeman earns so little, yet he spent two thousand on shoes. He's really not a practical man! Muttering to herself, she was just about to put away her phone and try on the shoes when she received a text from Ren Jie: "This National Day, I saw everyone giving gifts, so I bought you a pair of shoes. They're said to be quite comfortable, and I hope you won't look down on them. I can't make it for coffee this afternoon, as I've been called away on a sudden assignment. We'll talk when I get back. Hope your work goes smoothly."

Chen "Cinderella" Yan was just itching to fly to the store to try on the shoes. When she saw this text, a sweet smile appeared on her face. After thinking for a bit, she quickly typed back: "Thank you for the gift. I actually prepared a gift for you too. I'll give it to you when you're back. Have a smooth trip."

After replying, she pulled her suitcase along and happily walked towards the airport exit.

「At the store entrance.」

Shen Baobao had just gotten out of the car and rushed inside. "Where are Cinderella's Crystal Shoes? Let me see them!"

Shu Yun pointed to a cabinet behind the service counter and said, "They're in there. It wouldn't look good to keep taking them in and out with so many customers around."

Shen Baobao went to the cabinet, took them out, and looked, but she only glanced at the shoebox. She worried there might be a love letter or something inside; such a surprise was best left for Yan Bao. A thirty-year-old woman finally finds a chance at romance; better not ruin it for her. Otherwise, I'd definitely have Tiantian try them on first to stretch them out a bit.

As she was looking, Zeng Xiaoqi also came downstairs. She had eaten her fill and was resting upstairs to let her food digest, but as more customers arrived, she gave up her seat. Only when she came downstairs did she see the messages in the group chat and hurried over to see the Crystal Shoes.

After looking at the shoebox, Director Zeng remarked, "I'm not envious of the romance, but I do want President Chen to elaborate on the technical aspects of making boobs swell up. If it's semi-permanent, I might give it a try."

Shu Yun: ???????

Shen Baobao: ???????

They really needed to add someone less wild to the group chat. It was clear Zeng Xiaoqi was getting so worked up she was practically delirious.

Shen Guofu arrived upstairs; the booth near the kitchen was still reserved. The moment he sat down, the server brought over the reserved lotus root and pork rib stew and a portion of steam pot pigeon.

Han Shuzhen picked up a soup spoon, scooped up a small spoonful of the pigeon soup, and tasted it. Her eyes lit up instantly. "Oh, this soup is so fresh! It's even fresher than the last time we had steam pot chicken. Lin Xu's cooking skills are really getting better and better."

Shen Guofu fished out a large piece of pork rib from the lotus root, held it in his hand, and ate it with relish, exclaiming, "The lotus root and pork rib stew is also perfectly done. The meat is so tender it practically melts off the bone. It seems they've been busy cooking up new things at the shop while we were gone this week."

While they were eating, Lin Xu came up from downstairs carrying a steaming roast chicken. "Dad, Mom, try this roast chicken. It's been quite popular lately and is very tender when eaten hot. The other day, Yueyue and I delivered several to both grandmothers' homes. The elderly folks really liked it and were very satisfied."

Elderly people often have bad teeth and might struggle to eat other dishes. But this freshly roasted chicken was so tender, you could eat it even if you had no teeth. During the National Day holiday, she and Shen Baobao had driven around delivering them. Geng Lishan had even gifted back a piece of calligraphy titled "World's First Chicken," which made Shen Baobao laugh for a good while.

"This roast chicken is really delicious. Honey, don't just drink that soup; try the roast chicken too." Shen Guofu found it strange. During their days in Yinzhou, they had also eaten rich meals of fish and meat daily. Tan Yajun, who traveled with them, had even gained two pounds. But why was he still so ravenous after returning to Beijing?

He placed a chicken leg into Han Shuzhen's bowl, then looked at Lin Xu and asked, "What are we having this afternoon?"

"Drunken Crab!"

Drunken Crab? Shen Guofu and Han Shuzhen looked up. Now *this* was a real delicacy. Hairy Crabs marinated in wine and then preserved—they taste incredibly delicious.

"Professor Cui brought them. We didn't finish them the other day, and the leftovers were all made into Drunken Crab. Today's the perfect day to open the jar. Professor Cui has even invited my Senior Brother and Boss Huang to enjoy it with some heated Floral Carving Wine."

Shen Guofu drooled at the thought. An occasion like this, Old Shen can't miss out. To come back to such delicious food waiting... having a good son-in-law is true happiness!

After eating more than half of the roast chicken, Shen Guofu's craving for meat was somewhat alleviated. He spooned up some pork rib soup, took a couple of sips, and said to Lin Xu, "When you have a moment, arrange a meeting with President Liu of the Travel Association. I plan to invite him for a meal. You should find a few people to accompany us then. And have President Liu arrange a few honorific titles for the Horse Farm."

Invite Liu Zhengyu for a meal? Lin Xu quickly thought of who to invite as companions: the renowned calligrapher Geng Lishan; Zhen Wensheng from the Travel Channel; Liao Jinming, the director of the Dining Department at the Fishing Platform; and Tan Yajun, who had just returned from Yinzhou. These few should be enough.

While he was thinking, his Senior Brother, Xie Baomin, suddenly called. "Junior Brother, did you buy any ginger that's been aged for over three years?"

"I did. What's up, Senior Brother? Do you need some?"

"I'm taking Yu Fei and Yu Hang to school. On the way, I saw some nice ducks at a nearby farm. If you have aged ginger, let's cook Ginger Duck this afternoon. It'll be perfect to use the aged ginger to counteract the 'cold' nature of the Drunken Crab."

Ginger Duck? Lin Xu was delighted. The Perfect Level Cooking Learning Card! Finally, a chance to put it to use!

Chapter 757: Two Different Ways to Cook Ginger Duck! All the Scheming for a Chance Encounter!

My senior brother sure knows how to plan things.

Drunken Crab has a cooling property, which is why many people experience stomach discomfort after eating it. Old ginger, however, has a warming and restorative effect. Combining the two should neutralize it.

After hanging up the phone, Lin Xu said to his father-in-law and mother-in-law, "My senior brother is making Ginger Duck this afternoon. He said it can neutralize the cooling nature of the Drunken Crab."

Shen Guofu chuckled. "Master Xie really knows how to plan things. Eating too much Drunken Crab is indeed hard on the stomach. We're not going anywhere today; we'll just wait here in the restaurant to eat and drink."

Han Shuzhen mumbled, "Shouldn't we at least send the luggage home and change our clothes?"

Unlike Shen Guofu, she was more excited about the Ginger Duck. "Xiao Xu, is the Ginger Duck your senior brother is making going to be the dry kind or the wet kind?"

Dry or wet? Is there such a distinction for Ginger Duck? This question landed squarely in Lin Xu's blind spot.

He only had a superficial understanding of Ginger Duck. It was only after his senior brother had explained it last time that he realized the dish was 'old ginger-duck,' emphasizing the old ginger, not 'ginger mother-duck.'

But even if I don't know, my senior brother must be well aware.

With this in mind, Lin Xu said, "If you'd like the dry version, I'll have my senior brother make it dry. If you prefer the wet one, I'll ask him to make it wet. It's entirely up to you, Mom."

Right, I'll let Mom choose first. When it's time to cook, I'll just have my senior brother figure it out.

"I don't mind; dry or wet works for me."

Han Shuzhen wasn't a picky eater; she was just curious. During a trip to the Southeast Coast last year, she had discovered two ways of preparing Ginger Duck. The wet duck had tender, succulent meat, while the dry duck boasted crispy skin and a robust texture. Both were incredibly delicious. Even the old ginger cooked with it was quite flavorful.

After the meal, the fatigue from their travels vanished completely.

Shen Guofu patted his belly and said, "The holiday officially ends tomorrow. We'll have to start fresh, begin eating healthier meals, and only occasionally come to the restaurant to indulge ourselves."

He hadn't particularly noticed it before, but this time, just climbing Dragon Head Peak in the Yinzhou scenic area, he'd had to rest several times. This made Old Shen realize he needed to take his health more seriously.

Han Shuzhen looked at her husband with a gratified expression.

He's finally come to his senses!

But that alone wasn't enough. After a moment's thought, she said, "Since the weather isn't hot anymore, let's find a nearby mountain to climb every weekend. It'll be a good chance to clear our heads and get some fresh air."

Being cooped up in a city full of towering buildings all the time makes one's mind feel so stagnant.

At the mention of this, Shen Guofu started to have second thoughts.

Just then, Shen Baobao, having finished her chat with Shu Yun and Zeng Xiaoqi, returned. Hearing the suggestion, she immediately raised both hands in agreement. "Yes, yes! Let's all go! We'll bring Dundun along. The five of us can climb the mountain and see the autumn leaves. Dad, you'd better not lag behind then!"

This remark instantly fired up Old Shen's competitive spirit. "What are you talking about? Me, lag behind? Just don't come crying to me saying Daddy didn't wait for you!"

Downing the last sip of hot tea from his cup, Shen Guofu was about to ask Lin Xu for the car keys to go home when Dou Wenjing arrived upstairs, her purse slung over her shoulder. "Boss, the loan is almost settled. We'll start the paperwork when the office opens tomorrow, and the funds should be in the account soon. So, there won't be any more financial issues. Tomorrow, Feng Ge will double-check everything. If there are no problems, we can proceed to the next step."

Shen Guofu listened, somewhat surprised. "What's going on? Are you buying a house?"

He looked at his daughter and son-in-law.

You two are really tight-lipped, aren't you? If Little Dou hadn't let it slip, I wouldn't even know about this house purchase. There's so much involved with real estate, and plenty of pitfalls too. These two kids actually went about it so quietly...

"Here's the thing, Dad," Shen Baobao began, explaining the situation in detail. "Dundun received a gift, but it won't fit in our current apartment, so we had no choice but to look for a new house."

Shen Guofu and Han Shuzhen listened, their faces etched with astonishment. "President Yan wants to give Dundun a grand piano? And you're moving just for a piano?"

This really is like buying a computer just for the mouse pad!

Dou Wenjing said, "The company can handle the finances, and Feng Ge will oversee all the procedures. Shen Zong, you don't need to worry."

Normally, a company taking out a loan for the boss to buy a house would be too risky and could affect normal operations. But after Lin Xu decided to buy, I've been busy handling it precisely because Shen Guofu, the big boss, is in the picture. With Shen Zong backing this, what's a loan of a few tens of millions?

Hearing this, a pleased smile appeared on Shen Guofu's face.

He knows to entrust professional matters to professionals. Not bad! My son-in-law is truly dependable and reassuring.

"In that case, I won't meddle," he said. "Just don't forget to give us a tour once you get the house. Oh, right, sweetheart," he added, turning to his daughter, "your new car will arrive in the next few days, so get ready to drive it."

After saying this, Shen Guofu took the keys to Lin Xu's X5 and drove home with Han Shuzhen. They needed to drop off their luggage, sort things out, and change their clothes.

「At two-thirty in the afternoon.」

Chen Yan and the others finally arrived at Yingchun Street from the airport. Everyone was travel-worn, not just from the journey itself, but mainly because the drive into the capital had been incredibly congested.

"Brother-in-law, hurry and get something for everyone to eat! We're starving. We've been looking forward to coming to Lin Ji to satisfy our cravings."

With that, she strode to the service counter, not even bothering to tease Dundun, and slammed her hand on the table, demanding, "The shoes! Where are the shoes? Bring them out! I want to see if his aesthetic sense meets my standards."

Chapter 758: Two Different Ways to Make Ginger Duck! All Efforts for a Coincidental Encounter! \_2

Shu Yun laughed and said, "Seeing how eager you are, if they don't match your taste, are you going to change your aesthetic?"

As she spoke, she took a shoe box out of the cabinet.

As soon as it was placed on the service counter, Chen Yan couldn't wait to open it.

Inside, there was no note or love letter, just a pair of knit casual shoes with a hint of pink. The shoes were a flat style, giving off a very capable vibe.

Picking them up, they felt light, and the soles were soft.

"These shoes are..."

The Master's student from the Chinese department was so overjoyed she was momentarily speechless before finally saying, "These shoes would look a bit childish on an eighteen or nineteen-year-old, but they're perfect for me... It's like they were bought specifically for my taste."

Shen Baobao, who had come downstairs to join the fun, chimed in playfully, "You two should get married on the spot!"

Hmph, hmph. Whatever you said about me back then, I'm giving it right back to you now.

After looking, Chen Yan didn't immediately try on the shoes. Instead, she gently placed them back in the box and closed the lid.

"Why not try them on? What, afraid your smelly feet will knock us out if you take off your shoes?"

Chen Yan, ignoring her cousin's teasing, said, "I'm planning to go back, take a shower, and change into new socks before I try them."

"Tch, so dramatic!"

After putting the shoe box back into the cabinet, Chen Yan turned around and scooped Dundun into her arms. "Little Dundun, did you miss your Auntie? Auntie brought you a special gift this time, you know!"

Dundun, who had been struggling, immediately calmed down upon hearing about a gift.

Holding Dundun, Chen Yan reached into her bag and fished around, finally pulling out a small animal woven from straw. However, the animal was rather abstract, and no one could tell what it was.

"Ta-da! Look! This is a little kitty Auntie spent two days learning to make with a grass-weaving master. See how much it looks like you?"

Everyone: ??????

That master who taught you grass weaving... was he a descendant of Picasso?

Dundun, who had been full of anticipation, immediately wriggled out of Chen Yan's arms and darted into his little house after seeing the straw-woven "cat."

You can insult my feline dignity, but you can't insult my intelligence!

You'd have to be blind to see this as a cat!

Shu Yun curiously asked, "Manager Chen, did the master who taught you make them like this too?"

Just as she was speaking, Wu Kexin walked over holding a small, straw-woven cat. This one was exquisitely crafted, looking remarkably lifelike and even a little chubby.

"Dundun, look what a great gift I brought you! I bought this from a grass-weaving master. It cost me several hundred yuan!"

Everyone looked at the little cat in Wu Kexin's hands, then at the "Slime" in Chen Yan's.

It seemed the master's skills were not the issue.

The issue lay with a certain thirty-year-old auntie.

Dundun peeked his head out of his little house and licked the back of Wu Kexin's hand.

Clearly, Lord Dundun was very satisfied with this gift, especially when contrasted with the other similar 'gift', which made this one seem all the more precious.

Zeng Xiaoqi looked at Chen Yan with a perplexed expression and asked, "Did you prepare this kind of gift for your police officer too?"

"No, I got him a shaver from the airport duty-free shop... What kind of aesthetic sense do you all have anyway? I think it's quite pretty. Forget it, I won't discuss these things with you art novices."

Manager Chen sheepishly put her woven "Slime" back into her bag and said to Shen Baobao, "Hurry up and tell your man to bring out the food. This young lady is starving!"

Zeng Xiaoqi quietly reminded her, "Eat a little less. We're having Drunken Crab and Ginger Duck this afternoon."

"Drunken Crab? That's my absolute favorite! When I was studying at Fudan, I craved this dish the most, especially the way the local aunties in Shanghai make it. Their tastes simply divine! Thanks for the reminder. I definitely need to eat less for lunch; I can't miss out on tonight's feast."

At a nearby dining table, Panda and Yue Liyue were tasting the roasted chicken and other marinated dishes that had just been served.

The dishes from the main kitchen still needed preparation, so for now, they could only serve some marinated appetizers to tide everyone over.

Yue Liyue said, "When I heard 'roasted chicken,' I thought it was the crispy kind made using the roasted duck and Roasted Goose method from the Lingnan Region. I didn't expect it to be marinated fried chicken..."

One drawback of such a vast and resource-rich country is the lack of uniformity in dish names.

The same name for a dish can mean different tastes and flavors in different places.

Cantonese roasted meats are a prime example.

They differ significantly from Northern roasted chicken and roast duck.

And in various parts of the South, cured meats and sausages, though often sharing the same name, are prepared differently from region to region.

Some are smoked, some are air-dried, and some are sun-dried. Some are only salted, while others include Sichuan peppercorns and chili peppers. The same name can refer to vastly different preparation methods.

Yue Liyue's roommate asked, "Enough about the name, just tell us: is it good or not?"

"It's delicious, very tasty."

"Then hurry up and eat. We have to get back and catch up on work later. After a week off, escaping singledom feels like an unrealistic fantasy. Making money is much more practical."

"Same here. I'm not interested in romance right now; I just want to make money."

"The main thing is, the second half of the year is terrible for dating—too many holidays! National Day just ended, Christmas is right around the corner, then New Year's Day, then Spring Festival, followed by the Lantern Festival and Valentine's Day... Think of all the gifts you'd have to buy!"

During their trip, while lounging on haystacks on the Hulunbuir grasslands, they'd calculated the cost of dating.

They realized that even though they earned tens of thousands a month, dating wasn't easy for them.

Chapter 759: Two Different Ways to Make Ginger Duck! All Efforts for a Coincidental Encounter! \_3

Moreover, with a monthly income of tens of thousands, one can't spend it all. One must also save up to buy a house. So, after doing the math, it seemed wiser to stick with a two-dimensional wife who doesn't require gifts for the time being.

Once I have enough money, it won't be too late to find a partner.

After eating and drinking their fill, everyone took their luggage and left. Those in need of rest did so, and those in need of sleep caught up, all in preparation for work the next day.

Not long after everyone had dispersed, Xie Baomin parked his Cayenne in a spot in front of the store. After getting out of the car, he took two heavy plastic bags out of the trunk. After greeting Shu Yun and the others, he carried the bags upstairs and strode into the second-floor kitchen.

"Senior Brother, did you bring the ducks?"

"I did. Get a basin to soak them in. The ducks for Ginger Duck shouldn't be blanched, so we need to soak them to draw out the excess blood."

Having said that, Xie Baomin took the slaughtered ducks out of the bags.

The moment Lin Xu saw the ducks, he was stunned. "How come they're so big? Are these geese?"

Xie Baomin said with a smile, "These are Muscovy Ducks, which means 'foreign ducks.' It's the same concept as with sweet potatoes and tomatoes, signifying something foreign."

Lin Xu fetched a large stainless steel basin, filled it halfway with water, and started soaking the Muscovy Ducks, which were not much smaller than geese.

As he placed the ducks into the basin, he marveled, I don't know if a foreign monk can chant scriptures well, but foreign ducks sure are big.

And even though they're big, the meat is quite tender; it feels soft to the touch.

Xie Baomin said, "If they were ducks raised by a farm family, you wouldn't even need to soak them. But for those from breeding farms, it's best to soak them to remove the excess blood."

He had bought five ducks that day. Normal-sized ducks would definitely not have been enough. But these ducks were quite large; five of them filled a large basin to the brim.

After putting them in, he began to prepare the ginger. After instructing his apprentice last time, he had specifically bought some old ginger to keep as seed ginger. This old ginger had been growing in the ground for several years, was rich in fiber, and very spicy.

"How much do we need, Senior Brother? I'll have them start scraping the skin off."

Looking at the prepared old ginger, Xie Baomin laughed and said, "The ginger used for Ginger Duck doesn't need to be peeled. Ginger skin has the effect of eliminating internal heat and dryness, which is perfect for counterbalancing the heat brought on by the ginger."

Oh? That's a new concept. Well, that makes preparing the duck much easier!

"Just wash them and slice them directly. For each duck, you'll need a large bowlful, like the ones we use for serving rice and soup. The flavor of this dish relies entirely on ginger, so it's better to have too much than too little."

In addition to the ducks and old ginger, to make Ginger Duck delicious, one must also use Sesame Oil, preferably black Sesame Oil. Using Sesame Oil can add a pleasant aroma to the duck meat, while also effectively masking any gamey smell.

As they were busy, Lin Xu remembered his mother-in-law's words and curiously asked, "Senior Brother, what's the difference between the 'wet' and 'dry' versions of Ginger Duck?"

"The difference isn't that big; it's mainly the order in which the sauce ingredients are added. For the 'dry' duck, you fry it first. Only after it's well-fried do you pour in a small amount of sauce, which makes the duck fragrant and delicious. As for the 'wet' duck, you skip the frying process altogether. You stew the duck in the sauce from the start, making the meat softer and more tender."

Is it that simple?

Lin Xu planned to learn the technique properly.

All the ginger was sliced. Then the ducks were cleaned: the fine down was removed from the skin, the duck's tail—where the odor is stronger—was cut off, and the skin and body cavities were patted dry.

Next, Xie Baomin taught Lin Xu how to prepare the sauce. Into a bowl, he put two teaspoons of salt, two teaspoons of sugar, one tablespoon of Soy Sauce, half a tablespoon of Dark Soy Sauce, and finally two large spoonfuls of Rice Wine. He mixed everything evenly to create the Ginger Duck sauce.

"This is the amount for one 'dry' duck. If you're making a 'wet' duck, just replace the two spoonfuls of Rice Wine with a whole bottle of Rice Wine."

It was getting late, so they started cooking. For five ducks, five large clay pots were lined up on the stove. Cooking duck in a clay pot makes the meat taste even better.

As the clay pots heated, he added a small bowl of black Sesame Oil into each, followed by two-thirds of the prepared ginger slices. He first fried them over low heat to release the spicy fragrance of the ginger.

Then, he added the whole ducks. He then spread the remaining ginger slices over the ducks, covered the pots, and began to braise them over low heat.

"Aren't you going to cut them up, Senior Brother?"

"Not yet. In the initial stage of this dish, the duck needs to be cooked whole. This allows the flavors of the ginger and Sesame Oil to better penetrate the meat. If we cut it up now, the pieces would be pressed together and wouldn't absorb the flavors as well."

Xie Baomin prepared four 'dry' ducks and one 'wet' duck.

The 'wet' duck method is simpler: place black Sesame Oil in the bottom of the pot, cover it with ginger slices, add the duck, pour in the sauce, and finally add Rice Wine until it just covers the duck. After adding everything, just cover the pot and let it braise.

Because it's simpler, many restaurants now use the 'wet' duck method to prepare this dish.

He fried the 'dry' ducks for fifteen minutes, then opened the lids, carefully turned them over, and swapped the ginger slices at the bottom of the pot with those that had been on top of the ducks. By this time, the undersides of the ducks had turned golden brown but hadn't burned, likely due to their high fat content. After turning them, he fried them for another fifteen minutes, then poured in the sauce and continued to braise.

"This method is easier than I thought," Lin Xu remarked. He had originally thought it would be difficult, but watching his Senior Brother work, he felt he could manage it even without mastering any special techniques.

Xie Baomin said with a smile, "This is a traditional home-style dish from the Southeast Coast. During the cold and damp autumn and winter seasons, people there eat a lot of old ginger to ward off the cold and warm their bodies. That's how the Ginger Duck dish came into being."

While the apprentice brothers were chatting, at the entrance of Yingchun Street, a black Alphard slowly pulled over to a parking space on the side of the road.

"Mr. Yan, Tsinghua University's gate is just ahead. Shall we wait at the entrance?"

"No need, this is fine."

Not long after, Professor Cui's leisurely figure appeared, approaching from the intersection in the distance.

Yan Lin watched the figure outside, his usually stern face softening with a hint of warmth. Going to such lengths, pushing back a pile of important meetings, just to create this chance encounter with you!

Chapter 760: Geng Lele: From Today Onwards, Please Call Me the Assist King! 【Extra for Mr. Cat cerys】

"Heh, Professor Cui, what a coincidence, huh?"

At the entrance to Yingchun Street, just as Cui Qingyuan turned in, he ran into Old Huang, who had taken a taxi.

Old Huang was here today specifically to drink, so he hadn't driven. He came by taxi instead, allowing him to enjoy his drinks more freely and to his heart's content.

Tomorrow, his wife and kid would all be returning from Southern Yunnan.

So, he took advantage of today's lack of supervision to indulge in his love for alcohol once more.

The friendship between men is quite interesting. Take Old Huang and Cui Qingyuan, for instance—one is a food supplier who didn't even finish middle school, and the other is an artificial intelligence expert with numerous accolades.

You'd think they wouldn't want to exchange half a word, but they became good friends after last time's crab feast and found they actually hit it off when chatting.

Old Huang asked the driver to stop the car, paid, and then jogged over to Cui Qingyuan after pushing the car door open, saying, "How about trying Drunken Crab today? If it's good, I'll buy some more female crabs for Brother Lin to marinate. That way, we can have a little drink next time."

"Then I'll thank Boss Huang in advance."

"You're being too polite. Having drinks with a great professor like you is my honor."

Cui Qingyuan said with a smile, "Being a professor isn't much. It's just knowledge from books, after all. As for the study of life, I am still quite superficial and have much to learn from Boss Huang."

Old Huang laughed heartily, "What's there to learn? Just marry a wife who keeps a tight rein, and you'll be out of your apprenticeship within a year—much easier than going to university."

The two chatted as they continued walking into Yingchun Street.

In the black Alphard at the street entrance, Yan Lin listened intently to their casual conversation, a faint smile on her face.

After the pair had gone far, she whispered to herself in an almost inaudible voice, "Want to learn about life? Where were you twenty years ago? You little rascal!"

Xiao Qing, sitting opposite her, watched the scene intently, vaguely guessing something but not daring to be certain.

After Cui Qingyuan and Old Huang entered the shop, Xiao Qing then asked, "Director Yan, shall we go in now?"

Yan Lin replied, "Contact Director Shen's secretary. Tell him I'm quite interested in his Horse Farm project. Since I'm in Beijing today, I'd like to invite him to discuss it over here at the shop."

When they had contacted Shen Guofu two days ago, the Horse Farm issue was still up in the air, and they had no idea when he would return to Beijing. So, Shen Guofu had declined Yan Lin's meeting request, indicating he wasn't in Beijing.

Now that Shen Guofu had already returned, they might as well invite him to the shop to talk business.

That way, I can enter openly and just happen to bump into him.

Xiao Qing started contacting Shen Guofu's secretary, Xiao Zou, on her phone.

Before long, Shen Guofu, who had taken a nap at home, received the notification and hurriedly drove his X5 with Han Shuzhen to the shop.

When Shen Guofu got out of the car at the entrance of the shop, Yan Lin's black Alphard arrived fashionably late and stopped at the entrance.

"Oh my, what a coincidence, Mr. Shen. We arrived one after another."

After getting out of the car, Yan Lin greeted Shen Guofu with a smile and then looked at Han Shuzhen and said, "You must be Mrs. Shen? You look so radiant. Mr. Shen is very lucky."

Her enthusiasm made Shen Guofu somewhat uncomfortable.

I remember Director Yan as someone who was always serious and rarely smiled. Why does she seem like a long-lost relative today?

"Director Yan is too kind."

After exchanging pleasantries, the group entered the shop.

Just inside the door, Dundun, who was fast asleep, suddenly scrambled up.

Seeing the plump little creature, Han Shuzhen said, "We haven't even thanked Director Yan for buying such an expensive gift for our Dundun."

Yan Lin just smiled, "No need for thanks, as long as he likes it."

Saying this, she quickly walked to the service desk and scooped Dundun into her arms.

"MEOW..."

"Aw, are you saying hello to me? Have you missed me these past few days?"

Hearing Yan Lin say this, Dundun immediately turned over in her arms and kept rubbing his head against her.

This affectionate display melted Yan Lin's heart.

She had never imagined that a little cat could express joy like a child.

Perhaps... should I also have a child?

This thought, like a virus, had just formed in her mind and stubbornly lingered.

Thinking about a little life being nurtured and growing up under her care, learning to speak, Yan Lin suddenly felt that asking ordinary people for advice on life might actually be appropriate.

If I have a child in the future, I can't be so clueless as to not even know how to change a diaper... My goodness, what am I thinking?! Director Yan quickly dismissed the thoughts in her mind.

At that moment, Han Shuzhen came over, and Dundun jumped directly from Yan Lin's arms into "grandma's" embrace.

"Oh my darling, you finally remembered Granny? I wasn't in Beijing recently; were you behaving? Did you listen? I heard you've become a little star; my Dundun is the best!"

Yan Lin watched the scene with a smile, while the image of herself holding a baby resurfaced in her mind.

What's happening today? Why am I constantly thinking about children?

She took a moment to adjust her breathing, then looked at Shen Guofu and asked, "Mr. Shen, may we go upstairs for a chat now?"

"Of course. I was actually curious. Didn't Director Yan say last time that you wouldn't invest in unfamiliar fields? What made you suddenly interested in the Horse Farm?"

Yan Lin replied with a smile, "I feel Mr. Shen's financial luck has been rather strong these past few years, and I want to catch some of that good fortune."

This made Shen Guofu laugh, "Well, if it fails, you can't demand compensation from me... It's noisy down here; let's go upstairs to talk."

"Alright."

Shen Guofu, with Yan Lin and her secretary, Xiao Qing, made their way to the elevator, planning to take it directly to the private rooms on the third floor, as it was quieter there and more suitable for discussions.