

## Culinary 94

Chapter 94: Middle-aged Men's Cross-server Chat! Group Dining Business is Here!

Tan Yajun pondered for a moment. He took out his mobile phone and scrolled through WeChat, finally finding Shen Jiayue's contact. Upon opening their chat, he saw a message from four months ago:

"Uncle Tan, I have a classmate who is really smart, but he's sent out a lot of resumes without any response. Tomorrow, when the Audit Bureau comes to recruit at our school, could you please hire him? If there aren't enough spots, you can give him mine. I don't want him to leave Beijing. Please, Uncle Tan!"

Below the message was a photo of a young man. It was indeed the handsome fellow currently busy cooking in the kitchen.

I remember now! he thought. My niece once sent me this young man's photo. That's why he looked so familiar. But... what on earth was I so busy with back then? How could I have completely forgotten my niece's request!

Tan Yajun scratched his head in annoyance.

When Yueyue asked for my help, she must have wanted to secure a respectable job for her boyfriend. That way, the obstacles to them being together might have been lessened. It was such a simple thing to do, just a word from me. And yet, I forgot. No wonder Yueyue was so unenthusiastic about work, always leaving right on time. She must have been holding a grudge, right?

"Boss Tan, there are seats over here! Come and sit," Yuan Fei called out immediately upon finding two empty spots.

Tan Yajun walked over and sat down, his gaze towards Lin Xu now tinged with a deep sense of apology.

This young man could have had a respectable job, he mused. But because of my oversight, he ended up as a chef, working around stoves and fumes. Such a change in path... it's truly regrettable. He and Yueyue must have struggled so much to be together... Looking at Lin Xu, Tan Yajun even pictured the young couple, jobless, holding each other and weeping in despair.

It wasn't that he was overly sentimental. It was mainly because Boss Tan himself had experienced similar hardships.

When Tan Yajun graduated from college, his father had just passed away from liver cancer, leaving the family destitute. Despite this, his girlfriend resolutely dragged him to the Civil Affairs Bureau to register their marriage.

After getting the certificate, they couldn't even think about a wedding banquet; they didn't even have money to furnish a new home. But it was still a joyous occasion. The newlyweds scraped together what little money they had and treated Shen Guofu and a few childhood friends to a meal of lamb spine hot pot at a small restaurant in their alley. That was their wedding.

The day after they married, his wife, on top of her regular job, found part-time work at a bakery to support his postgraduate studies. After he earned his master's degree, she encouraged him to pursue a doctorate. Tan Yajun's achievements today were entirely thanks to his wife's unwavering support.

Seeing the busy figure in the kitchen, Tan Yajun felt as if he were looking at his younger self, diligently pursuing his studies.

Sigh... I've got to find a way to help this young man, he thought. A graduate from the Finance University working as a chef... he must have endured so many hardships.

Just as he was pondering this, a rich, savory aroma pulled Tan Yajun's attention back to the present. He then noticed the server had brought the dishes to their table: Tiger Skin Chicken Feet, Ginger Lotus Root, Steamed Pork Ribs with Black Bean Sauce, and Sweet and Sour Pork Tenderloin. The dishes looked incredibly appetizing, making Tan Yajun feel a pang of hunger.

"Boss Tan, try these. They're all made by Shen Jiayue's husband. They're incredibly delicious!"

The young man made these? A university graduate, and he can cook this well?

Tan Yajun skeptically picked up a piece of pork rib and tasted it. The skepticism on his face instantly transformed into shock. This culinary skill is simply too good!

Over the years, he had traveled extensively and tasted countless delicacies. Even the time-honored restaurants in Yangcheng could, at best, only match the quality of these Pork Ribs.

After marveling at the ribs, he tried the other dishes. Every single one was exceptionally delicious.

To fail at job hunting, then decisively switch to the culinary arts and achieve such success... this young man is far more capable than I was at his age, Tan Yajun mused with an internal sigh, his gaze towards Lin Xu now filled with even more admiration.

However, the guilt in his heart also intensified. If I had helped him back then, he might have made a significant name for himself in the auditing field. Such a talented individual... what a waste!

After they had eaten their fill, the two stood up to leave.

Back in the car, Yuan Fei resumed driving. Tan Yajun, however, took out his phone and called Shen Guofu.

Initially, he had intended to arrange a job for Lin Xu at the Audit Bureau. But considering the young man's exceptional culinary skills and the restaurant's booming business, offering him a job was no longer the best approach. He planned to give Lin Xu some support by speaking to Old Shen.

"Old Shen, what have you been up to lately? I haven't seen you at the cigar bar recently."

Shen Guofu was in his office, eating the lunch his secretary had brought him, when he received Tan Yajun's call. He put the call on speakerphone and chatted while he ate.

After the initial pleasantries, Tan Yajun said, "Old Shen, there's a new restaurant in Beijing that serves some excellent food..."

I can't just bring it up directly, Tan Yajun thought. First, I need to entice Old Shen to go there. Knowing his passion for good food, he'll probably get hooked. And then, with a little maneuvering, the matter of the marriage might just fall into place.

However, before he could finish, Shen Guofu interjected, "What a coincidence! I was just about to tell you about a great little eatery on Yingchun Street, near the North Fourth Ring."

These words sent a jolt through Tan Yajun. "You already know?"

"Hah! Did you think something like this could be hidden from me? That girl Yueyue is so careless; I found out the address," Shen Guofu said from the other end of the line, pausing his meal. He then lit a cigar with a smug expression. I, Old Shen, am renowned in Beijing as the Gourmet Prince. Would I really need you, Old Tan, to introduce me to good restaurants?

「In the car.」

Tan Yajun took a deep breath. He hadn't expected Old Shen to already know. And from Shen Guofu's tone, he even sounded somewhat pleased.

Could it be that he doesn't oppose their marriage?

He probed further, "So, what do you think... of it?"

Tan Yajun had been about to ask what Old Shen thought of the young man. However, he reconsidered; Yuan Fei, an outsider, was also in the car. It was better to be discreet.

"Not bad at all! Very good, in fact. I'm quite satisfied!" Shen Guofu declared.

Quite satisfied? Then it's settled! A surge of joy welled up in Tan Yajun. No wonder Old Shen managed to build such a large business. His magnanimity is truly beyond that of an ordinary person.

After reflecting for a moment, the Audit Bureau came into view. Tan Yajun arranged to meet Old Shen for tea over the weekend, then hung up, ending their rather disconnected conversation.

So, there's no issue on Old Shen's side, Tan Yajun thought. But I still haven't fulfilled the request Yueyue made of me. It's too late for an apology now. I need to find a way to make it up to them and, at the same time, offer my blessings for their hard-won happiness. But how can I make amends?

Tan Yajun was idly scrolling through his phone when he noticed Shen Jiayue sending a red packet in the audit firm's group chat, followed by a message: "Everyone, if you come across any opportunities for group catering, please introduce them to me! A generous thank-you gift will be provided!"

She then posted a picture of a catered meal, which clearly displayed the name "Lin Ji's Food."

Is this... her helping her boyfriend solicit business?

Watching Shen Jiayue earnestly promoting in the group chat, Tan Yajun was reminded of his wife years ago, taking a bus after her full-time job to work part-time at the bakery.

He thought for a moment, then looked at Yuan Fei, who was driving, and asked, "What are the arrangements for catering at the upcoming training session?"

"The Audit Bureau is handling both catering and accommodation, Boss Tan. You only need to focus on the training itself."

The Audit Bureau is responsible? Tan Yajun then instructed, "When we meet their liaison, tell them we'll take over the catering. We'll handle the food; the Audit Bureau can just manage the accommodation."

This... Yuan Fei was a bit puzzled. They know we don't have the capacity to cater for so many people; that's why they offered to handle it in the first place. If we take it back, who will be in charge?

Tan Yajun, still looking at his phone, said casually, "Assign it to Shen Jiayue. When you get back, inform her that she'll be responsible for all catering procurement for the duration of the training."

"Understood, Boss Tan!"