

Chapter 1036 Simple Rural Delights

All the children at the orphanage really admired and appreciated Loraine who was kind and lovely. When she spoke, they listened and agreed without hesitation.

After sorting out the remaining items, the group followed Loraine.

Having grown up in the area, Loraine knew her way around very well and led the children to the base of a mountain.

Confused, Marco noticed the shovels and hoes Loraine had asked the children to carry and couldn't resist asking, "What are we doing here?"

With a mischievous grin, Loraine grabbed his hand and guided him into the forest. After scouting the area for a bit, she excitedly pointed out a target, a grey mushroom.

She plucked the mushroom and turned to Marco, asking, "Do you recognize this?"

Marco was able to recite the difficult and professional knowledge fluently and make the artificial intelligence as precise and intelligent as Qbot, but he was clueless about these mushrooms.

Seeing the bewilderment in Marco's eyes, Loraine chuckled and took the time to explain, "This one is safe to eat, but not all mushrooms are. A lot of them are poisonous as well."

Marco nodded, his expression still a bit puzzled.

Loraine continued to gather several other plants, which to him looked just like ordinary weeds, and taught the children how to identify them.

In this setting, Loraine was far from the cold and dignified CEO of the Universe Group. Instead, she became like a big sister in this family, showing patience and kindness, organizing tasks for each child meticulously, and ensuring no one felt left out.

Laughter echoed around the foot of the mountain, warming Marco's heart.

He had never been exposed to such simple rural delights before. Thanks to Loraine, he was discovering many new and fascinating things.

He glanced at the baskets filled with wild vegetables and mushrooms, then decided to join in the search himself.

Just then, Loraine went off to assist a child with finding mushrooms and didn't notice him.

Focused intently, Marco examined the wild vegetables in the basket and pulled out what he thought was the correct one, only to hear a young voice filled with astonishment next to him.

A kid remarked innocently, "Marco, that's just weeds, we can't eat those."

Hearing the comment, everyone turned to look. Seeing him holding a piece of weed, unsure of what to do next, Loraine burst out laughing, and so did the other children.

Marco smiled helplessly and frowned as he compared the weed in his hand to the actual wild vegetables.

They did appear quite similar.

Despite a minor problem, the overall experience unfolded



smoothly. At last, with the children's guidance, Marco learned identifying wild herbs.

After spending several hours occupied, they returned joyfully to the orphanage, their baskets were full.

Loraine headed into the kitchen to sort the ingredients while Marco volunteered to help by washing the vegetables. The children crowded around him, busily washing and bombarding him with their queries.

The children's inquiries were always strange, yet Marco didn't just brush them off. He pondered each one and responded thoughtfully, which made it challenging for him.

He frowned and thought. It was rare for him to be at a loss. When Loraine caught sight of him struggling, she couldn't resist chuckling and teasing, "You're learning how to connect with the kids now. They seem to really like you."

Marco's expression grew intense, and he shot her a significant glance. Realizing his meaning, Loraine quickly turned her face away, her cheeks tinted with red.

Laughter filled the air as lunch was served. Loraine wheeled out the food, and the children formed an orderly line to serve themselves.

Marco, now a part of the children's group, was escorted by his new friends to join the line, and they thoughtfully prepared a plate for him.

With a plate in his hands, Marco stood in line with a group of children to get the food, feeling it wonderful.

Tonight's meal was personally prepared by Loraine. Even though it was simple fare, it tasted so delightful that the children complimented it enthusiastically before quickly polishing off their plates.



Marco and Loraine sat at a separate table. This was his first encounter with these wild delicacies. He took a bite and exclaimed in amazement, "These dishes are unexpectedly refreshing."

The corners of Loraine's mouth lifted slightly. "You're used to fine dining, so these simple, wild vegetables must taste especially fresh to you. Plus, in the countryside, wild vegetables are common and very cheap, yet they're packed with nutrients."

Marco nodded thoughtfully. Just then, Eloise entered the dining hall, supported by two children. She inhaled deeply and smiled, "Lorrie, your cooking gets better every time."

Loraine rushed over to assist her, and Eloise advised warmly, "It's rare for you to be here. Don't overexert yourself!"

"No, I enjoy cooking for the kids," Loraine responded as she helped Eloise to a seat, then shared her plans for a charity lunch.

Eloise, concerned about the children's nutrition, was touched and pleased to hear of Loraine's thoughtful initiative. She said immediately, "Okay, it's all up to you!"



Chapter 1037 Charity Lunch

A few days later, a car came to a stop not far from the orphanage.

The door swung open, and a man bowed courteously to the car's occupant, saying, "Mr. Wilson, this is the location I mentioned earlier!"

Inside the car, a distinguished-looking man with a composed air opened his eyes, gave a slight nod, and then exited the vehicle.

As he walked onto the freshly constructed road, a reflective expression appeared on his face. He commented, "I was here a few years ago. At that time, the road was so muddy it was barely passable on foot, much less by car. They've really done a remarkable job with the road now."

His companion, a local official who recognized Damon as a significant figure but knew little about him, chimed in enthusiastically, "Absolutely! This road was constructed by the Universe Group, which has been recognized as an advanced enterprise by the government!"

Damon paused briefly, his face growing serious. He asked with a neutral tone, "Is it the nearby orphanage that's providing the popular charity lunch I've seen online?"

The official felt a bit uneasy, wondering if he had misspoken. He replied carefully, "Yes, the person leading the lunch program is also reaching out to schools in nearby villages to extend this type of lunch, ensuring the children are well-fed!"

Damon nodded, recalling the images he had seen online, and

felt a stir of emotion.

"If these dishes were served in Zodiac, they would certainly be expensive. Providing them to the children is really commendable. But the costs must be high, right?"

Though a member of the wealthy Wilson family, he was always down-to-earth in his governmental role, unlike other wealthy people who ignored the costs of necessities.

With this thought, Damon suddenly frowned and scoffed, "Could this all be just a publicity stunt to gain online fame?"

The official trembled and hesitated, saying, "Maybe the government provides some subsidies for the meals?"

Yet, he wasn't even convinced by his own suggestion. They had inspected other areas, and even with government help, the food there wasn't nearly as abundant or affordable as what they observed here.

Damon mused, "If the person behind this is sincerely focused on charity, they have my utmost respect. But if it's just a spectacle for fleeting fame that doesn't truly benefit the kids, I can't stand by and watch that happen!"

The official, eager to please, complimented. "Mr. Wilson, your sense of justice is admirable! What will you do now?"

"Seeing is believing. I'll personally check out this charity lunch to see if it lives up to its reputation," Damon said.

With that, he headed toward the orphanage. However, he soon encountered a group of children carrying another child on their backs, hurrying in their direction.

One of the flustered children nearly bumped into Damon, causing him to quickly step aside.

As the official frowned and was about to scold them, Damon held him back and looked at the children with kindness.

The child at the front managed to offer a quick apology before turning to his companions and urging, "Hurry, let's get Dillon to the clinic to get bandaged up!"

It was then that Damon observed the thin child being carried, his lips pale and a large, bleeding scrape visible on his arm.

He thought for a moment, aware that the orphanage was at the village's entrance, far from any medical facilities. He also considered the modest medical capabilities of the village and realized their equipment might not even match the medical kit in his car.

With this thought, he called out to the children and suggested, "I have a first-aid kit in my car. Let's clean that wound now to avoid infection."

The children hesitated, but they sensed a certain refined quality in him, similar to Loraine and Marco, hinting at a well-bred background.

After a brief pause, they stopped.

Damon took the medical kit from his car, approached the children with a reassuring smile, and squatted down, easing their nervousness as he said, "I'm going to clean the wound now. Do all of you live at the orphanage?"

While opening the medical kit and preparing the supplies, he calmed their fears.

The official behind him looked surprised as he personally attended to the child's injuries.

Feeling his genuine care, the children relaxed a bit, though one ran back to the orphanage to inform the adults.

Damon focused on the task, gently cleaning the wound with a sterilized cotton swab and advising them to be more careful.

After dressing the wound with fresh gauze, he assured them with a nod, "It's nothing serious. Just make sure to keep the wound clean over the next few days."

The injured child quietly expressed his thanks. Just as Damon was about to suggest driving them back to the orphanage, a young woman hurried out towards them with another child, anxiously inquiring, "How's Dillon? Is he okay?"



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Damon paused, struck by the sight of such a young and beautiful woman in this rural setting.

What truly caught him off guard was the sense of familiarity he felt upon seeing her, as if he had encountered her somewhere before.

Shaking his head to dispel the thought, Damon didn't dwell on it for long. His attention quickly shifted as he noticed the injured child approaching the woman, his demeanor contrite as he apologized. "I'm sorry to make you worry. We were just trying to catch a chicken for an extra meal, but we ended up falling and failing to catch it..."

Lorraine didn't know whether to laugh or cry. Was it really time to worry about the chicken? She gently took Dillon's hand to examine it, and was astonished to find the wound on his arm neatly bandaged.

Dillon shyly glanced at Damon, his lips pursed. "This man helped me bandage my wound."

Lorraine's gaze shifted to Damon, who offered her a gentle smile.

Something about his smile stirred a sense of familiarity within her, as if she had encountered those features before.

It was a strange sensation, difficult to pinpoint, yet it felt comforting and natural, reminiscent of her interactions with Vincent.

Grateful for his kindness, Loraine quickly expressed her thanks and invited him to join them for a meal at the orphanage.

The children, too, chimed in with their own eager invitations, their eyes wide with anticipation. Since Damon had initially planned to visit the orphanage, he accepted their offer with a warm smile.

With mealtime approaching, Loraine asked Damon to wait briefly while she went to the kitchen to prepare.

Meanwhile, Damon found himself seated in the dining hall, surrounded by a group of children. Curious about Loraine, he engaged them in conversation.

"Lorrie? She's an amazing cook!" chimed in a girl with a runny nose.

Upon hearing that, everyone erupted in laughter. Dillon, still nursing his injured arm, spoke up with admiration. "Lorrie is truly incredible. Sir, have you heard of the Universe Group? Lorrie is the president of the Universe Group! Despite her wealth, she cares about us and even helped repair the orphanage and build the road from the city to the village..."

Damon barely caught the rest of the conversation as his mind reeled from the revelation that Loraine was the CEO of the Universe Group. He struggled to conceal his surprise.

Was the woman he had just admired for her grace and beauty the same person described by his niece?

He felt a pang of shame and embarrassment.

He had praised Loraine without realizing her true identity.

No wonder Kaley had mentioned Loraine's acting skills; he had been completely deceived!

Damon's expression shifted, his preconceived notions of Loraine clouding his judgment. Even as he observed her behavior, he convinced himself that it was all an act.

Unwilling to remain in her presence any longer, he rose to leave, finding a pretext to depart.

Just then, Loraine emerged from the kitchen with a spread of freshly prepared food, its aroma tantalizing his senses and stirring his appetite. Despite his intentions to leave, his stomach betrayed him, urging him to stay.

Damon hesitated, his gaze flickering between the food and the door. Finally, his hunger won out, and he sat back down, rationalizing that it was just a meal—he could leave afterward.

Loraine remained oblivious to Damon's inner turmoil, unaware of what troubled him. After arranging the dishes on the table, she instructed one of the children to call the others for the meal and delegated responsibilities to the older children to look after the younger ones.

Placing the dishes before Damon, she spoke with genuine gratitude. "This is a token of my appreciation for helping Dillon. Judging by your attire and demeanor, I can see you're not an ordinary person. The rustic fare may not be to your accustomed taste, but our culinary options are limited in these countryside surroundings. I'm afraid I can't offer you anything more extravagant."

Her sincerity caught Damon off guard once more. This wasn't the haughty and imperious Loraine that Kaley had described. Could she truly be acting? Could she feign such genuine consideration and kindness?

Thus far, Damon found himself more impressed than disappointed by Loraine's demeanor.

Tempted by the delicious spread before him, Damon accepted

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the dish with a reserved thank you, then took a bite.

The flavorful chicken melted in his mouth, eliciting a spark of
delight in Damon's eyes. Before he knew it, he found himself
unable to resist the allure of the meal.



Chapter 1039 Privileged Background

Although Damon ate at a fast pace, he maintained an air of elegance and displayed impeccable manners.

His swift consumption of the dish, combined with his identity, revealed his satisfaction.

Loraine couldn't help but feel a sense of joy at seeing his approval. As a cook, there was nothing more rewarding than having one's culinary creations appreciated.

The children eagerly joined the gathering and found seats at the table. Their eyes widened in exaggerated surprise when they noticed the presence of chicken.

"Lorrie, did you personally kill a chicken today? We have chicken!" one of the kids exclaimed in astonishment.

Loraine found amusement and pity in the innocent excitement of these young souls who were just beginning to grow. In her efforts to balance their nutrition, she had gone to great lengths recently.

While it appeared on the surface that she had taken the children to forage for wild vegetables, behind the scenes, she had made arrangements with a local livestock farm. This ensured a stable source of meat for the orphanage while also teaching the children self-reliance.

However, Loraine didn't seek recognition for her actions. Instead, she smiled in her usual manner and said, "Would you like to taste real chicken? You can learn to raise chickens



ourselves, so in the future, you can have eggs, chicken, and even your own chickens."

The children blinked, their interest piqued. One particularly bright child asked, "What do you mean by 'real chicken'? Isn't this chicken real?"

Loraine picked up a piece of "chicken" and placed it in the girl's plate, encouraging her to taste it. The girl took a bite, but her confusion remained.

Damon's eyes sparkled with curiosity as he observed the exchange. He, too, reached for another piece, tasting it again, and then turned his gaze towards Loraine, mirroring the children's curiosity.

Loraine smiled and explained, "This is a plant-based chicken made from beans."

"Beans?"

The children, along with Damon, were astonished. They had no idea that what they were eating wasn't real chicken!

Continuing the conversation, Loraine said to the children, "You can let me know what you'd like to eat. I understand your desire to help me and Eloise, but first and foremost, you must ensure your safety."

The children nodded obediently, displaying their maturity and sensibility.

Observing this scene, Damon felt an indescribable surge of emotions. He looked at his own plate, which included not only plant-based chicken but also several meat and vegetable dishes. Due to his professional instinct, he furrowed his brow with concern and asked, "These dishes must not be cheap, right?"

He was aware that Loraine ran this charity canteen. If the





costs were not well-controlled, it could potentially become a burden rather than a sustainable project.

Loraine understood his concerns. Teaching people to become self-sufficient was more effective than simply providing handouts. After all, the Universe Group was a business and couldn't sponsor a project that yielded no profit whatsoever.

That's why she had chosen to empower the children, enabling them to improve themselves based on existing resources.

She concisely explained her approach, saying, "Most of the ingredients we use in the charity canteen are common in the countryside. For example, this plant-based chicken is made from beans, which are often discarded by villagers. They are delicious, yet inexpensive."

She then shared several meticulously designed recipes with low costs, which the children could learn to make on their own.

Damon listened attentively, surprised to find the approach feasible. Even with his discerning palate, he couldn't find any faults.

He glanced at Loraine, unable to resist asking, "I'm curious. With such a privileged background, why would you undertake such endeavors for these children?"

Loraine smiled and replied, "Privileged background? You probably don't know me well. I used to live here, and these children are like my siblings."

Damon was shocked, his mouth agape in surprise. He remained speechless for a long while.

He began to question whether his previous opinion of Loraine had been too narrow-minded and prejudiced.

In just a few words, he felt a sense of complexity and hardship





in Loraine's past, contradicting the image Kaley had painted of her as a wealthy, domineering, and manipulative heiress.

Damon couldn't help but furrow his brow, contemplating the possibility that the rich girls in Zodiac, who were always seen with Kaley, were indeed as described - domineering, rude, and self-centered.

Damon wondered if Kaley had been under some sort of enchantment, causing her to misunderstand and misjudge Loraine.

Feeling a shift in his perception, he decided not to leave in haste. Instead, he took the initiative to inquire further about the charity lunch.

Loraine shared her original plan with him, and the more he heard, the more he realized what a kind-hearted and admirable person she was.

He sighed inwardly, wanting to inquire more about Loraine's history, but his thoughts were interrupted by a cold voice from the doorway. "Why are you here?"



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With a somber expression etched on his face, Marco strode forward with an air of authority, instinctively pulling Loraine behind him in a protective gesture. His gaze was vigilant and icy as he locked eyes with Damon, his voice dripping with coldness as he asked, "What are you doing here?"

Loraine, puzzled by Marco's sudden hostility, interjected, her voice laced with confusion, "What's the matter? This gentleman just assisted Dillon, so I invited him to share a meal with us."

Marco continued to glare at Damon, not relenting in his intensity. He revealed Damon's true identity, his voice filled with accusation. "He is a member of the Wilson family. Didn't the government officials come earlier to strip the Universe Group of its honorary title? He was behind it all."

Initially irritated by Marco's abrupt intrusion and brusque demeanor, Damon's anger dissipated somewhat as he processed the weight of Marco's words.

He had just engaged in a pleasant conversation with Loraine, momentarily forgetting that he had targeted the Universe Group and even dispatched individuals to thoroughly investigate their construction site.

A tinge of guilt washed over Damon, causing his gaze to lower.

Loraine, observing the subtle change in Damon's expression, quickly pieced together the puzzle and realized that Marco's claims held true.

Moreover, Marco had mentioned that the Wilson family was responsible for the recent obstruction of the Universe Group's

project, implying Damon's potential involvement.

Lorraine's countenance turned cold as suspicion crept into her heart.

Was Damon unable to accept her taking the initiative in organizing the charity lunch program, prompting him to visit with the intent to provoke a confrontation?

No wonder he doubted the costs. It seemed that he doubted the sincerity of her efforts and suspected she was seeking fame.

Seeing the expression on Lorraine's face, Damon felt a pang of guilt. However, alongside the guilt, a flicker of anger ignited within him.

Damon was oblivious to the presumption made by his subordinate as he attempted to second-guess his thoughts. In his mind, sending someone to investigate the Universe Group was simply part of his duty and beyond reproach. However, the expression on Lorraine's face made him feel as though he had done something wrong.

This caused his own countenance to grow colder. "In regards to the incident at the Universe Group's construction site, if it is not handled properly, it could indeed have a negative impact on public opinion," Damon stated coolly. "I was merely addressing the issue at hand and did not commit any wrongdoing."

Lorraine's response was calm yet firm. "Mr. Wilson, you are conducting official business, and I have no right to interfere. However, I do request that you refrain from using your position to settle personal scores and intentionally cause difficulties for the Universe Group."

With a cold tone, she then said, "Mr. Wilson, I appreciate the help you provided to Dillon earlier. Now that our meal is over, please feel free to leave."

Damon furrowed his brow, wanting to inquire when he had deliberately caused difficulties for the Universe Group.

However, upon seeing the expression on Loraine's face, his pride was stung. He maintained a cold demeanor, choosing not to ask any further questions, and resolutely left.

The official, witnessing Loraine's interaction with Damon, felt indignant. He followed Damon and expressed his discontent. "Mr. Wilson, you were conducting an impartial investigation into the charity lunch program! The people in this orphanage are far too arrogant!"

With ulterior motives, he suggested, "Should we do something to teach them a lesson?"

Damon furrowed his brow and scolded him, "Our purpose is to serve the people, not to act arrogantly and bully others. Who taught you to behave this way?"

The official quickly apologized, expressing understanding and compliance.

With a bitter smile, Damon sighed, "Moreover, I must admit that I had prejudices against Loraine before, and I misunderstood her. It's understandable for her to react the way she did."

He shook his head and departed.

Inside the canteen, Marco observed Damon's departure, still wearing a serious expression. He spoke coldly. "Whenever a member of the Wilson family shows up, it's never for anything good. I will have someone investigate why Damon has come to the orphanage and what he might be planning."

Loraine intervened, shaking her head, "Forget it. There's no need to bother. As long as we continue our work with a clear conscience, that's enough."

Damon's demeanor and behavior gave Loraine a sense of familiarity that reminded her of Vincent. What stood out most to her was the fact that they had engaged in a pleasant conversation despite being strangers prior to their meeting.

Loraine held a strong conviction that Damon was not the kind of person who would use his position for personal revenge. She firmly believed that he would refrain from taking any further actions against the Universe Group.

Loraine carefully considered the events that had transpired before and acknowledged the possibility of misunderstandings playing a role in their previous interaction with Damon.

The subsequent events that unfolded only served to confirm Loraine's initial assumptions. Damon not only refrained from taking any adverse actions against the Universe Group but also took proactive steps to support Loraine and the charity lunch program she had designed. He actively arranged for journalists to visit the orphanage and cover the impact of the charity lunch program. With official endorsement, the efforts made by Loraine to support impoverished children were publicized.

The negative impact of the construction site incident was effectively erased as the public opinion surrounding the Universe Group experienced a significant improvement. Through positive actions and media coverage, the company successfully restored its reputation and regained the trust and confidence of the community. Furthermore, the previously stalled projects for the Universe Group gained new momentum.

Loraine and Marco successfully accomplished their objectives during the visit, which turned out to be smoother and faster than expected.

Loraine enjoyed two tranquil and uneventful days in the village, accompanying Eloise. However, as the branch company in Zodiac began to make more frequent and insistent calls, she

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+120 Points at most

felt compelled to cut short her stay and return to attend to the pressing matters at hand.

Just as the two of them were about to get into the car and depart, Marco's phone rang, indicating an incoming call from Melvin.

"Marco, go back right now!"

