

The runaway groom (Irene and Isaac)

Chapter 1031

"Come on, it's just a suit," Zachary said, putting his elbow on James's shoulder. "And what's more important, me or the suit?"

James replied, "The suit, of course."

Speechless, Zachary started to turn and leave.

James promptly caught him. "I'm just kidding. Why so serious?"

Zachary snorted. "It's understandable if you told me that your bride's more important, but your clothes too?! It's over. We're done."

James chuckled. "Why are you being so petty?"

"You're petty." Zachary shot James a look.

The pair continued their banter, but they were self-aware enough to quickly stop talking once they arrived at the crowded hall and even flashed a genial smile.

Their ability to change their expressions was certainly instantaneous.

And being the protagonist of the day, James did draw considerable attention.

Mick had made plenty of friends at Minerva over the years. Many of them were attending James and Erin's wedding, and Mick was eagerly introducing James to everyone.

Though the ceremony was planned by a professional wedding planner, it has not started yet since they intended to maintain a schedule that stuck strictly to the time, per Zidonian tradition. Weddings in Minerva were naturally simpler and did not involve complex rituals.

The priest soon spoke in Zidonian, specially requested since James and Erin were Zidonian—being wed here did not mean they were Minervan.

"Thank you everyone for taking time from your busy schedules to attend Mr. Cross and Ms. Gooding's wedding."

The priest's voice was rich and booming as he announced, "You may come forward, Mr. Cross."

After James went up to the altar, the priest continued, "And now, please rise to welcome the bride."

Everyone turned toward the main doors at that, and Tommy excitedly tugged at Irene's hand while pointing at it. "Mommy, is Aunt Erin coming in from there?"

"Yes," Irene replied, and the doors swung open as the music blared.

A fair lady akin to Snow White appeared before everyone. With her delicate appearance, slim figure, and elaborate makeup, she was even more attractive.

"Wow, Aunt Erin is so beautiful!" Tommy exclaimed.

Irene nodded in agreement. "Yeah!"

Erin had one arm around Mick's as she entered, the train of bridal gown swaying as she walked slowly and steadily toward James, her eyes determined.

Mick personally handed her hand to James, not forgetting to say, "I'm entrusting Erin to you. You must treat her well."

James nodded. "I will. Don't worry."

Mick smiled—he would not have entrusted Erin to James if he was worried. "I'm relieved."

After that, the priest announced it was the time for speech. "Do you have a speech prepared, Mr. Cross?"

James turned toward Erin.

It was a moment to convey his love, and though their relationship started with a one-night stand, many unpleasant matters followed.

That was why he had a serious look and an earnest tone. "It's my great fortune to be the one whom you'll spend the rest of your life with. From now on, I'll love you more. I'll shelter you, share all your burdens, and spend the rest of my life with you. Be it in the past or the future, I'll never give you up. I love you."

Once he was finished, Zachary led the crowd in applause!

The priest then turned to Erin. "What about you, Ms. Gooding?"

Erin's eyes were welling with tears.

The many moments of their past seemed to echo in his mind, and it was certainly difficult for them to get to where they were today.

"Thanks for coming into my life and making me the happiest person in the world. I entrust all my life to you, and I'll be with you no matter rain, sleet, or snow!"

The runaway groom (Irene and Isaac)

Chapter 1032

Even as Erin and James held each other's gaze, their lips curled into faint smiles.

It was a good day, especially for them, and it was only right that they would be happy. No matter what happened before, they were happy at that very moment.

After the exchange of rings, the priest announced with perfect timing, "You may now kiss the bride." Zachary hyped things up from the pews. "Kiss! Kiss! Kiss!"

James had been feeling a little awkward at first, and Zachary's goading only made him even more embarrassed. He looked down at Zachary, stopping himself from snapping at the man because there were many others around. Zachary even started whistling at James. "Kiss the bride! Or are you getting shy, bridegroom?"

While James was speechless, Erin giggled from Zachary's antics, and she was also close enough to see that James's ears were red. She was actually surprised that he could get embarrassed.

"Come on, James! Get down here if you can't. I'll sub in!" Zachary's banter escalated further, since he knew that James would not snap at him just then.

Still, that was when Erin walked up to James, wrapped her arms around his neck, and stood on her toes to kiss him before he could react.

James stiffened, but he soon wrapped his arms around her waist and responded passionately.

Tommy then clapped like everyone else, but he asked Irene, "They're kissing, Mommy. Won't they get embarrassed?" Irene patted his little head but said nothing, so Tommy looked up and asked, "Are you going to kiss Daddy too?" Irene was speechless, and various expressions alternated over her face even as she lowered her gaze at her son.

How was she supposed to answer that?

Naturally, she did not notice Isaac hiding a smile as he watched her being left at a loss.

Nonetheless, Zachary scooped Tommy up in his arms and said, "Your parents would never have had you if they didn't kiss, y'know."

While Irene was left speechless again, Tommy blinked his bright large eyes in confusion. "What does that mean?" "That means—"

"Zip it." Irene cut Zachary short before he could say anything. "Why have you become such a chatterbox ever since you got a daughter?"

He certainly never spoke that much.

Zachary did not feel that way, however, and asked in return, "Have I?"

"Yes, you have," Irene replied confidently. "Try to keep it down—it's James and Erin's big day." "Fine, I'll stay quiet." Zachary pouted.

Irene took Tommy off his arms. "And keep your mouth shut." Zachary was left speechless.

Did she just tell him to be a mute? But he refused!

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Soon, it was the wedding reception, and Erin left to change into something more comfortable.

Tommy insisted on seeing her, so Irene had to bring him along, while Isaac carried Baby and sat in a quiet corner—Mick had to look for him for a while.

"Why are you sitting here?" Mick asked. "There's some of my former business partners over there. I'll introduce you."

Isaac naturally sat there because he wanted to avoid socializing, but Mick was clearly doing this out of the goodness of his heart, since business people would never complain about having more connections.

As such, he passed Baby to Mrs. Watson.

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Tommy saw Erin in the lounge, having changed out of her bridal gown and into a Zidonian dress, while a make-up artist helped her with her mascara.

He blinked at her, saying, "You look so beautiful today, Aunt Erin." She turned at

his voice to find Irene carrying him.

"Come on in." She smiled.

"Don't move," the make-up artist said, so Erin had to turn back to the mirror.

Irene put down Tommy, holding his little hand as they walked up to Erin, and she said, "I've prepared you a gift in your bridal suite."

The runaway groom (Irene and Isaac)

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Erin smiled in anticipation. "What is it?"

"You'll know when you get there," Irene replied.

Tommy tugged on the hem of her shirt, curious as well. "Mommy, what is it?"

Irene tapped his little nose and said, "You're just a kid. You don't need to know—come on, let's eat something tasty."

The wedding reception must have started, and she turned toward Erin and asked, "Are you hungry? I can get you something to fill your stomach for the time being."

"I'm not hungry," Erin replied.

"Okay." Irene smiled. "We will be going now." Erin nodded. "See

you later."

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Irene did not see Isaac at their family's table, and Mrs. Watson told her that Mick had taken Isaac away. She took Baby

off Mrs. Watson's hands, who flailed while babbling, "Mama, mama..."

Irene took his little hand and kissed it. "Be good."

"He really refuses to settle down these days. Just leave him to me—you should eat." Mrs. Watson held out her hands. Irene waved

Mrs. Watson off. "You can eat with Tommy. I'll take Baby out on a walk."

However, Mrs. Watson thought it inappropriate to eat first as she was a servant. "Ma'am..." "Be good now."

Irene's focus remained on her baby.

She considered Mrs. Watson family, so it did not matter who ate first. Mrs. Watson did

not excuse herself at that.

The luncheon was certainly exquisite. Though it was Minervan cuisine, the ingredients were as rare as it was fresh! Tommy was

content with food and started eating happily without needing Mrs. Watson to supervise him.

Mrs. Watson quickly ate as well, since there was not much time given the occasion. After that, Irene ate

as well since there would be a toast.

Irene had to be there as well, since she was close with James and Erin, and being away was inappropriate.

Soon, it was clear that Baby was not going to settle down, so Mrs. Watson quickly finished her portion and switched places with Irene.

When James and Erin had their toast, Irene finally spotted Isaac but did not go to him since there were others with him.

Even if she was just there to attend their wedding, while James and Erin were the main event, she stayed there for a day anyway.

By evening, Zachary was eager to make a ruckus at the bridal suite.

Irene did not have the time to join, since that was for friends and she had two children.

"Wait, I think I'm heading home as well," Zachary said, remembering that he had a daughter too, and staying outside for too long was no good since he should be home to take care of her.

"I can babysit," Irene offered.

Zachary shook his head. "Forget it. James would get embarrassed if I got too far anyway."

Irene smiled—Zachary was shaping up to be a good father, giving up on playing now that he had a daughter.

"Go on. Get in." Zachary got into the car first.

Irene then told Zachary to bring Tommy home, since she would stay back to wait for Isaac. Mrs. Watson and Zachary left together with Tommy, while Irene waited with Baby outside.

It was after a long while when Isaac was finally done socializing, and he came up to Irene, asking, "Where are the others?" "They went back," Irene replied. "It's just you."

Isaac held out his hands for Baby, who stretched out his arms to Isaac eagerly. Irene avoided Isaac, saying, "You're driving."

"Alright," Isaac replied.

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Martin also prepared for everything after the wedding. James and Erin

headed to the bridal suite at the hotel.

Even if they were very familiar with each other, they were now formally husband and wife, and Erin got embarrassed from that fact.

Remembering that Irene mentioned something about a gift for her, she quickly went looking.

The runaway groom (Irene and Isaac)

Chapter 1034

The bridal suite was decorated in lively fashion with rose petals, ribbons and balloons. James, however, was frowning as Erin rummaged through everything. "What are you doing?" It was almost as if she had forgotten that she was a bride that day.

In fact, she did not even turn around to look at her bridegroom as she smiled. "Irene told me that she left a gift here. I want to see what she prepared for me."

"Alright, you keep searching," James said. "I'll take a shower." Erin waved him off, still facing away from him. "Let's go."

James was speechless—was the gift more important than him? It was as if she did not care about him already. Walking up to her, he asked, "What, am I less precious than a gift?"

Erin looked up, staring at him for almost a minute in shock, leaving James a little embarrassed. "W-What are you looking at?" James asked, touching his cheek. "What, is there dirt on my face?" Erin shook her head seriously. "No, but there's something else."

"What?" James asked.

"Your skin is as thick as a wall."

Then, before James could reply, Erin added, "Of course it's the gift. Did you forget what Isaac gave me? That's worth more than you!" She could spend all that money for the rest of her life, even waste it! She was not stupid enough to not know how nice it was to be rich!

The affection of men might change, but money never betrayed anyone. What was more practical than money in this day and age?

James was speechless. He cleared his throat as he reminded her, "You should remember that Irene isn't as rich as Isaac, and she can't give you so much money."

"Well, she told me it's special, so it definitely isn't anything so mundane," Erin replied. "Now go take your shower—I'll find it myself."

James was speechless again.

It was as if everything he said today was wrong!

It was their first night, so how did things turn out unpleasant like this? It was so infuriating!

"Fine, you go look," he got up, before pausing to look at her continuing to rummage through everything. "You sure you don't want to look in the bedroom?"

"Oh, right!"

With that, Erin lifted her dress and headed straight to the bedroom. She opened the door to find it all red, as celebratory as it was romantic. It was obvious the people who decorated it gave it thorough thought.

Just then, James said from outside, "Zachary and Irene worked hard to prepare everything. You like it?" Erin nodded repeatedly. "Yeah."

She grew up in Minerva, but she was a Zidonian at heart, inheriting the country's culture and tradition in her bones, so the traditional decorations struck her fancy.

"They came all the way from Zidonia to attend our wedding. Let's treat them to a nice dinner some other day." Erin nodded repeatedly. "Yeah, good idea."

They had been busy for a while because of their wedding, but they would have time afterward. They could return to Franconia soon.

Erin soon heard splashing from the bathroom—James was taking a shower.

Erin then spotted a box on a desk, and she walked over, picking up the card attached to it which read: [Congratulations on your wedding!]

She pursed her lips ever so slightly, put down the card, and untied the gift wrapping, opening the box with much anticipation. Her cheeks blushed when she saw what was inside, at once embarrassed and happy as she carefully picked it up!

The runaway groom (Irene and Isaac)

The dress unfurled, and Erin could tell immediately that it was an alluring sleeping gown—she had to let it loose to see what it was.

She had never dressed in anything so risqué and was at once thrilled and delighted.

She wondered how James would react when he saw her put it on, and the very prospect excited her.

Still, she wanted to surprise him, so she left it outside, while James returned after his shower. "Did you find it?" "Yeah,"

Erin replied evenly.

"What was it?" James asked, somewhat curious.

Still, he presumed it to be jewelry, since women loved their necklaces, bracelets, and the like. "It's

nothing," Erin replied.

"It's nothing? What is it?" James pressed.

"I need a shower," Erin said and headed straight to the bathroom.

James chuckled. "Is everything alright here? We just got married and we're already splitting our wealth? What's so valuable that you can't show me?"

"It's a priceless treasure. I'm not giving it to you just like that." Erin flashed a mysterious smile at him and left the bedroom. James did not press her. He simply smiled and lay in bed to wait for her.

Even though he and Erin had always been together, they have been constantly restraining themselves from getting too intimate.

On one hand, he had yet to fully recover, just as Erin was still traumatized after what happened before, and he would never initiate it lightly in fear that he would reopen old wounds.

That said, she was much better these days, and her personality was slowly changing back to what it was like before.

James naturally hoped that she would become carefree, down-to-earth, and earnest like before, which had been as adorable as it was captivating.

He smiled, seemingly remembering a moment they shared together in the past.

Nonetheless, he waited for a long while but Erin was not returning—she should have been done with her shower by then. He left the room and found it still closed, and he headed over to knock on the door. "Erin..."

"Oh!" Erin yelped, sounding a little nervous. James'

heart seemed to clench. "What's wrong?"

"N-Nothing..." Erin said. "I'm not done yet. Don't hurry me." James

glanced at the time—it had already been an hour.

He decided that something was wrong—if she showered any longer, she would be washing the skin off herself. "Erin, it's our wedding night, but I won't do anything you're uncomfortable with."

It was his way to tell her that he knew it hurt her and would not disregard her feelings to initiate sex, which in turn would traumatize her.

"I-I know. Just wait in bed," Erin urged.

She was just embarrassed.

The black spaghetti-strapped dress only covered her chest—her posterior was barely hidden, while her fair skin was bare anywhere else, including her thin legs.

And now, she was staring at the black pantyhose and the hair ornament on the vanity unit.

She really did not want to put those on, since she had no idea if it would work on James or just make him laugh. Thud, thud—

James knocked on the door just then, saying, "Open the door. Let me check on you." "I'm not done showering," she quickly replied.

"No, you're done. I don't hear water running. Come out already!"

Erin was speechless, but James was right—she was done showering.

Scratching her head for a moment, she then resolved herself and said, "Just hold on for a moment."

She picked up both the hair ornament and black pantyhose, put them on, and opened the bathroom door.

The runaway groom (Irene and Isaac)

Chapter 1036

James froze when he saw Erin, unable to believe his eyes! "What..."

Erin held a hand on her own chest. "What's wrong?"

James simply lowered his head and chuckled—he never expected Erin to put so much effort into making herself so alluring for their wedding night, just as he was surprised that she carried such charm.

"No good?" she asked, and peeked at herself in the mirror. It was actually good, or so she believed.

James quickly shook his head. "No. It's good."

Though bewitching was even more appropriate, panting her with a different shade of charm! As a man, he would be abnormal if he stayed unmoved!

He scooped her up in his arms, prompting her to yelp in surprise, "Let me down!" James refused. "You're my bride."

Still, Erin exclaimed, "Your leg isn't better—"

James leaned in to kiss her lips before she could finish, leaving the words stuck in her throat. And the rest was history!

When it was all over, Erin was resting her head on James's arm and nestled in his chest.

She looked up, her cheeks obviously blushing pink just then. "Do you know who gave me that dress?" "Who?"

James asked, lowering his gaze to meet hers.

"Irene."

She was certainly surprised that Irene would give her something like that—even James was raising his brow in surprise too.

"I mean, only best friends give each other stuff like that, so I'm surprised Irene would send one to me," Erin said. "It felt like we're best friends more than in-laws."

"Yeah," James replied—only those who were very close would do something like that. "I'm

very lucky," Erin added then.

She was abandoned as a child, but her adopted parents treated her better than her biological parents could.

Isaac, who had no blood relations to her and whose connection to her was second to implausible, gave her his company's shares, treating her like a real family.

Holding James then, she murmured, "I'll definitely be a good sister and a good aunt." James

stroked her hair. "You've already done very well."

She was no schemer and was always earnest, and he was sure that was why Isaac acknowledged her, while Irene was also nice to her.

After all, character was much more important than roots, and it was how everyone grew to accept her.

James tightened his arms around her then—she really was worth the affection. "When

are we returning to Franconia?" she asked just then.

She had resigned from work to take care of James, and now that their wedding was over, she could head to Franconia with him at any time.

"Let's take a few days to rest and get ready," James said.

The wedding was just over, and he was sure that Irene would need a break after traveling so far and with children too. While

adults might still be fine with traveling in quick succession, it might not be the same with kids.

"Okay." Erin nodded, agreeing with James too.

They decided to go out tomorrow—just the two of them, since they were just married.

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Neither Tommy nor Baby were willing to stay still in the house, so Isaac went out with them.

Minerva was a country with rich culture, and there were plenty of places to visit—they had the time to bring the children out to take in the culture and sight of the country.

Tommy was a little excited.

The runaway groom (Irene and Isaac)

Chapter 1037

It was rare for the whole family to travel together, after all. Irene

tousled Tommy's hair and said, "You're that happy, huh?"

Tommy nodded and hugged her, asking, "Where are we going?"

Irene had no idea, so she asked the man who was driving, "Where are we going?"

She needed to take care of Baby and Tommy, so she had to stay in the backseat, while only Isaac sat in the front row. "I'll

decide for the day. How about that?" he said.

"Okay." Irene smiled—there were plenty of places worth visiting, but Isaac was used to most and was therefore not interested.

Moreover, the children might not be interested as well, so he had gone out of his way to find some that would suit the children.

They drove for a way, passing multiple neighborhoods with plenty of detached housing. It was sparsely populated and a lot less congested than Zidonia, making for a good living environment—other factors notwithstanding.

It was not surprising Mick Gooding would get to this place and refuse to move afterward.

The car stopped outside a spot covered under bright green foliage, and the very air was fresh.

Isaac picked Baby out of the car. The latter was quite heavy now and developed a stubborn streak, refusing to be carried around and always wanting to walk on his own.

However, he was very slow on his short little legs and was certainly being difficult.

Only Isaac was able to carry him too.

Irene took Tommy's hand and headed inside side-by-side with Isaac.

They certainly looked like a happy family, with one carrying a child and the other leading another by his hand. If

only Baby was a daughter, it would have been more perfect.

Still, the sight alone was envious.

"What is this place..." Irene began to ask, but she was soon captivated by the scenery before her.

Past the small woods was a crystalline lake, and the ground was covered with vibrant green grass—it was a place for picnics and other outdoor activities.

A gentle breeze brushed against them just then, filling the air with invigorating freshness.

Tommy quickly let go of Irene's hand and ran happily toward the lake—it seems that he liked being outdoors.

Irene smiled. "I should have brought food if I knew."

Isaac gave her a look. "It feels like you're saying that I'm not well-prepared." Irene

giggled. "I was the one who did not prepare."

However, she soon saw that Zachary and Mrs. Watson had arrived as well, leaving her surprised. "How?"

Isaac had come here for the first time, but he was scouting the route and the woods before calling Zachary over since this was definitely a good place.

Zachary and Mrs. Watson in turn brought everything from food to toys for a picnic and basically everything they needed.

Tommy was naturally the most pleased about that, since he was the eldest and could eat and run around without anyone minding him, while Baby did the same.

The greenery and the crystalline lake was just right for relaxing and unwinding.

Zachary sighed emotionally just then. "It would be perfect if we brought a grill set."

Irene turned toward him. "Quite the glutton, aren't we?"

"It's just the right place for it," Zachary said. "And it's not that many of us... If only James and his bride were here too."

Irene frowned. "You're unmarried, but you're an adult. Would he have time to spend with you?"

Zachary was speechless—Irene's words were certainly unsettling.

Even so...

"What do you mean, I'm unmarried? Heck, I was a divorcee, or did you forget?" Irene

was speechless—she really did!

The runaway groom (Irene and Isaac)

Chapter 1038

Still, Irene scoffed. "Well, I can give you that much. But was it glamorous?"

Zachary was speechless in turn—his marriage was certainly a dark part of his history and mentioning it was just hurting himself. He quickly changed the subject. "Do you like grapes? We washed them before bringing them over—I'll get it for you."

Irene caught his sleeve. "By the way, does it count as your second marriage if you marry again?"

Zachary sighed. "You used to respect me so much, but you've really changed. You're just like Isaac

now." Isaac shot Zachary a cool, warning glare right then. "Does it kill you to stay quiet?"

"How boring would it be for everyone if I did?" Zachary retorted calmly and feebly. "It's a nice day out with nice weather but we have nothing to do. Staying quiet would be a waste, so I'm just making the best out of a difficult situation, you know."

"What's difficult about your situation? Don't you have a daughter? What more do you want?" Isaac asked, still upset about how Zachary bragged about having a daughter before.

"But she doesn't have a mother." Zachary sighed.

It was certainly the greatest regret he had—something felt missing since her daughter did not have a complete family. Irene finally saw that Zachary was just hiding his mood by being talkative.

Yes, he was happy to have a daughter, but it hurt that she would not have a

mother. The more she looked at Zachary's smile now, the more it felt less earnest.

She actually felt like she had not shown him enough concern right then, both as a lowerclassman and as a friend. As such, she said, "You wanted a grill, was it? Just ask someone to bring it over."

Zachary said, "And cold beer."

Irene wanted to roll her eyes at him—give him an inch, and he would ask for a mile.

"You have a daughter," she told him. "Self-indulgence sets a bad example. You should be a good father."

"Fair enough." Zachary smiled. "Let's do it."

Naturally, Irene asked Isaac to do it, since she did not have the connections.

It was a rare day out to relax, so Isaac indulged her for once and whipped out his phone to call someone.

Irene had no idea who it was, but they worked quickly to send tools and ingredients, along with a cook and his helper.

And with that, a simple picnic became a grill party, though having people work meant no problems, nor did it take time to get the food done.

Tommy thought the skewers looked fun and tried to grill something himself, while Zachary kept an eye on him or he might burn himself.

Irene was in turn leaning against Isaac's shoulder as they both lay on the grass, watching as Baby shambled forward. His cheeks were pink and he was holding a chunk of cake, with crumbs all around his mouth.

His teeth were growing slower though he could walk already, and he only had four—two of which he bared whenever he smiled. "It's the first time we're enjoying ourselves in such peace and quiet, don't you think?" She smiled faintly.

Isaac held her hand. "I'll spend more time with all of you when we get back."

Irene had given up on her ambition for family, so he could not get obsessed over work too.

"Mommy." Tommy ran up to them cheerfully with an aromatic beef skewer and handed it to Irene. "I cooked this myself." Irene was appreciative enough to have a chunk, while Tommy asked hopefully, "Is it good?"

He was certainly eager to get praised.

However, Irene could tell that the tenderness, doneness, and condiments were just right—clearly not his work.

Still, she did not ask and smiled in praise. "It's great. You're amazing, Tommy."

Then, she held up the skewers to Isaac's lips. "You try it too."

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Chapter 1039

Tommy blinked his large eyes hopefully at Isaac, hoping for Isaac's acknowledgment. Isaac

bit off a chunk, chewed, and seriously commented, "It's alright."

Tommy blinked, but it was a praise, was it not? He

giggled before running off, skipping.

Irene smiled as she watched Tommy being so happy. Bzzt...

Her phone started to ring in her pocket, and she picked it up to answer. A man

asked, "You're Lulu's best friend, right?"

It was a familiar voice—Irene recognized him as one of the members of Martin York's squad, back when she met up with Lulu at New Kent.

"Yes. Why do you have her phone? Where is she?" Irene replied, sharply noticing that something went wrong. It

should be Lulu talking if she was asking for her. So why was it this man instead?

"Lulu was hurt—"

Irene sprang to her feet right then and asked urgently, "What happened?! How did she get hurt?! Is it serious?!"

The man was quiet for a moment before saying, "It is a little serious, but her life isn't in danger, so there's nothing to worry about."

Irene was just slightly relieved. "How is she now?" "It

doesn't look good..." The man stammered.

Irene frowned. "Just be out with it."

The man sighed. "Come over if you have the time. I would like you to sit her down and talk to her." Irene had

a hunch. "Was she doing it because of Martin?"

"That's one of the reasons, but it's not all," the man said. "It's alright if you're busy. We'll do our best to take care of her." Irene

thought about it—she was willing to go, but she would at least need a few days to bring her two sons home first. "Give me a few days," she told the man.

"Okay," he replied.

As Irene hung up, Isaac asked, "What happened? That's a bad look on your face." Irene took

a moment to ease herself.

"It's nothing," she said as she lay down and leaned against his shoulder again. "It's Lulu." Isaac

had a hunch, while Irene hesitated before asking, "When are we going back?" Isaac turned to

look in her eyes. "Whenever you say the word."

Irene held her hand and lowered her gaze, hesitating and sighing. "I thought Lulu found happiness with Martin, but I guess no one ever predicts what comes next."

Resting her chin on his shoulder and looking up at him, she said, "Let's go back to Franconia as soon as we can!" "Okay," Isaac

replied.

Irene happily hugged his waist in turn. "You're so wonderful." She really

cherished everyone around her, especially Isaac.

After going through so much, the peace at this moment was very rare.

"You two! Snuggling up and doing nothing is outrageous, don't you think?" Zachary came up to them with a plate of skewers and two beers just then, and sat on the grass as well. "It's a rare moment of peace, don't you think?"

Irene peeked at him, but quickly composed herself and did not tell him about Lulu. Even she

had no idea how Lulu was, specifically.

Picking up a skewer, she said, "I'd rather have mutton."

There was not much mutton available over here, and what they had was mostly beef.

Thankfully, the meat was perfectly marbled, with exquisite balance between the lean meat and fat, making the taste sublime. "You

glutton." Zachary snorted. "This beef costs way more than mutton."

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Chapter 1040

Holding up a skewer of grilled mushrooms, Zachary said, "You don't usually get this either. Exclusively imported matsutake."

Irene did not care. "It's just mushrooms."

"Could you at least try before you give a comment?" Zachary smiled wryly. "It's not your usual mushroom either."

Irene took a skewer and tried it, but it really was good.

Baby tripped and fell just then, and she quickly got up. "You two can eat. I'm checking up on Baby."

Zachary turned to watch her as she left. "Why do I have this feeling that she's deliberately avoiding me?"

Isaac shot him a cool look. "Does she have to? Why do you think you are?"

"Hey now, you know she's close with Lulu," Zachary told him. "She knows a lot about Lulu, but she just won't tell me."

Isaac was left speechless, but he quickly changed the subject. "Call James. Ask him when he's going back to Franconia."

Zachary was left speechless—Isaac was the one who told him not to bother James, since James just got married! And Isaac was now asking him to call James?!

"I refuse to bother them," Zachary said, taking a sip of beer. "Ask him if you want. Also, the grill feels like it's just lacking something."

The ingredients were good, but the condiments for the soul were just not there, making it more an outdoor party than a camping grill, though they were just missing some people.

It did feel a little quiet with just them and the children.

Isaac raised a brow. "Why do I feel like you changed so much ever since you gave up on being a doctor?"

He certainly was a lot less talkative.

Zachary sighed emotionally. "People do change."

Isaac did not answer, having turned toward Irene in the distance.

She seemed to be plucking something, but she was too far for him to see.

When he got to his feet, however, Zachary promptly stopped him, "Where are you going? Can't you let her leave for a moment? You're too clingy for a husband!"

Isaac shot him a look. "And you're too talkative."

"You have happiness now, so you're not letting me talk?!" Zachary snorted in annoyance, but he got up too. "Wait. I'm coming too—let's see what Irene's up to. It's boring being alone, you know!"

He suddenly broke into a run toward Irene, even yelling, "What are you plucking there, Irene?"

Irene turned and said, "Raspberries."

Zachary pursed his lips. "Did you identify them right? They could be poison berries."

"Did you ever attend med school?" Irene asked him in return. "Can't you identify that much?"

Zachary walked up and got lucky, but it really was raspberries.

He then picked up one from Irene and put it in his mouth—it really was sweet.

"There is more growing over here."

The red raspberries dangling on the soft branches were especially conspicuous, and Tommy was tugging on Irene's sleeve, asking for one.

Irene did not give it to him, since it was not washed.

Isaac walked up to her just then and scooped Baby up in his arms.

Zachary in turn asked Isaac, "You've never seen this, have you?"

Zachary was pointing at the strawberries, looking punchable with that smug look of his, though Isaac simply ignored him.

Isaac's phone suddenly started ringing, so he whipped out his phone with one hand while holding Baby with the other.

He frowned—it was James.

Why was James calling him on the first day of his marriage?!

Still, he answered, and James asked from the other end, "Where are you, Mr. Jefferson? Your house is empty..."