

The More the Merrier Chapter 756

Chapter 756 I Can Have Red Wine With You

“There won’t be any time left by the time I finish my work.” Benjamin walked out of the study. Arissa glanced at the time and wondered whether the children had bathed.

No sooner had they gone out than the six children ran over from the dining room.

“Mommy, Mr. Graham, it’s time for supper!”

“Let’s have supper, Mommy!” “Let’s have supper, Ms. York!”

“Let’s have supper, Mr. Graham!” “Mommy, Mr. Graham, hurry up!”

“Mommy, Daddy, let’s have supper together!” All six of them called out to the couple in unison. Arissa beamed widely upon seeing that they had all bathed. “I thought you all hadn’t bathed!”

“We know exactly what to do, Mommy!” Zachary exclaimed with a grin. As Arissa led them to the dining room, she turned and called out to Benjamin, “Are you eating?”

After having been busy for a while, she was indeed a touch hungry. “Yeah.”

Benjamin gave her a look and brought the children to the dining room as well. The children were over the moon to see that they were all having supper together. Oliver, Jasper, and Jesse chattered nonstop about the delicious food that Edwin made.

As the two of them went over, they were greeted by the sight of a tableful of scrumptious food. Arissa was delighted. “Everything looks yummy! Was this all prepared by Edwin?”

“Yeah,” Benjamin muttered. Carrying the children, he plopped them onto the chairs before pulling out a chair for the woman. “Sit down and eat!”

Arissa sat down and ate with them. Edwin then brought out a plate of barbecue skewers. The instant he spotted Benjamin there, he was startled for a moment. “I added a bit of chili pepper to this.”

He specifically added it because he knew that Arissa loved eating spicy foods. “Thank you, Edwin! I love this!”

Getting up from her seat, Arissa took it from him. “Don’t bustle around anymore, Edwin. Sit down and eat with us!”

Edwin merely chuckled. “You all go ahead. I’ll go and get the milkshakes.”

“Wow, you even prepared milkshake?”

Arissa was pleasantly surprised. In response, Edwin nodded. “Yup! The atmosphere won’t be right if there’s no milkshake during supper!”

Arissa smiled from ear to ear and praised his cooking skills to the skies. “Edwin, the supper you prepare tastes better than those prepared by professional chefs! They taste amazing!”

Edwin laughed heartily. “I’m glad you like it, Mrs. Graham!”

Benjamin glanced at them. When he saw Arissa beaming at the man, he frowned imperceptibly. Does she smile like that at any man?

“Don’t talk while you’re eating!” he snapped.

Having been called out, Arissa curled her lips.

“Supper is to be eaten while chatting!”

“Yeah, Mr. Graham. Supper is usually paired with beer,” Jasper seconded.

Arissa’s eyes lit up. She turned to Benjamin. “How about some beer, Graham?”

Benjamin gazed at her long and hard. “If you want to drink, I can have some red wine with you.”

He loathed the fact that one hiccupped after drinking beer.

Arissa flashed him a sheepish smile. “Never mind, then. Red wine is too high-class.”

In truth, she was mainly afraid that she would end up drunk after imbibing.

I’ve still got to wake up early tomorrow to bring the kids to the hospital to visit Grand aunt. If I oversleep, there wouldn’t be enough time.

Benjamin’s thin lips curved to form a smile. “Milkshake is fine, too. There’s no need to drink beer.”

Arissa cast a look at him.

At the sight of the smile on his face that rendered him handsome beyond words, her heartbeat inexorably accelerated.

“Okay.”

She averted her gaze and focused on eating the barbecue skewers.

When Benjamin noticed the red marks staining the corners of her lips, his gaze darkened a shade.

“You’re having such spicy food?”

Blinking, Arissa smacked her lips.

“It isn’t spicy. Try one, and you’ll know. It only appears spicy.”

She instinctively handed him a barbecue skewer, but she suddenly remembered that he suffered from gastric. Immediately, she retracted her hand.

Benjamin had already stretched out a hand to take it, so embarrassment swamped him when she did that.

“Your stomach is easily upset, so you’d better not eat such a thing.”

Benjamin quirked an eyebrow. “That only happens occasionally.”

Arissa shot him a sidelong glance. “Even if you’re feeling fine now, you can’t simply eat whatever you please!”

Benjamin’s gaze flickered, and he replied in a low voice, “Okay.”

His rich baritone voice carried a hint of joy.

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Chapter 757 A Furious Blush

Benjamin said indignantly, “Still, I want to try a bite!” As he spoke, he snatched the barbecue skewer from Arissa, who gaped at him in shock.

Gavin, Tim, Zachary, Oliver, Jasper, and Jesse stared at Benjamin, equally wide-eyed. Gavin exclaimed, “Daddy! Why are you eating Mommy’s food?”

His father would never eat someone else’s food. Innocently, Zachary piped up, “Mr. Graham, there’s plenty of food on the plate!”

“You ate Mommy’s saliva, Mr. Graham!” Jasper yelled. Benjamin cringed in awkwardness while Arissa blushed as red as a tomato at Jasper’s words. She glared at Benjamin before explaining to the children, “I haven’t eaten that skewer yet!”

Alas, Oliver merely smiled at his mother and replied, "You don't need to explain anything, Mommy. We understand." Oliver's knowing smile embarrassed Arissa to no end.

Thankfully, Tim and Jesse did not chime in. Arissa put on a stern expression and chided, "Eat up! Stop talking!"

The children laughed for a good moment. As though fearing no one had noticed Arissa's blush, Jasper even teased, "Mommy, your face is so red!"

Arissa lowered her head and began eating. When the children tried to take the barbecue skewers in front of her, she held on to the plate and refused to share.

"These are mine!"

Meanwhile, Benjamin had finally swallowed the bite of skewer he had impulsively taken from Arissa. His face reddened from how spicy the food was.

Arissa's love and tolerance for spicy food were making his stomach churn. He could not believe how she enjoyed such torture.

"Hehe! Daddy's face is red too!" Gavin burst into a fit of laughter after spotting his father's blush.

The other five children instantly whipped their heads around to stare at Benjamin.

Arissa shot Benjamin a surprised look and mocked, "My, my, Graham. That's a furious blush you're wearing. Are you shy?"

That earned her a warning glare as Benjamin defended himself. "The food is too spicy!"

Arissa's lips twitched in amusement. She scoffed and said, "Please. This isn't spicy at all."

Tim nodded in agreement and added, "Not spicy!"

She smiled at the young boy and said gently, "Yeah. It's not spicy at all!"

Her response drew a small smile from Tim.

Arissa's gaze softened at the sight of her son's happy expression.

Benjamin was equally relieved when he noticed that Tim was gradually lowering his guard against them.

Softly, he asked, "Do you like spicy food, Tim?"

Tim nodded and replied, "Yes!"

He used to plant and sell chili peppers with Mary in the winter. The peppers were small but packed a punch. Mary used to marinate them and cook them with pasta, which was absolutely delicious.

Zachary noticed how Tim's eyes had lit up, and he asked curiously, "Tim, what was the spiciest dish you ever ate?"

"The chili pepper that Great-grandaunt and I planted!" Tim announced quietly but proudly.

"Wow. You guys plant your own chili peppers?" Oliver's curiosity was piqued.

Nodding, Tim explained, "Many people in the village plant them. You can sell them for money."

"How big was your field?" asked Jasper.

Tim scratched his head as he mulled over the question. He replied hesitantly, "Maybe about one thousand and five hundred square meters!"

Gavin and Jesse had no concept of how big that space was, nor did the other children, who looked equally perplexed.

Arissa, however, grew up in the countryside and immediately knew just how big that piece of land was.

She asked, "Did you and Grandaunt harvest the peppers alone?"

"Uh-huh!" Tim nodded.

Arissa was stunned. It was already difficult for an old woman and a child to manage a chili pepper field larger than a thousand square meters, let alone harvest the crop by themselves.

"Sweetheart, was the harvest good?"

Tim lowered his head dejectedly and muttered, "No. We couldn't plant them well, so the chili peppers didn't look nice, and we had to sell them for a low price!"

Arissa's heart ached for the boy. Farming had never been easy.

She stroked Tim's head tenderly and consoled, "Let's not plant that next time. Study hard, Tim, and you can do bigger things and earn a lot of money!"

Tim's eyes lit up with hope, and he nodded somberly.

"Yeah! A lot of the older kids in the village studied hard and found jobs outside the village. They always bring a lot of money home during festivals!"

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Chapter 758 A Lesson

Arissa smiled at the innocent Tim and said, "You can do the same thing when you grow up too! There's no rush now. You should study hard at your age."

"I can't make money yet, Ms. York. Great-grandaunt and I are using your money now, but I promise I'll pay you back in the future!" declared Tim with conviction.

While Arissa was relieved by his sense of independence, she was also a little disappointed that Tim did not plan to rely on her and Benjamin.

Independence was an excellent trait, yet as Tim's biological mother, she naturally could not help but wish that her children would depend on her.

She was more than happy to spoil her child rotten.

Instead, Tim was still treating her like an outsider.

Benjamin glanced at Arissa before addressing Tim, "Your mommy should be giving you and your great-grandaunt money to spend. Your parents are responsible for raising you into an adult. Don't feel pressured to pay her back now. Once you're all grown up with a job of your own, you have plenty of opportunities to thank her for her care!"

He also glanced at the other children and declared, "I won't stop any of you if you plan to give your salaries to your mommy in the future!"

Zachary snickered and replied, "We can give Mommy a good life now, Mr. Graham. She doesn't have to work so hard anymore."

"Mm-hmm! I can pay for Mommy too. I have savings!"

Meanwhile, Gavin shot Benjamin a sidelong glance and warned, "Don't make Mommy suffer too much. Sometimes, she's so busy she can't spend time with us."

Benjamin arched a brow in response. He knew Gavin was rich, but he had no idea how the children raised by Arissa gained their wealth.

He asked them, "Where does your money come from?"

Zachary, Oliver, Jasper, and Jesse kept their lips zipped instead of answering him.

Their adorable response brought a smile to Arissa's face. She had an inkling of where their money came from.

The children had known the ins and outs of running a business from a young age, a talent likely inherited from their father.

"Did you make money yourselves?" Tim asked Zachary curiously.

Gavin's rich, and so are my younger siblings. I'm the only poor lad here. I need to work hard so I'm not a burden to them!

"Yup!"

Zachary nodded before leaning toward Tim's ear, whispering, "I'll teach you how to make money later!"

Tim was stunned. "Okay!"

Curiously, Arissa asked Zachary, "What are the two of you talking about, Zachary? Why are you whispering to each other?"

Grinning cheekily, Zachary replied, "Don't worry, Mommy! I won't try anything dangerous."

Arissa glanced at Zachary before turning her attention to Tim. Eventually, she smiled and said, "Fine. Just watch your safety, no matter what you're doing!"

Her third son's mouth twitched in amusement. How dangerous can making money be?

"Don't worry, Mommy! It's definitely safe!"

Arissa nodded, acknowledging his promise.

On the other hand, Benjamin had overheard Zachary and Tim's entire conversation, thanks to his excellent hearing. Thus, he was far less concerned over his children's safety.

"Let me know if you need my help!" he said to the boys.

Zachary glanced at him and replied, "We don't need your help for now!"

Benjamin merely nodded in response.

"Here are the drinks, Mrs. Graham!"

Edwin entered the room with a cup of coffee for Arissa and milkshakes for the six children.

Then, he asked Benjamin, "Would you like some coffee, Mr. Graham?"

Benjamin took up his butler's offer since everyone else was enjoying a beverage.

Arissa sipped on her hot coffee, pleasantly surprised by its flavor profile.

She usually took her coffee cold and had not noticed the delectable nuances when the drink was served hot.

Arissa exclaimed in delight, "Mm, hot coffee tastes pretty good!"

Smiling, Edwin advised, "Mrs. Graham, it's better for women to take warm and hot foods. Don't have too many cold drinks in the future!"

She returned his smile and nodded. "Okay! Edwin, why don't you sit down and eat with us? Don't keep rushing around the house!"

Edwin looked to Benjamin for approval, and the latter raised his jaw subtly, gesturing for the butler to take a seat.

At the same time, Benjamin said, "She has invited you to join us, so have a seat!"

"Thank you!"

Edwin sat beside the children happily.

Jesse busied herself filling Edwin's plate, and her five elder brothers quickly followed her lead.

"Please eat, Mr. Whitley!"

"Why, thank you, children!" Edwin was pleasantly surprised.

Arissa smiled at the scene before continuing to savor her food.

Suddenly, she noticed Benjamin clutching his stomach, and she asked, "Is your stomach upset again?"

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Benjamin rubbed his tummy and replied, "I'm okay!" The corner of Arissa's lips twitched as she knew the man was trying to act tough. "You aren't supposed to have spicy food! See? You must have worsened your condition," she grumbled in disapproval.

While nagging at him, she still poured him a glass of water. "Drink some water," she ordered. Benjamin emptied the glass and lost appetite to eat anything else.

Arissa could tell how uncomfortable he felt and advised him, "Why don't you wash up and get some rest?"

"Daddy, are you okay?" Gavin hopped off his chair and rushed to Benjamin's side. "Yes, I am," Benjamin assured the young boy while caressing his head.

"Mr. Graham, you should be honest!" Zachary came over too and stared sternly at Benjamin. Meanwhile, Tim frowned and urged, "If you are not feeling well, you should see a doctor."

"Yes, I will." Benjamin nodded with a smile. "Mr. Graham, you should go lie down then!"

It was Oliver's turn to express concern. "You shouldn't try to put up a brave front, Mr. Graham. If you are feeling unwell, you have to seek medical assistance. You will get better after taking some medicine," Jasper advised.

Jesse nodded in agreement and chimed in as well, "Mr. Graham, you should listen to Mommy and get some rest."

The way the six children showed their concern touched Benjamin's heart.

"I do feel a little uncomfortable, but don't worry. It's nothing serious."

"Mr. Graham, maybe you should eat more. Who knows, but it might help relieve the heat."

Immediately, Zachary scooped up some mild food that was suitable for Benjamin. "You should eat this!"

A surge of warmth enveloped Benjamin like a hug. "You can have it. I'm not hungry."

"No, you should have this. That way, you won't feel as terrible," Zachary insisted.

Arissa watched the children fuss over Benjamin and said, "Zachary is right. Maybe you should eat more to soothe your stomach."

Given the situation, Benjamin could only heed their instructions and help himself to more food.

At the same time, Arissa gestured to the children. "All right, you guys. Eat up and prepare for bed."

Obediently, the six children returned to their seats to finish their meals.

At that moment, Edwin placed a pill bottle on the table and told Benjamin, "Mr. Graham, you'll feel better after taking your meds."

Benjamin knitted his brows, and Arissa took note of the slight change in his expression.

"Edwin is right. You should take your meds after the meal," Arissa persuaded.

Benjamin merely glanced at her in response.

Arissa promptly looked away.

As the six children continued to eat, they kept tabs on Benjamin, wanting to ensure he was feeling okay.

Benjamin could tell how worried they were and warmly reassured them, "I am all right. Don't worry!"

"Hmph! We aren't worried." Zachary snorted, pretending as if he couldn't care less.

"Exactly! We're worried about Mommy. If you fall sick, Mommy will have to overwork herself to care for you," added Jasper, curling his lips in disdain.

"Yes, this isn't about you. We only feel bad for Mommy," Oliver echoed.

Gavin also commented, "Stop flattering yourself!"

The children's defensive responses made Arissa let out an amused chuckle.

Benjamin furrowed his brows and scanned the children as well as Arissa before a glint flashed across his eyes. Suddenly, he bent forward and acted as if he was in pain.

Instantly, the six children widened their eyes in shock, concern written all over their faces.

The sight made Benjamin happy.

Arissa thought he was in pain again and could not help but comment worriedly, "If it's serious, you should head to the hospital!"

"No, it's all right. I'll be okay after taking some medicine," Benjamin casually replied before helping himself to more food.

He then drank some milkshake and cringed when he realized it was too sweet for him. Thus, he placed the milkshake in front of Arissa and said, "You can have it."

Arissa glanced at him. "This is quite sweet. I don't think you are used to it, so you shouldn't touch it."

She pushed aside the dishes that he couldn't eat.

"Should I cook you some pasta instead?"

Benjamin made a face. He already had pasta in the afternoon, so he didn't feel like having the same thing again.

"No, it's okay. I don't usually have supper, anyway."

Benjamin stopped after having his fill and watched Arissa and the kids enjoy themselves.

"Remember to take your medicine. Then, you can take a warm bath and head to bed. You will feel better afterward," Arissa reminded.

"Okay," Benjamin acknowledged but did not budge.

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Chapter 760 I Was Like That Too

Arissa handed him the pills when she saw that he had no intention of taking his medicine. "Here. Take them." Left without a choice, Benjamin did as told.

At the sight of the exchange, Gavin scoffed, "Why are you acting like a child? I can't believe you need Mommy to persuade you to take your medicine."

In response, Benjamin shot daggers at the boy. "Why are you glaring at me? I was only speaking the truth." Gavin shrugged.

"Gavin, are you itching for a beating?"

Benjamin narrowed his eyes and warned the boy.

Little did he expect Gavin to turn to Arissa and whine, "Mommy, he wants to hit me!"

Arissa laughed and assured, "Sweetheart, don't be scared. If he dares to lay his hands on you, I will protect you!"

Benjamin grumbled, "You always take their side!"

"Well, of course. Gavin is my son, after all!" Arissa boasted proudly.

Benjamin merely scoffed and turned his attention back to the children. "All of you should finish your supper and go to bed as soon as possible. If you wake up too late the next morning, you won't be able to visit your great-grandma."

Hearing that, the children wolfed down their supper and finished their milkshakes. Afterward, they said their goodnights and headed upstairs to bed.

"I'll go check on them."

Edwin followed suit to take care of the children.

A tender smile appeared on Arissa's countenance as she watched the children hop up the stairs.

"You should eat up too," Benjamin gestured to her plate.

Only then did Arissa turn her attention back to him. When she met his deep eyes, she stated, "You should head upstairs and take a bath since you've finished your food."

"I'll wait for you."

Casually, Benjamin leaned back in his seat and watched the woman eat.

They were the only ones left in the dining room, and the atmosphere quickly became somewhat sensual.

Under Benjamin's intense stare, Arissa felt the heat creep up her face.

Suddenly, she became extra conscious of every mouthful of food she took.

From the corner of her eyes, she could still see him staring at her.

Thus, her heartbeat began accelerating beyond her control.

"Why are you looking at me like that?" Arissa blurted out.

Instead of answering her, Benjamin threw her an unexpected question. "Are you getting used to staying here?"

Arissa recomposed herself and replied, "Yes."

It did not matter where she was, as long as she was with her children.

"I see." Benjamin sounded pleased.

"What's with the sudden question? Do you think we're too noisy? Did we disturb you?" she asked, staring at the man's charming face.

"Not at all."

Benjamin kept his eyes glued to the woman's delicate face as he spoke. "Gavin became more cheerful after you all moved in."

Arissa beamed happily in response. Yeah, he's right. The boy has become livelier.

Gavin was a quiet boy in the past. He did not speak as much, but now, with the company of his siblings, he became talkative and full of vigor.

At the same time, he became a responsible big brother and often took care of his younger siblings.

With that in mind, a loving gaze appeared in Arissa's eyes. "Gavin did change a lot."

She then turned to Benjamin and continued, "He used to be like you. He's quiet and solemn since a young age. Having such a character as a child made him miss out on all the fun in life."

A gleam flashed past Benjamin's eyes. "I was like that when I was young, too."

Arissa paused and stared at him, but he remained silent and didn't continue with what he wanted to say.

Though he was a quiet and solemn boy, he grew up fine. Thus, he did not think anything was wrong with Gavin's overly-mature character.

"A child needs peers to grow up with. Their character will change when they get to play with their peers."

She then changed the topic and mentioned Tim. "Tim is still not used to it yet, but once he clicks with his siblings, he'll be fine. We need to give him some time."

Benjamin nodded. "Tim still feels quite uneasy, but you shouldn't keep a watchful eye on him all the time. He might feel pressured."

Arissa bobbed her head. "I'll take note of that."

Then, she lowered her head and continued eating.

He reached out and tucked her hair behind her ear upon noticing it was about to touch her food.

She stopped in her tracks and felt as though the parts of her face where his fingers brushed were burning up.

Although she tried her hardest to act normal, her natural reaction betrayed her. Her fair cheeks flushed as she blinked nervously, making her look all the more alluring.

Benjamin was thoroughly enchanted by her beauty. She has such beautiful eyes, and most importantly, she gets shy easily. Though she has a strong personality, it can't hide the fact that her cheeks will turn red whenever she's shy.

To Benjamin, Arissa looked mesmerizing when she was embarrassed. Her fluttering eyelashes as she avoided his gaze stirred desires and emotions deep down within the man.