

Apocalypse 737

Chapter 737 Lunch

Abby licked her dry lips as she imagined the vegetables, her eyes sparkling with anticipation. Seeing her like that, Keith couldn't help but boast a little. After all, once the gates of City B opened for trade and interaction with other survivors, their resources and lifestyle wouldn't remain a secret for long.

Letting Abby know a bit early wasn't a big deal. Unlike most people, Keith was aware that Kisha possessed the ability to see beyond a person's surface — their stats, skills, even their intentions.

He trusted that she had already screened everyone thoroughly. And even if some turned out to be trouble, Keith had unwavering faith in Kisha. He believed she already had contingency plans in place to ensure no one could betray her or step out of line.

Keith spoke cheerfully with Abby, a proud grin on his face. "You didn't know? Yeah, we actually have a vegetable farm and even an animal farm. We pretty much have everything we need. My sister's working hard to expand it all so our lives can keep getting better in the future."

He puffed out his chest proudly, clearly expecting Abby to sing his sister's praises — and sure enough, the moment she heard it, her face lit up with joy.

"Woah!!! That's amazing!" Abby exclaimed, practically drooling. "Does that mean you actually get to eat fresh meat and vegetables sometimes? Like... sweet and sour pork ribs, braised pork, stir-fried veggies, and all sorts of delicious food?"

She wasn't the only one drooling at the thought — even Dracon and his team, seated not far away, felt their stomachs twist with longing. Just like Abby, they had only been eating canned goods day after day, the same bland and monotonous flavors over and over again.

But none of them dared complain — they lacked almost everything. Clean water was scarce, bathing was a luxury, they didn't have enough clothes, and food only came from risky supply runs to whatever supermarkets or convenience stores hadn't already been picked clean.

The vegetables had long since rotted, fresh items like eggs and milk had spoiled ages ago, and the fridges had stopped working not long after the power went out. They had learned to survive on dry goods and canned foods like biscuits, sausages, and preserved pickles. It was all they had.

Just hearing Abby mention cooked food felt like a distant dream. It had been so long since any of them had tasted a proper, home-cooked meal. The closest they ever got to "cooking" was boiling instant noodles — maybe adding a few toppings if they were feeling generous.

On better days, they managed rice with a bit of preserved meat or a sprinkle of condiments, and that alone was enough to be considered a feast.

But dishes like braised pork or sweet and sour pork ribs? That was a whole different world — a fantasy that felt as far as heaven was from earth.

"Well... we actually have a chef back at our base who handles the cooking and makes sure our three meals are nutritionally balanced," Keith said with a small, proud smile as he scratched the back of his head.

He didn't miss the way Abby's eyes lit up, and now she was openly drooling.

"You eat three times a day?!" Abby exclaimed, her eyes wide with disbelief.

In their shelter, they were lucky to eat even once a day. The rest of their food had to be hidden or surrendered to the leaders, who claimed it was for fair distribution. Because of that, everyone lived with constant uncertainty—never knowing when the next meal would come.

It made sense now why Keith and the Winters looked so strong and healthy. Their skin had color, their bodies didn't show signs of starvation, and their muscles hadn't wasted away from hunger. It wasn't just good genetics—they simply weren't starving.

As if the universe wanted to drive the point home, the convoy of trucks came to a gradual stop, the hiss of the engines releasing steam echoing through the stillness.

Steam...

Creak...

Suddenly, a loud knock echoed from the partition separating the driver's seat from the back. A moment later, the small sliding window opened, and Duke's voice came through with a cheerful tone.

"Alright, we're stopping here for lunch before we continue!"

At his words, Dracon, Abby, and the rest of their team—crammed into the first truck—exchanged glances. Their eyes lit up, and their mouths nearly watered in unison.

The anticipation brewing in their hearts was impossible to hide. Just the thought of an actual lunch felt like a dream coming true.

When Abby, Dracon, and the rest of their team—along with the civilians—climbed down from the trucks, they were met with a surprising scene. The Winters from HOPE Base were already moving with practiced efficiency, unloading equipment like portable stoves, large cooking pots, and a massive gas-powered rice cooker.

But what truly caught everyone's attention was the sight of a large fishnet bag brimming with fresh, vibrant vegetables. There were cabbages the size of their heads, carrots as thick as a child's arm, and if that wasn't enough, massive chunks of meat—each weighing several kilos—were carefully being set aside for the meal.

Abby and Dracon's hearts pounded with anticipation as they instinctively stepped forward to help, but it quickly became clear that the cooking was already being handled. A group of people, clearly assigned to the task, moved efficiently around the setup.

Just then, Keith appeared behind them and said with a small grin, "Didn't I tell you we have a chef back at the base? See that guy over there? He's the head chef—and actually the fourth son of the Evans family. They used to be the second most powerful family in the country, right after the Winters."

He paused, his smile faltering slightly as a scowl flickered across his face.

"Now they help with chores around the base, just like everyone else. We assign work based on specialty, and since he's great at cooking, the kitchen became his domain."

But even as he spoke, the look on Keith's face made it clear he wasn't fond of the Evans. And why would he be? Even after the Evans family was revealed to be Kisha's biological relatives, they still chose to support Melody—the same woman who continued to bring trouble to Kisha's doorstep.

Although the Evans kept insisting that it wasn't like that—that they missed Kisha and regretted the past—there was no real action behind their words. All they had done was hurt Kisha over and over again with their choices. Keith couldn't bring himself to like them because of that—and he wasn't alone in his feelings.

Even his grandparents held a grudge, and the Winters, who were once close allies of the Evans, had begun to keep their distance. As for the Winters' men, especially those loyal to Duke, they made no effort to hide their disdain. The Evans were slowly being isolated, and they had no one to blame but themselves.

And yet, they still hadn't realized what they did wrong.

But logically speaking, the Evans were truly caught between a rock and a hard place. On one side was their biological daughter, and on the other, the child they had raised and loved for over a decade. Even if it had been a pet they cared for all those years, they would still feel a deep attachment—let alone a human being.