

Apocalypse 848

Chapter 848 Simple Hearty Meal

As soon as they arrived at the usual cooking area, the women were already busy washing vegetables in the stream that flowed near the edge of the farm. They had quickly discovered that the water running through the irrigation system, circulating around the entire farm, the animal pens, and the rest of the territory, was not only clean but had a slightly sweet and refreshing taste.

By the second day of working within the territory, they had started using the water as their primary source for drinking and cooking. Its natural coolness made it especially satisfying, removing the need for ice to quench their thirst. And since the water flowed steadily like a river, they never had to worry about running out.

“Here, young Mike gave us a few big chickens, maybe we can stew them?” Hugo suggested, raising three chickens upside down in one hand. Behind him, another man carried more poultry, while Hugo’s other hand held a basket filled with freshly collected eggs, several dozen in total.

“We could boil the eggs and have them with the stew, or save them to snack on while we work,” he added. That way, they wouldn’t need to stop and cook again when hunger struck later.

The women washing vegetables nearby took the basket of eggs. One of them filled a pail with clean water from the stream and carried it over to the campfire they’d prepared earlier. She began boiling the water to cook the eggs while the others continued prepping the remaining ingredients for the meal.

“Alright, leave the cooking to us. Why don’t you head back and help young Mike with the animals?” one of the women urged Hugo and the others.

They all knew how large the farm was; it would be exhausting for anyone to manage it alone. Thankfully, Mike was a clever child who had figured out a way to make the farm run more efficiently. Even if he didn't feed every animal by hand, they wouldn't go hungry; the system he set up allowed the animals to manage on their own most of the time. When Mike had the chance, he would go around to offer them a different type of feed, just to vary their diet.

"Alright, we'll head back for now..." Hugo said, setting down the chickens, which were already unconscious. Two women approached, took the birds, and prepared a large bowl. They swiftly slit the chickens' necks and collected the blood in the bowl. Once all six chickens were properly bled and confirmed dead, they set them aside.

They also set aside the chicken's blood, knowing it could be grilled later once it had coagulated, seasoned, and lightly steamed. Having lived poorly for most of their lives, they had learned not to waste any part of a valuable resource like this. Even the innards were carefully cleaned and saved; some would be boiled or stir-fried and turned into snacks, while others could be grilled and shared later.

By that time, the eggs had been boiling for about six and a half minutes. One of the women used a strainer to retrieve the eggs and transferred them to a bucket of water, then submerged the bucket in the cool stream to chill the eggs. This would give them that perfect, soft, creamy center.

They then reused the hot water from the pot where the eggs were cooked, pouring it over the chickens to soften their skin and open the pores, making feather removal easier. However, the water wasn't enough for all six birds, so they boiled a second batch.

While waiting for that, one woman took the three cleaned chickens to the stream, placed them in a basin, and thoroughly rinsed them, making sure to remove the remaining fine feathers. She then poured the collected bloodwater around the crops as fertilizer before giving the chickens a final rinse. Afterward, she began chopping them into bite-sized pieces.

Meanwhile, the second pot of water finished boiling, and the remaining chickens were plucked in the same way. While all of this was happening, the others, having finished washing the vegetables, began peeling the potatoes and cutting them into large cubes, preparing for the stew.

The carrots were long and thick, and the potatoes were as large as two adult fists, so just a dozen potatoes and six big carrots were enough for the entire meal. The white onions, each roughly the size of a baseball, also drew attention.

Everyone was amazed at the sheer size of the crops grown inside the territory. Even those planted outside near the mountain base at the hidden base were just as impressive. Their hard work was clearly paying off, and the sight of such plump, healthy vegetables never failed to make them laugh in delight and sigh with satisfaction.

Meanwhile, Hugo and the other men were helping Mike shear the remaining sheep. Only a few still needed to be done, and once finished, they would wait for the wool to grow back. Normally, that would take about six months, or 182 and a half days, outside the territory. But thanks to the accelerated time flow inside the territory space, it would only take about 18 days for the wool to grow thick again.

Once they finished shearing the sheep, Mike took over the task of organizing the wool. He mentioned that he already had a warehouse prepared for storage, and he wasn't exaggerating. His grandfather had granted him sub-access to the territory's warehouse interface, allowing him to store items directly without needing to ask for his grandfather's help every time.

After confirming that Hugo and the others were out of sight, Mike quietly transferred all the freshly sheared wool into the warehouse system. Before long, the wool would be delivered to Artisan-type awakened ability users, who would process it into coats, sweaters, blankets, rugs, and various clothes, making it easier for the residents to purchase affordable warm essentials for the sudden extreme cold that came and went without pattern.

After finishing at the sheep pen, Hugo and the others made their way to the chicken coop, duck pens, and other fowl enclosures to gather the eggs. Just like earlier, they handed the collected eggs to Hugo, who stored them in the warehouse.

None of them dared to ask where or how the warehouse worked; they understood their limits and respected the boundaries. Instead, they simply focused on helping to lighten Mike's workload.

Next, they moved on to clean the cow barn. They shoveled the manure toward the back of the barn, making it easier to collect later and transfer to the compost bins once the biogas farm became operational. After hours of hard work, Hugo straightened his aching back and stretched, exhaustion settling in, when suddenly, they heard the women calling out from afar, shouting for them to come over.

Seeing that both Mike and Keith were still busy feeding the animals, Hugo called out to them. Just then, Gant and Daisy arrived to fetch their brother. Gant was carrying a long string made of braided grass, with about a dozen large fish hooked on it.

He had come to ask Mike to roast the fish, but before he could, Hugo pulled him along to join the group for a meal. Gant handed the fresh catch to the aunties instead, who happily took over and began preparing the fish to roast over an open fire, while the rest sat down to enjoy the hot chicken stew over rice.

"Kids, just sit down and let us handle the rest," one of the aunties said warmly as she ushered Daisy, Gant, Mike, and Keith toward the small bamboo chairs arranged nearby. Taking the fish from Gant, the aunties began gutting them with practiced hands. They carefully set aside the innards and gills, then buried them beneath the soil to decompose and enrich the earth as natural fertilizer.

While the aunties busied themselves cleaning the fish, Hugo and the others took the opportunity to wash up in the stream. Mike, Keith, and Gant followed suit, quickly rinsing off the dust and sweat. By the time they returned, the aunties had already plated bowls of rice topped with hearty chicken stew.

A simple grill had been set up over the fire, where the fish, stuffed with fresh herbs, spices, tomatoes, and red onions, were sizzling away. The mouthwatering aroma filled the air, making the kids' mouths water as they eagerly dug into their meals, their eyes drifting hungrily toward the grilling fish.

"Slow down, kids. There's plenty more," one of the aunties said with a gentle smile as she handed out glasses of cucumber lemon water. Keith accepted it with a grateful nod and a grin. He hadn't expected to be treated so well just for helping out on the animal farm.

Compared to the hidden base, where every day was an intense grind of training with Ethan and the others, life here in the territory space felt more relaxed and even enjoyable. And yet, ironically, the training here was proving to be even more effective and efficient.