

Apocalypse 187

Chapter 187 Who's the Jinx?

As they walked away from the blazing zombie carcasses, a thought flashed through Vulture's mind. Previously, he hadn't paid much attention to the events that had gradually unfolded since they left City A to get to their base. From there, they journeyed to City B to track down their master's family and eventually rescue them.

"Do you think one of us might be a jinx?" Vulture asked incredulously. He had noticed that not a day passed without them encountering some form of danger or problem. Dealing with zombies was one thing, but recently, they had faced more traitors, were hunted by creepy zombie hordes, and now even evolved zombies.

"Are you talking about yourself?" Sparrow snorted, looking Vulture up and down. Now that Vulture had mentioned it, Sparrow really did think he might be the jinx. "If you ask me, I'm quite lucky and often stumble upon good opportunities, so it's highly likely it's you." Sparrow didn't spare Vulture's feelings at all.

"Why is it me?!" Vulture exclaimed, his eyes widening with anger.

"What? Are you suggesting it's either Master or Young Madam?" Sparrow teased, a playful smirk on his face. Vulture found himself tongue-tied, unable to respond. He had no choice but to accept Sparrow's insinuation that he was the jinx of their group.

What started as a casual remark now felt like a genuine curse, making Vulture believe that the gods were indeed targeting them, complicating their already challenging lives.

The two exchanged a few more playful barbs as they walked back. They traveled on foot for quite a distance before eventually getting back on the truck. As they neared the shelter, Kisha instructed Sparrow to stop in a secluded spot. She knew there was something they needed to take care of before re-entering the shelter.

"Before we go back to the shelter, there's something we must do," Kisha stated, looking around at the faces of her companions. Despite their haggard and dirty appearances, they all seemed fine. None of them had slimmed down or appeared pitifully troubled, indicating they had endured their time outside fairly well.

Even though they had lost two members of their group, their appearance suggested they had fared well, leaving no room for excuses about their time outside.

"What must we do?" Aston asked, voicing the question on everyone's mind.

"Look at yourselves," Kisha replied, her expression indifferent.

"W-we look fine," Reeve responded a hint of doubt in his voice. He couldn't pinpoint anything wrong, but a sense of nervousness crept in.

"Exactly, that's the problem," Kisha said, pointing at each of them. They all looked confused, not grasping what she was insinuating. Seeing their puzzled expressions, Kisha decided to spell it out. "The issue is that you all look fine. Are they as strong as us?" she directed the question to one of Aston's members.

"No," he answered.

"Exactly. You're not as strong as us, and looking this fine will be an issue," Kisha stated bluntly. "We just lost two people, and those two happened to be traitors sent by the Minister of Defense and the Coltons."

Kisha paced around, appearing disinterested as she continued. "If we go back looking like this, how do we explain their disappearance? Do we admit that we knew they were spies? And then what? Let the two forces join hands and surround us on all sides, not knowing who our enemies and allies are? Blindly fight back?"

She paused, letting the questions hang in the air. Kisha didn't want to hand them all the answers. She wanted them to use their brains, to run through the simulations in their heads so they wouldn't be overly reliant on whoever was leading.

"That sounds like a bad idea," Reeve said, starting to fidget. "Even though we now know where the Coltons' hideout is, we're still not sure how much influence they have in the shelter or how far they're willing to go to retaliate. They don't fight fair; they might even use the innocent lives of other survivors as hostages to get what they want."

"Exactly. So, as a cover, we need to make it seem like we had a really tough time outside. We'll say the two deserted their position to run on their own, only to die before us," Kisha explained, pointing at each of them. "We should look like we fought hell to come back alive. To make it believable, we should have some injuries. Don't you think?"

Hearing the last sentence from Kisha's mouth made everyone gulp nervously. They sensed where this conversation was headed, and it didn't bode well. Yet, they couldn't voice any objections because Kisha had a valid point. They all understood why Kisha and the others kept their awakened abilities hidden—it was for a good reason, and deep down, they all agreed it was the best option.

They believed that revealing their awakened abilities to the Coltons would escalate the situation, making it more tragic and challenging. As Kisha broached the topic, they began to grasp her concerns. They understood that returning unscathed while the two spies were missing would raise suspicions, potentially turning the spotlight on them.

And if they alerted their enemies prematurely, it would leave them more guarded and prepared, nullifying the advantage gained from the traitors' information. This moment presented their best opportunity to mobilize their faction, catch the Coltons and the Minister of Defense off guard, and make use of the element of surprise.

"T-then... How should we deal with this?" Aston asked tentatively, his voice betraying concern. He wasn't afraid of pain or serious injury; he'd endured countless battles even before the apocalypse and had no intention of faltering now. However, he empathized with Reeve and the others who lacked his experience. He worried whether they would be able to endure the pain.

"Commander, I know you understand what needs to be done. My team and I will also have to go through with this," Kisha said with a frustrated sigh. She didn't want to see Duke injured, and she knew he didn't like it either; he was already frowning and simmering with discontent at her side.

When she turned to meet his eyes, she could see his silent acknowledgment of the necessity, though he remained silent himself. "We'll also need to leave the truck behind and continue on foot from here."

After Kisha spoke, silence fell over the group as each member contemplated what lay ahead. They absorbed the implications of Kisha's words, some already mentally planning the injuries they would need to convincingly feign, hoping to appear as beleaguered and vulnerable as possible with their self-inflicted injuries.

Kisha was pleasantly surprised by Aston's team's unwavering resolve, surpassing her expectations. She hadn't anticipated their lack of discontent and their eagerness to comply with her orders. She knew this wasn't because of the slave contract; such contracts didn't alter a person's fundamental personality or mindset—they merely imposed a binding obligation.

Their willingness to comply brought a smile to Kisha's face, reassuring her that she had made the correct decision. In truth, when she first encountered the traitors within Aston's team, she had entertained thoughts of allowing the others to perish, perhaps even considering drastic measures such as killing them aside from Aston to prevent future betrayals and ensure her and her people's safety.