

Apocalypse 329

Chapter 329 The New Normal

After Kisha finished admiring her status window and the significant boost in her stats, she took a moment to savor a glass of milk. Now, with her stomach full, she set out for the square where the warriors were already assembled. Aston, Sparrow, Vulture, and the rest were waiting on the front porch, ready to accompany her.

Their mission was clearly on everyone's minds, and Kisha's leadership was crucial for the next steps. As they gathered, the anticipation was palpable. Kisha, still focused on her objectives, was unaware of the murmur of speculation among her team about Duke's absence. She led them with purpose, eager to begin the task ahead.

They scanned the area but found no sign of Duke. Given their familiarity with his recent exhaustion, they quickly concluded that he must have been too fatigued to make an appearance. This explanation was well understood among them, so they chose to remain quiet and proceeded to follow Kisha without any further comment.

Each of them had their own assumptions about what the mission might entail. This was their first mission since taking over the base, and excitement was palpable among the group. Sparrow and Vulture, in particular, were eager. They had grown accustomed to the rigorous training and were itching for the exhilarating sense of purpose that came from real combat.

They yearned to experience the thrill of fighting outside against zombies, relishing the growth and development they felt in every life-and-death battle.

Now that Kisha had mentioned a mission, a tremor of anticipation ran through them. Despite their previous experiences in battles—whether in territorial disputes, drug wars, or other dangerous

missions—they often felt morally conflicted, as their opponents were still human. However, this mission promised a different kind of conflict. They were about to face monsters, not people.

The removal of this moral burden was liberating, allowing them to focus purely on the task at hand without the weight of ethical concerns.

They could fully unleash their bloodlust and grow exponentially stronger, a process they had eagerly anticipated. This was their sole purpose, their *raison d'être*. Duke had nurtured and trained them to become elite warriors, and in this world of combat, they felt a profound sense of belonging, as if it had been tailor-made for them.

In contrast, Aston was an exception among Duke's ranks. A soldier by trade even before the apocalypse, his mission was to save and protect civilians. His focus remained on preserving life rather than indulging in the violence that drove his comrades.

Although Aston was skilled and capable, he remained constrained by his intrinsic values. Unlike Duke's warriors, who thrived in their primal environment and reveled in their brutality, Aston felt a sense of dread rather than anticipation. For him, the impending mission was a stark reminder that it could result in injury or death among their ranks.

His focus was on the potential harm that could befall his comrades, rather than the thrill of combat.

As they approached the square, each absorbed in their own thoughts, they found the warriors engaged in a lively debate. The air was thick with speculation about the purpose of their summons and the nature of the upcoming mission. While rumors had been circulating, nothing had been confirmed, leading to a palpable sense of nervous anticipation among the group.

Over the past few days of training under Duke's guidance, the team had not only honed their physical strength and reflexes but also learned group and pair formations designed for real combat scenarios. However, despite their intense efforts, the rapid pace of their training meant that their muscles were still adapting and their skills remained underdeveloped.

This left many of them feeling apprehensive and intimidated by the prospect of their first mission.

Kisha, however, saw things differently. She believed that the lack of experience was precisely why they needed to be thrust into the field. For her, real combat was the only way they would truly learn to fight and protect themselves.

There was no time to wait for them to become fully accustomed to killing zombies or engaging in battle; she needed her warriors to develop the courage and resilience to fight, even when the odds were stacked against them.

That's why she kept the specifics of the mission a secret, only informing them that a mission was scheduled. While part of her intention was to instill a sense of nervousness for their first outing, she also wanted to underline the unpredictable nature of their world. Just as zombie breaches and dangers could strike at any moment, so too could missions arise unexpectedly.

This approach was meant to sharpen their awareness and readiness for any eventuality.

By maintaining an air of uncertainty, Kisha aimed to ensure that even under intense pressure, her team would remain perpetually alert. She wanted them to understand that being prepared at all times was crucial, regardless of the situation. Experiencing feelings of nervousness, dread, and fear was part of this readiness.

With their base situated in the heart of a city teeming with zombies, complacency was not an option. If she had to be the bad guy to instill this necessary vigilance, she was prepared to do so, reinforcing the importance of constant preparedness and awareness.

Especially now that their lives have started to stabilize—no longer needing to worry about food or shelter—people have begun to feel like things are returning to normal. However, this sense of normalcy is misleading. Their minds are blocking out the ever-present danger lurking just outside, and they're deluding themselves into thinking they're back to the peaceful lives they once knew.

However, if Kisha were to shatter that delusion, people might become angry and apprehensive about her leadership. Yet, they would also come to understand what true safety means. True safety can only be achieved through constant vigilance and preparedness, with everyone ready to protect their home at all times.

This also meant that her soldiers needed to be ready to fight at all times. After all, wasn't that why she had distributed the Scarlet Honey to the warriors even before they awakened? She wanted them to understand that every action they took was aimed at protecting their new home and ensuring their new normal remained secure.

Now that Kisha had stirred the hornet's nest, all that remained was to initiate the operation. Standing on the stage with the core members around her, Kisha surveyed the anxious faces of the warriors below.

As Kisha surveyed the crowd, she began, "Hello everyone. I trust you had a good rest last night and that you've gained valuable insights from your training with the Vice City Lord." A devilish smirk played on her lips as she observed the warriors below, watching them gulp nervously as apprehension took hold of them.

"It's time for all of you to put what you've learned into action." Her voice boomed, echoing through the tense silence. The warriors' faces turned pale with fear, realizing what Kisha's words implied. It wasn't just a few of them who would be sent out—she meant every single one of them gathered in the square, without exception.

Although Kisha didn't want their base to become a militarized stronghold like it had been in her previous life, she was determined not to have her people become weak or prone to fleeing in fear. Such weakness could spell disaster for their survival and the security of the base.