

## Apocalypse 349

### Chapter 349 Mourning

Even hardened soldiers, who had seen their fair share of gore on the battlefield, would feel their stomachs churn at the sight of the zombie corpse in front of him. The grotesque scene was enough to make anyone feel nauseous.

The man could barely breathe, but he steeled himself, drawing the dagger from his waist. With a shaky hand, he plunged it into the evolved zombie's head, the motion clumsy and uncertain. As he twisted the blade, a squishy sound accompanied the sensation of brain matter hitting the metal. He gagged, struggling to keep his breakfast down, fighting the urge to vomit.

His eyelashes fluttered as he weakly inhaled, trying to avoid the overpowering stench of decay. Despite his efforts, the foul odor still hit his nostrils, making him wince. With his eyes tightly shut, he braced himself, dreading the moment when he would have to look into the hole he had carved in the zombie's head to retrieve the core.

But with no other choice, he reluctantly leaned closer to peer into the hole. The stench hit him harder than before, making him feel dizzy and lightheaded. Being so close to the rotting corpse caused his stomach to churn violently, and he could no longer hold it in.

Stumbling backward, he bolted away from the zombie, but before he could even reach a corner, he was already vomiting, leaving a trail behind him. When he finally reached a spot, he doubled over, his body trembling as he retched, emptying his stomach in violent heaves.

'Damn it! That stench is going to kill me!' he thought, letting out another violent heave. It sounded like he was about to throw up his entire stomach, but after a few more gagging attempts, his body gave up—there was nothing left to expel. His eyes were red and teary, his throat raw from the effort, and his aching nose felt completely numb from the overwhelming smell.

After emptying his stomach completely, he had no choice but to return to the zombie corpse and finish the grim task. Determined to get it over with quickly, he approached the body, dreading every second he had to stay near it.

Thankfully, on his first try, he managed to dig his dagger into just the right spot. When he peered inside the zombie's head, he spotted a faint glimmer—something reflecting the sunlight filtering through the small window behind him, catching the edge of his hair.

The moment he saw the small glimmer, he didn't hesitate any longer. With a grimace, he plunged his hand into the mess, grabbing the crystal core between his fingers. His stomach churned again, and he gagged, but forced himself to push through. He rushed back to Sparrow, stopping in front of him, only to double over, retching uncontrollably as the nausea hit him once more.

He extended his hand to give Sparrow the crystal core, but Sparrow only glanced at the offered palm, noting the core was still coated in a slimy black substance and reeking of decay. Without a word, Sparrow raised an eyebrow, his face unreadable, yet the man could almost feel the silent judgment.

It was as if Sparrow's gaze alone was calling him 'stupid' for even thinking of handing it over in that condition.

With no other choice, he reluctantly wiped the slimy remnants of brain matter off the crystal core onto the sleeve of his pants. At least this way, he wouldn't have to constantly endure the stench right under his nose, as he would if he had used his shirt.

Thinking this through, he felt slightly consoled as he begrudgingly passed the now-cleaned crystal core to Sparrow. This time, Sparrow accepted it immediately, slipping it into his pocket without hesitation. Without a word, Sparrow turned and walked out of the storage room.

As he stepped into the open, the others, hearing the movement, glanced back instinctively—only to see Sparrow carrying Rose effortlessly in one arm.

At first, they didn't notice anything unusual about Rose and assumed she was merely unconscious. But the moment Sparrow laid her down near the gasoline refill tank, everyone's attention snapped to the dark, protruding veins creeping up her neck and onto her lower cheeks. Her lips, once pale, were now tinged with a deepening purple.

Everyone gasped in sight, they all knew something happened inside the storage room but they didn't expect it to be this serious, they all looked back at Sparrow in panic, as if asking him with their eyes on what to do with Rose in that condition.

But, Sparrow didn't even need to say something for them to understand the underlying situation and meaning behind his action, nor explain what happened. They would only become worried and scared when they heard about the evolved zombie.

Sparrow gazed up at the overcast sky, which mirrored the grim reality of their lives. The clouds seemed to mock their dire situation, a cruel reminder of their fate. Yet, despite the bleak outlook, Sparrow couldn't help but smirk. No matter how daunting their future seemed, he was certain that humanity—especially his own group—would not succumb to extinction so easily.

Everyone's faces were etched with gloom, as if they were already mourning Rose. Her followers, seeing her from a distance, pushed through the gathered crowd, their expressions vacant and lost.

Rose had been their beacon of hope during the apocalypse—her leadership had been instrumental in organizing their groups and guiding them through seemingly insurmountable waves of zombies. Though they had lost many along the way, her unwavering determination had ensured that many survived.

Seeing her so frail and on the brink of death stirred a tumult of emotions within them—resentment, loss, and anger. The fact that they were unable to protect her despite being so close felt like a profound failure.

They couldn't accept this outcome. Desperate to help Rose, they found themselves helpless, not knowing how to assist her. They understood the gravity of her situation—Rose had yet to awaken, and a zombie bite usually signified impending death. As they watched her lie there, unmoving with shallow breaths, some of the men began to weep silently, their sorrow palpable.

"Captain Sparrow, please—don't end Captain Rose's life just yet. W-we'll deal with it when the time comes," pleaded one of Rose's men, his voice trembling as he fought back tears. He could barely speak through his sobs, despite his best efforts to remain composed.

"Let's wait and see," Sparrow said, before turning on his heels. He instructed the other teams to continue guarding the perimeter while the rest prepared lunch. Since they had found a relatively safe spot with fewer zombies, it was the perfect opportunity to rest and eat before resuming their journey to the port city.

Although Sparrow appeared detached and unemotional in his response, his actions betrayed a deep frustration. They had barely reached the outskirts of City B, just a short distance from their base, and yet they were already facing a serious mishap. With every member of the mission under his responsibility, it was clear that Sparrow felt the weight of this incident heavily.

The thought of losing one of his team leaders so quickly weighed heavily on him, causing him to berate himself and spiral into self-blame. He felt like a failure, unable to escape the cycle of guilt and weakness. Despite this, he also recognized that there was nothing more he could have done in the situation.