

## **Apocalypse 42**

### Chapter 42 The Farm

Not wanting to be overdone by Kisha, Melody's determination was also sparked.

Although she was angry to see Duke's physical contact with Kisha, she had no way of showing her discontentment. She places her effort in growing her strength and her influence in the base without alarming Duke and his people so she can eventually have a voice in the future.

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"Boss, the farm is just up ahead. Should we take a look or continue on our way?" Sparrow asked Duke.

Kisha glanced over at Duke, the exhaustion evident in her expression. After three long hours of travel, despite her best efforts, she couldn't shake the numbness creeping into her feet, while her senses dulled as her discomfort settled in, even affecting her ability to feel her own body.

However, Duke remained steadfast in his position, seemingly unfazed by the journey. Sensing Kisha's gaze, he observed her subtle movements as she attempted to alleviate her discomfort by massaging her leg muscles.

"Why not take a break and do some stretches?" he suggested, acknowledging her need for relief.

A subtle shift transformed Kisha's usually stoic expression, her face briefly lighting up with a hint of warmth. Though the change occurred swiftly, Duke's observant gaze didn't miss a beat, capturing every ounce of her actions and expressions. Over time, he had grown attuned to Kisha's subtle cues, and witnessing her moment of happiness energized him, strengthening his connection to her.

Upon receiving Duke's approval, Sparrow veered to the right onto a narrow mud trail hidden within the forest. The trail was so faint that it almost seemed nonexistent, making it challenging to discern amid the dense trees and tall grass.

Describing the road as merely "a little bumpy" would be an understatement. As the car navigated the muddy terrain, it jolted and bounced intermittently as medium-sized rocks rolled beneath the tires. The relentless movement caused Kisha's already numb feet to tingle intensely, the sensation creeping up to her gums, making them itch.

With gritted teeth, she endured the discomfort until the numbness gradually subsided.

Observing Kisha's discomfort from the corner of his eye, Duke couldn't help but let out a chuckle. Despite understanding her discomfort, he couldn't help but find her expressions cute and amusing. In response to Kisha's frown and side glare, Duke openly chuckled, unabashedly enjoying the moment as he watched her reaction.

Resigned to Duke's teasing, Kisha decided to ignore it and focused on finding relief. Gripping the overhead handle, she shifted her position slightly, lifting her butt off the seat. The sensation of pins and needles prickling her backside made her wince, but she persevered, determined to alleviate the discomfort.

Observing Kisha's attempts to find comfort, Duke burst into hearty laughter, clutching his stomach in amusement. Sparrow and Vulture, catching glimpses of Kisha's glare into the rearview mirror, wisely

avoided meeting her eyes, sensing her irritation. However, Duke remained unfazed by her threatening expression, his laughter continuing unabated.

It would be dishonest to claim that Sparrow and Vulture weren't tempted to sneak a glance because of Duke's infectious laughter, a rare occurrence for their typically cold indifferent boss. Indeed, since meeting Kisha, Duke seemed to be breaking his own norms regularly. They recognized that Kisha held a unique power over him, capable of eliciting changes that others couldn't.

They knew that this wasn't a bad thing. They smiled reservedly as they focused their gaze on the road ahead.

After 30 minutes of navigating the rugged terrain, the silhouette of a silo and a barn finally came into view.

Sparrow skillfully parked the car in front of a rustic cabin, and as they stepped out, Kisha swiftly stored the vehicle in her inventory. It had become her habit to stow away items after use, a precautionary measure born out of the uncertainty of what might occur next in the midst of the apocalypse.

"Boss, I'll go ahead and scout the area," Sparrow offered.

Duke nodded at Sparrow.

Taken aback by Sparrow's quick escape, Vulture stammered, "I-I'll, uh..." Unable to think of a plausible excuse, he blurted out, "I'll just... take a quick whizz." As the words left his mouth, Vulture realized the awkwardness of his statement, feeling his cheeks flush with embarrassment as he glanced in Kisha's direction.

Such an excuse wouldn't have been so embarrassing if there hadn't been a woman present.

Vulture sensed Sparrow's intention to provide their boss with some privacy with Kisha. Recognizing this, he too made a swift exit, deciding to explore the interior of the cabin.

As Kisha and Duke engaged in their muscle stretches, Vulture took the opportunity to inspect the cabin. Upon entering, his attention was immediately drawn to the sight of cigarette butts littering the small coffee table, alongside several empty cans of Monster energy drinks.

Venturing further into the cabin, he noticed a few cup noodles scattered on the kitchen counter. The sight immediately put him on high alert; the noodles appeared relatively fresh, emitting a sour smell indicating they had been there for about 15 to 24 hours.

He proceeded to the bedroom, confirming his suspicions as he observed the disheveled bed with a few bed sheets spread on the floor. In one corner, he noticed patches of blood staining the white sheets.

He cautiously reached out to touch the dried blood, feeling its hardened texture and noting its dark, nearly brown color. Cracks had formed around the edges, indicating that it had been there for some time.

On the opposite side of the farm, Sparrow observed multiple tire tracks at the alternate exit leading toward the forest road. Upon inspecting the garage, he noticed that the spare cars typically parked there were now absent. Hastening to the secret bunker concealed behind the garage, he meticulously examined each box. Satisfied with his investigation, he swiftly returned to where Duke was waiting.

He approached to find Kisha and Duke engaged in a serious conversation, their expressions grave and tense. As Vulture joined them, he witnessed the same somber scene unfold before him.

Before either of them could speak, Kisha abruptly departed, heading back in the direction Sparrow had come from. Sparrow and Vulture exchanged surprised glances, momentarily forgetting what they had intended to report as they watched her leave.

Duke broke the silence. "It appears our people have arrived here. Most likely Tristan and the others."

Once more, Vulture and Sparrow were taken aback by surprise. "Boss, how did you know?" Sparrow inquired, seeking clarification. "Upon reflection, it does seem probable," he added. "The lack of forced entry into the bunker and the missing firearms suggest familiarity with our operations. Everything else appears undisturbed."

Vulture echoed, his tone grave. "Additionally, there are signs of recent occupancy in the cabin, and it seems that some individuals may have been severely injured."

After Vulture spoke, he and Sparrow exchanged incredulous glances as a realization dawned on them. However, they couldn't help but wonder 'How did Duke know these details when he and Kisha had not moved from where they had left them?'

Sparrow couldn't help but voice his curiosity. "Boss, how did you know?" he inquired, noting Duke's lack of surprise upon hearing their report.

"Kisha told me." Duke said proudly.

The two were thoroughly shocked and their curiosity deepened. 'Could Kisha have deployed drones to monitor their movements?'

Well, they weren't far off. Kisha had indeed dispatched drones to keep an eye on them.

Kisha dispatched the regular bees to meticulously monitor every move made by the two individuals. This was a deliberate test to assess the intelligence-gathering capabilities of the regular bees and to evaluate whether they could efficiently relay useful information through their connection with Bell.

The regular bees, while small and inconspicuous, faced a communication barrier and struggled to convey what they observed in detail. They could only describe things using shapes or the simplest words they knew. Bell, tasked as their translator, found it incredibly challenging to relay this limited information to Kisha.

Bell could only shed tears, wishing fervently for her colony to grow faster.

Kisha and Duke collaborated, analyzing the information gathered by the bees and piecing together the puzzle. Duke's familiarity with the area proved invaluable; with just a few details, he could discern what was happening. He shared his insights with Kisha, allowing them to form a comprehensive understanding of the situation.

But of course, he chose not to divulge the involvement of the bees to Sparrow and Vulture. He savored the sense of exclusivity that came with being the first to know about this significant secret Kisha was

keeping. While he knew that others would eventually discover it, the feeling of being the initial confidant held a special significance for him.

A ticklish flutter warmed his heart as he contemplated the secret, his eyes forming into crescents as a smile tugged at his lips. Sparrow and Vulture could only stare in disbelief as they watched him. Not only were they left without answers to their growing curiosity, but they also witnessed Duke happily lost in his own thoughts.

The two had no choice but to suppress their curiosity and remain silent, patiently awaiting further instructions.

Is this really their boss. Despite their respect for Duke, they couldn't help but feel a pang of nostalgia for their former boss.

It's not that they dislike the changes in their boss, but seeing him in this light somehow left them feeling a pang of loneliness being single. They couldn't shake the bitterness creeping in as they longed for a love life too.