

Apocalypse 458

Chapter 458 His Condition? (Unknown)

But who would answer them? Duke was already...

"Vice City Lord!"

"Vice City Lord!"

Gasps filled the air as Duke collapsed to the ground with a heavy thud.

Shocked, everyone stared at his body lying motionless on the cold ground, horror etched on their faces.

Without a second thought, they all rushed to him, momentarily forgetting the danger that still loomed around them.

"What was that?!" one of the warriors exclaimed as a loud buzzing sound filled the air.

He looked around, unable to pinpoint the source, and with them stopping using their abilities, the whole place dimmed, shadows filled the darkened streets, obscuring their view.

They couldn't make out what had just happened—only that something had exploded, and now Duke lay motionless on the ground while the cocoon still loomed tall in the center of the street.

Despite their best efforts to stay hopeful, dread crept into everyone's mind as they considered the worst possible scenarios.

The warriors quickly formed a defensive circle, positioning those with remaining strength on the outer perimeter, while the more exhausted fighters took refuge within.

A few knelt beside Duke, anxiously assessing his condition.

Rose, stationed on the outer line, led the defense with a vigilant gaze, but kept one ear tuned to the hushed conversation of those tending to Duke.

Every warrior was tense, ready for any sudden threat, as they struggled to hold their ground amidst the dire situation.

"W-what's this?" one of the warriors stammered as he reached out to adjust Duke's body, trying to help him lie down properly on the pavement.

His hand touched a sticky, metallic-smelling liquid.

He froze, recognizing the scent instantly—rusted iron.

He didn't need to look twice to know what it was.

"B-blood!" he choked out, the grim realization dawning on him and the others as they began to piece together what had happened.

"Dammit!" one of the warriors muttered, his voice thick with a mix of frustration, sorrow, and helpless rage.

Hearing the commotion behind her but still unsure of Duke's condition, Rose stepped forward and barked an order, her voice firm.

"Help carry the Vice City Lord! We're moving out to the next location before that zombie raid arrives."

Her jaw tightened as she finished.

The weight of the situation bore down on her—she had no idea how she'd explain this to Kisha back at the base.

With Duke incapacitated, she wasn't sure if she could even get the rest of the group back safely.

Anxiety knotted in her stomach, thoughts spiraling with all the things that could go wrong from here.

"Yes ma'am!"

"Yes ma'am!"

"Copy!"

Soon, everyone prepared to retreat.

They could no longer focus on the evolved zombie—they didn't know what it might do next, but in their current state, facing it was out of the question.

With Duke down and his condition uncertain, continuing the fight was simply impossible.

Two warriors quickly fashioned a makeshift stretcher from a sturdy earth spike as the pole and a large towel, were carefully secured from the sides of each earth spike to support an adult's weight.

Once Duke was loaded onto the stretcher, the group prepared to leave.

Rose and the others cast reluctant glances back at the cocoon, frustrated by how close they'd come to breaking through.

But with their depleted strength and Duke's condition, even Rose's firepower wouldn't be enough to finish the job before the small-scale zombie raid arrived.

Although the eerie sound of marching had momentarily ceased—possibly because they'd halted their attack, interrupting the evolved zombie's distress call—they had no way of knowing how long it would take to complete its transformation.

They found themselves in a difficult position, and Rose's priority shifted to preserving their team's lives.

She resolved to retreat to the base and assess their options from there.

After all, the only people she knew who could handle this kind of situation were Duke or Kisha.

With Duke incapacitated, Rose knew she would have to rely on Kisha to devise a plan for dealing with the cocoon and its evolving threat.

However, traveling at night carried significant risks, and they decided it was best to set up camp and wait for the morning before returning to the base.

With their enhanced physiques as superhumans, they possessed greater power, agility, and stamina, not to mention heightened senses.

Despite the darkness shrouding the streets, they navigated with confidence, heading towards the location Duke had indicated earlier.

Somber and grim expressions marked each face, and although the shadows obscured their features, the weight of the atmosphere made their shared tension palpable.

The warriors in the outer layer of the formation fought off the zombies that approached them as they moved, while those inside concentrated on recovering their strength so they could switch places with their comrades on the front lines.

"At three o'clock, incoming!" Rose shouted as she assumed a defensive stance and began to advance.

The warriors braced themselves for another confrontation as a horde emerged from the street ahead.

Gritting their teeth, they fought valiantly to carve their way through the oncoming waves of zombies before launching into a relentless sprint toward safety.

After an exhausting thirty minutes of battling and running, they finally reached their designated location, securing the perimeter just in time.

They collapsed onto the ground, utterly spent, their exhaustion palpable as they fell into a heavy silence.

For a full hour, they rested in quiet contemplation, lost in their own thoughts, none of them eager to move.

It was only when one of them recalled that Duke was still lying motionless on the makeshift stretcher that the gravity of their situation truly sank in.

They found it hard to accept the reality of what had transpired.

Overwhelmed by an exhausting fatigue that dulled their senses, they couldn't even muster the energy to feel hunger.

The thought of returning to the base with Duke in such a state filled them with dread.

Finally, someone snapped and stood up to turn on a lamp and prepare a simple meal.

No matter how shitty their circumstances were, their bodies still needed nutrition and energy to face the challenges of the next day.

He realized they could only tackle other concerns after ensuring they had the strength to fight their way back.

Above all, they needed to guarantee that Duke's body would be delivered to Kisha properly.

The same person who was preparing the food began to sob quietly, struggling to keep his voice down, but soon, his anguish echoed through the group.

One by one, others joined in, weeping for their vice city lord.

They couldn't bear to look at Duke's motionless body now that the light had been turned on; they were too afraid to confront the reality of how he had ended up like this.

They felt the weight of their helplessness crashing down on them, realizing how weak and useless they had been.

They couldn't even assist Duke during his battle against the evolved zombies; instead, they had become a liability.

If it weren't for his instinct to protect them, he wouldn't have had to exert himself to the point where he'd end up like this.

They knew that if he had only focused on his own survival, he could have easily escaped, as they had all witnessed his strength and intelligence in combat.

Duke had the skills to evade multiple evolved zombies and ensure his own safety, but because of them, he was now...