

Apocalypse 502

Chapter 502 The Banquet

Just like that, the atmosphere shifted into one of celebration, as everyone went about their tasks, working together to prepare.

Duke and Kisha, being the honored leaders, were not allowed to participate in the preparations; their roles were to guide and oversee, like commanders leading their troops.

With a sense of purpose, the survivors moved efficiently, each member contributing their part.

Kisha, in particular, had already reassured everyone that there was no need to worry about the supplies.

They had more than enough to ensure a successful day of festivities, and it was time to unwind.

After weeks of relentless pressure, with one challenge after another coming in, the people had barely had a chance to release the built-up tension.

Today, however, would be different—today, they would take a well-deserved break and let go of the stress that had accumulated in both their bodies and minds.

Hearing this, a wave of gratitude surged through everyone, deepening their respect for Kisha.

Motivated by her words, they silently vowed to do more, to strive for excellence, and to uphold the trust she had placed in them.

In their hearts, they made an unspoken promise: to never betray their leaders, for the consequences of such treachery would be nothing short of a painful, inevitable end.

Of course, Kisha didn't organize this banquet simply to give everyone a chance to unwind—she had a more strategic purpose in mind.

It was a way to reinforce her "carrot and stick" approach, reminding everyone that hard work would be rewarded, but betrayal would not go unpunished.

This was not just a celebration; it was a subtle reminder.

Everyone at the base knew that Kisha and her team had taken down the previous tyrants who once ruled, and now those tyrants were locked away, their fates unknown.

No one dared to speak of them, and no one knew what had become of them.

In this atmosphere of uncertainty, Kisha's periodic rewards served as a stark reminder—a comparison to the old regime.

These moments of recognition were meant to solidify the trust and loyalty of her people, ensuring that their commitment to her and her team would only grow stronger.

After all, while the harshness of the world often brings out the darker sides of people, it also exposes their vulnerability.

In their lowest moments, even the smallest act of kindness can ignite a deep sense of gratitude.

But this only holds true for those with a good moral compass, which is why Kisha had to be meticulous in screening the survivors who entered her territory.

By carefully selecting those who would join her base, she ensured that her people remained united and harmonious.

This way, the foundation of her community would be built on trust and shared values, fostering an environment where loyalty and cooperation thrived.

Not long after, the streets within the base, especially the square, were illuminated with oil lamps placed everywhere.

Each table had its own oil lamp, and others dotted the square, casting a soft, flickering glow that created a warm, inviting atmosphere.

It felt almost like celebrating Christmas Eve together, and the sight of it made everyone working feel even more solemn and dedicated to their tasks.

As the others prepared the ingredients, most were setting up camping stoves at each table, placing pots on top.

The cooks had already prepared large batches of rice, bone broth, and a mild spicy broth.

For those who craved more heat, a spicy Sichuan seasoning was available to add as desired.

The air was filled with the smell of food, and the atmosphere buzzed with the energy of people coming together to enjoy a much-needed break.

They also prepared a variety of fried foods, including crispy fried chicken, fried balls, sausage and golden-brown tofu, while making minced meat and seafood mixtures so everyone could enjoy fish balls and meatballs in the hotpot.

As the night went on, the temperature unexpectedly plummeted, turning the evening into one of the coldest nights they'd experienced in a while.

Though it wasn't snowing, the chill was so intense that each breath they took produced a cloud of visible vapor.

It was strange—winter wasn't supposed to have arrived yet, but the sudden drop in temperature made it feel as though it had come early.

As the cold grew more intense, a hotpot quickly became the perfect choice for the banquet.

The superhumans were less affected by the sudden temperature drop—they were cold, but still able to manage it.

However, the normal humans could feel the chill in their bones, their limbs growing stiff as they began to shiver.

To counter the biting cold, some of the workers set up a large bonfire in the center of the square, with smaller ones placed around the corners to ensure that everyone stayed warm, especially the children.

The little ones gathered closer to the warmth of the flames, while the adults focused on their tasks.

The elderly were entrusted with watching over the children, ensuring that they stayed safe and kept a respectful distance from the fires as the evening buzzed with activity.

After hours of working together, everyone was tired, but the moment the rich scent of the hotpot began to waft through the air, a renewed sense of energy filled the atmosphere.

People gathered around the tables, some standing, others seated, but all were eagerly waiting.

At the front, Kisha and the other leaders sat like royalty, overseeing the gathering.

The survivors, who had worked diligently all evening, looked up toward them, their eyes waiting for the signal to begin.

The warmth from the bonfires mingled with the anticipation in the air, adding a sense of unity and reverence to the moment.

Kisha and Duke exchanged a glance, their eyes filled with silent understanding and a shared smile.

Raising their glasses filled with alcohol, they prepared to officially kick off the banquet.

With a slight nod from Kisha, the leader's words were met with an anticipatory hush, as she stood ready to make a short but meaningful speech to mark the beginning of the celebration.

"Everyone, I want to take a moment to express my deepest gratitude for all the hard work and dedication you've shown in making HOPE Base a better place for all of us. This base is ours, and it is only through our collective effort that we can shape and protect it."

"With the completion of the new, stronger wall, our defenses are now much more secure. We no longer need to live in constant fear of when the next zombie raid will breach our walls, as we did before."

"Not only that, but with the expansion of our territory, we can also rest easy knowing that we have the space and resources to accommodate the growing population for the time being."

"With this, we've earned a brief moment to catch our breath and gather our strength. I want to remind you all: don't feel discouraged if you haven't awakened yet, or if your abilities aren't what you expected."

"Each and every one of us has a role to play in supporting this base. There's no need to put undue pressure on yourselves. We are here to support you, and we hope you'll do the same for us as we lead the way forward."

"What matters most is that we build a foundation of mutual trust, knowing that, together, we can stand strong against a world that has turned its back on us."

"With the completion of our wall, we take our first step toward a brighter future. I hope that each of us will continue to do our best, for the sake of our children and loved ones. I thank you all for being here, for your hard work, and for your commitment to our shared future."

As Kisha finished her speech, she raised her cup and drank deeply, her actions steady and resolute.

The others followed suit, their faces reflecting deep respect and quiet emotion.

A slight redness rimmed their eyes, for Kisha's words had struck a chord in their hearts, reminding them of the sacrifices they had made and the hope that still burned within them.

Kisha's words had the desired effect, stirring the hearts of everyone in the banquet place, just as she intended.

By repeatedly using "we" and "our," she subtly reinforced the idea that the base belonged not just to the leaders, but to everyone present.

It was a clever way to ensure that the survivors saw themselves as an integral part of the community, while simultaneously positioning Kisha and her allies as the natural leaders who would guide them toward a better future.

This strategic use of language made the idea of leadership elections seem unnecessary, almost unthinkable.

It created an unspoken understanding that Kisha and her people were the rightful rulers, and anyone who challenged them would be seen as working against the collective goodness and effort of everyone.

By making everyone feel involved in the base's success, Kisha subtly placed the onus on them to contribute positively.

Any action that went against the base's well-being would be viewed as a betrayal of not just the leaders, but of the community as a whole.

This psychological maneuvering ensured that the survivors felt both the privilege and the responsibility of being part of something bigger than themselves, grounding them in their positions and reinforcing their loyalty to the leaders.

Duke and his family exchanged knowing glances, a sense of pride in their eyes as they watched Kisha speak.

Her impromptu speech revealed her natural leadership, effortlessly uniting her people while subtly ensuring that her agenda remained firmly in place.

Kisha's words were not just inspiring—they were calculated, designed to strengthen the bonds within the community and solidify her role as the unquestioned leader.