

## **Apocalypse 573**

### Chapter 573 Search And Rescue Mission 9

"This is deeply concerning," Duke muttered, his index finger lightly resting against his chin as he surveyed their surroundings, his expression dark and grim.

Despite the prolonged search and the energy they had expended—both physical and spiritual—they were holding up well, thanks to Kisha's active and passive skills.

These abilities not only kept their stamina replenished but also shielded them from the worst of the strain.

However, their mental endurance was being tested.

Yet, who were they if not seasoned veterans of countless harrowing experiences? Their resilience had been forged through hardship, and their minds were far from fragile. They pressed on with a steady determination, their composure unwavering.

Even so, an hour passed with no progress. The Scarlet Bees, typically efficient in scouting, had scoured the area but uncovered no new leads. The silence and emptiness weighed heavily on them, deepening the unease in the air.

"Ah!" Kisha suddenly let out a sharp, frustrated cry, her expression darkening with fury. She stomped her foot on the ground, her teeth clenched tightly, radiating anger.

"What happened?" Duke asked, his voice tinged with concern as he quickly moved to her side.

Placing a reassuring hand on her back, he gently rubbed it in soothing circles, his touch steady and calming. His worried eyes searched her face, silently urging her to share what had triggered her outburst.

"Something killed my Scarlet Bees!" Kisha exclaimed, her voice laced with anger and urgency.

Without hesitation, she broke into a steady sprint toward the location where her Scarlet Bees had been attacked. Duke immediately matched her pace, running alongside her.

"Then doesn't that mean we've found a lead on where the creature might be hiding?" Duke said, his tone trying to offer encouragement. "Their sacrifice wasn't in vain, Wifey. This could take us straight to our target."

Though Kisha appreciated Duke's attempt to console her, she couldn't help but feel a deep pang of frustration.

The Scarlet Bees weren't just disposable tools to her. Thanks to Bell's diligent efforts, their numbers had grown into the thousands, but nurturing the specialized scouting drones wasn't an easy task.

These drones, with their extended stamina and endurance, were vital for long-term reconnaissance missions.

Unlike the regular worker Scarlet Bees, these drones could scout for longer periods without succumbing to exhaustion, making them indispensable to her operations.

That's why losing them stung more than usual. They weren't just valuable assets—they represented countless hours of care and effort.

Still, Kisha steeled her resolve, knowing their loss might finally provide the clue they desperately needed just like what Duke said.

Kisha felt her heart ache as if it were bleeding. Losing a dozen Scarlet Bees in an instant was a devastating blow, made worse by the frustration of not knowing what had happened.

There had been no warning—no sign of danger. One moment, the connection was alive and strong; the next, it was abruptly severed, leaving her bewildered and angry.

Deciding to exercise caution, Kisha refrained from sending any more Scarlet Bees into the area.

Instead, she ordered the remaining Scarlet Bees to maintain a safe distance, monitoring the scene from above and along the perimeter without venturing closer.

She couldn't risk losing more of her bees without understanding what had killed them.

As Kisha, Duke, Vulture, and Zeus approached the perimeter where her Scarlet Bees had disappeared, their steps instinctively slowed.

Eventually, they came to a halt.

The air ahead of them was dense with an ominous, thick fog, curling unnaturally around the area. Kisha's sharp eyes narrowed as she studied the unsettling sight, a shiver of unease running down her spine.

"Was the fog poisonous?" Duke asked, his voice low as his sharp eyes scanned the area. He couldn't spot any of the Scarlet Bees—they had expertly hidden themselves among the broad leaves and other safe crevices.

The usual faint hum of their wings was absent, adding to the eerie silence.

Duke's brow furrowed as he observed the fog swirling around the area. It wasn't natural; it carried an oppressive stillness that seemed to suffocate everything it touched.

Could it have been the fog that killed the Scarlet Bees so suddenly?

His jaw tightened at the thought, knowing whatever they were up against was far more dangerous than they'd anticipated.

"This fog appeared out of nowhere," Kisha said, her voice tight with concern. She relayed the information coming from the Scarlet Bees positioned around the area.

According to their reports, the fog hadn't just risen—it had appeared suddenly, almost as if summoned. But what caught their attention was that the Scarlet Bees had already started dropping dead before the fog even reached them.

"So, it's possible that the fog itself isn't what killed them," Kisha continued, her thoughts racing.

"It could be a poisonous smell that took them out, and the fog is just a cover—a way to hide whatever's lurking inside it from us."

This meant that either the creature they were hunting had already detected the Scarlet Bees hovering around the forest and killed them with a poisonous scent, or it had sensed something hunting it and, in a defensive move, released the toxic air, leaving only a scent.

The fog was likely a cover, a way for it to shield itself while hiding in the thick mist.

But if the creature they were after could kill its enemies so easily, why would it need to hide?

Kisha struggled to pinpoint what kind of enemy they were facing.

Many mutated animals had the ability to create fog and emit poisonous scents, but it was also possible that the creature was a symbiotic pair—two different creatures working together for mutual protection and survival. With so many possibilities, Kisha couldn't narrow it down.

They would have to see for themselves to understand the true nature of their enemy.

Now that Kisha realized they were hunting a creature capable of secreting a poisonous substance potent enough to kill her Scarlet Bees, it became clear that the poison likely had properties similar to a pesticide, highly effective against insects—or it was simply potent enough to kill something as large as an elephant with its scent.

She couldn't risk sending her Scarlet Bees in anymore, as she'd lose more of them. She also couldn't send Zeus in, as his strong sense of smell might make him fall victim to the same fate as the Bees.

Kisha then took out a stick and carefully prodded the fog, testing whether it had any corrosive properties that might erode their equipment or clothing.

Fortunately, the fog seemed harmless—aside from its ability to obscure vision and disrupt their senses, it didn't pose any additional threat.

Relieved, Kisha distributed gas masks to Duke and Vulture, ensuring they were properly equipped before venturing inside the perimeter.

After they donned their gas masks, keeping their night vision goggles in place, they prepared to enter.

Zeus paced anxiously around them as if wanting to accompany Kisha but instinctively knowing how dangerous it was inside. His behavior reflected a heightened survival instinct that humans often lack.

Kisha's eyes narrowed as she observed Zeus, falling into deep contemplation. It was a common belief that if someone was uncertain about danger, they should watch the animals around them. Animals' instincts are often spot on, signaling imminent threats.

Although Zeus couldn't explicitly warn her, his anxious pacing was enough for Kisha to sense the danger lurking within.

Zeus, who had once stood his ground against an evolved zombie and a horde of its kind without flinching, now paced restlessly, his fur bristling along his back. Occasional growls rumbled from his throat, a clear sign of the tension and unease he felt.

"Zeus, can you sense what's inside?" Kisha asked, reaching out to Zeus through their mindlink.

"Master, Zeus doesn't know. But... danger... danger... strong!" Zeus responded, his anxiety evident as he paced restlessly.

At times, he tugged at Kisha's cloak, trying to pull her away, his desperation clear. His actions spoke volumes about the peril that awaited them, but Kisha couldn't afford to hesitate.

If the danger was this great and this was their only lead to find Sparrow, they had no choice but to press on, ready to face whatever came their way.

Zeus let out a soft, mournful whine, his head drooping as Kisha gently but firmly stopped him from pulling at her cloak.

His body was tense with anxiety, and his eyes were filled with a mix of fear and sadness. The thought of losing Kisha, his only remaining family, weighed heavily on him.

She had promised to be his family after the loss of the one he had known growing up, and the possibility of losing her too made his heart ache.

Despite his desperation to stay by her side, Kisha wouldn't let him come along. Zeus knew he couldn't protect her if he was left behind, and that thought only deepened his unease.

Seeing Zeus's drooping ears and the sadness in his eyes, Kisha's heart softened. She knelt down to his level, her voice gentle but firm.

"Zeus, we can't take you inside, but I need you to guard the perimeter with the Scarlet Bees. Keep an eye out for any enemies or danger trying to enter while we're inside. We'll be relying on your protection from the outside so we can focus on the fight within."

Bell, too, had been vocal in trying to stop Kisha through their mindlink, her warnings persistent and urgent.

But Kisha had already blocked Bell's incessant pleas, repeating the same words she'd told Zeus.

Now, both Bell and Zeus had no choice but to remain outside, guarding the perimeter and ensuring no unexpected threats would disrupt the group as they moved forward.