

## **Apocalypse 651**

### Chapter 651 Scouting New People

However, his enthusiasm dimmed as he hesitated, realizing a harsh truth—unlike Rakan, he and his people weren't fighters. Looking at the Winters' men, battle-hardened and capable, it was clear they were either mercenaries or soldiers, skilled in combat just like Rakan and his group.

It made sense that they would accept Rakan—he had value, he was strong.

But what about them?

They were just civilians, with no real fighting ability. Would they be seen as nothing more than a liability? Just another set of mouths to feed?

One of the Winters' men noticed the older man's hesitation and the doubt flickering across his face. He understood the concerns—these people posed no threat, and their priority was clearly the safety of the children.

As a way to show gratitude for their help, he decided to extend an offer, knowing how desperately they were searching for a secure place to stay.

"If you'd like," he said, his tone sincere, "you can join our base. We have various roles available, and you don't have to be a combatant if you don't want to. There's plenty of work to be done, and everyone contributes in their own way."

Although this invitation came from just one of the Winters' men, they all knew their master and young madam wouldn't object.

After all, HOPE Base was already sheltering over five thousand survivors, and a few dozen more wouldn't make much of a difference. Besides, these people could contribute by working, especially since they had farming experience, as they claimed earlier.

Relying solely on Marcus to handle all the farming wasn't a sustainable long-term solution—especially with a hundred acres of land to manage within their young madam's space territory.

So, their invitation wasn't entirely selfless or without reason. So far, many survivors have worked in different sectors within the base, but none have the expertise to help with farming, the primary source of their long-term food supply.

While they had hundreds of thousands of canned goods from Port City's warehouse, relying solely on preserved food wasn't sustainable.

Fresh vegetables were essential to maintaining proper nutrition, especially for the younger ones, who needed a balanced diet to stay healthy.

So, they made the decision on behalf of their young madam and master, hoping they wouldn't be upset.

Hearing the Winters' men's offer, the group visibly perked up, their faces lighting up with excitement. They wanted to cheer in relief but held back, knowing they couldn't afford to make too much noise in their current situation.

Normally, after their past experiences of betrayal, they would have been wary of trusting others so easily. However, despite the Winters' men's intimidating presence and sharp aura, there was a sincerity in their eyes that they couldn't ignore.

They understood that this opportunity was given to them solely because they had chosen to help the Winters' men in their time of need.

If they hadn't extended a hand, this offer would never have come their way. In another scenario, once the danger had passed, they might have been left to continue their journey to the village alone.

If they had continued toward the village, there was no guarantee that it would be as safe as they had imagined or that they would be able to build a shelter there. After all, the world had changed drastically—animals had mutated, growing stronger and more dangerous—while they themselves were either elderly, young, or completely inexperienced in combat.

This offer from the Winters' men felt like a lifeline, a chance at survival. Some of them were so overwhelmed with relief that they began to shed quiet tears of gratitude and hope.

They could say they were reaping the rewards of their own kindness—by extending a helping hand to others, they had unknowingly paved the way for their own salvation. This stroke of good fortune felt like karma at work, and the realization filled them with gratitude. Everyone was relieved that they had chosen to follow a leader with a good heart, and their faith in him had led them to this moment—a clear path to survival.

Unfortunately, the mutated tiger was relentless. It refused to give up, circling the last place where it had caught their scent, determined to track them down. Meanwhile, the children, perched in the trees for so long, were growing numb, exhausted, and increasingly hungry. Fortunately, the Winters' men had come prepared—they carried military backpacks stocked with food, enough to sustain the group while they waited for the right moment to escape.

As they waited, the sky grew darker, and the night breeze turned colder. Even for the adults, the chill was harsh, especially given their weakened and hungry state. Despite having eaten the food shared by the Winters' men, their hunger remained.

Most of the provisions had been given to the children, who eagerly devoured every bite. Though the children tried to share with the adults, the latter, not wanting to take from them, insisted they eat first.

As they waited, the Winters' men—those who had awakened their abilities and gained enhanced physical senses—spotted Sparrow in the distance. One of them swallowed nervously but, despite the others' protests, stealthily left his hiding spot on top of the tree to intercept him.

They had just heard the low growl of the mutated tiger nearby and feared that if Sparrow come face to face with it, the beast might shift its target to him. However, what they didn't realize at that moment was that something was chasing after Sparrow from behind—the true reason behind his frantic sprint.

Back to Sparrow and his group sprinting through the night—most of the Winters' men from Group 6 were stumbling as they ran, still disoriented and unable to fully utilize their abilities. Like Sparrow, they pushed themselves to the limit, doing their best to keep moving.

Then, one of them tripped and nearly fell. Before he could hit the ground, a few of the civilians who had been helping them stepped forward, offering support. Some wrapped an arm around the struggling men's shoulders, while others provided steadying hands from behind.

Sparrow raised an eyebrow at the unexpected assistance. He wasn't sure how his men knew these civilians, but it was clear they were genuinely trying to help. Deciding not to question it for now, he focused on guarding the rear as they ran. The sounds of chaos behind them grew fainter, but none of them dared to slow down.

No one dared to look back as they ran. The children clung tightly to the adults, doing their best to stay silent despite their fear. Their pale faces and red-rimmed eyes showed their terror, but they remained obedient, burying their faces in the adults' embrace. Those too exhausted to run any further were carried, their small limbs unable to keep up.

As they pushed forward, Sparrow and his group finally reached a hidden rendezvous bunker deep in the forest—one that appeared to belong to the military. A wire fence surrounded the area, and the moment they got close, their eyes lit up with relief and excitement.

"Damn! Luck's on our side!" one of the men from Group 6 exclaimed. "They've got a Bell Boeing V-22 Osprey military chopper here!"

They came to a halt just outside the perimeter, panting heavily. The civilians, in particular, were drenched in sweat, their faces pale from the exhausting sprint. Their lungs burned, but for the first time since their escape began, hope flickered in their eyes.