

## Apocalypse 69

### Chapter 69 Surprised?

"Wait! Hold up right here," Kisha exclaimed abruptly, halting their stride near the heart of the western district. With a swarm of zombies looming ahead, she urgently sought to reassess their route.

"Miss Kisha, what's wrong?" One of the newcomers inquired, only to receive a sharp smack on the head from Sparrow's palm in response.

"Less chit-chat, more focus on what's around us, you fool!" Despite his playful tone, his expression resembled that of a vigilant guard dog. His posture stiffened, and every muscle tensed as he scanned their surroundings intently.

"This route won't do. We need to detour to the southeast; it might add some extra distance, but it's significantly safer," Kisha declared decisively. However, her momentum halted as a crucial piece of information flashed into her mind.

Approaching Duke, Kisha shared her thoughts on the situation, outlining the looming threat of the zombie horde ahead. It was clear they couldn't proceed, and the only viable path to the southeast led through territory potentially occupied by their adversaries.

Having absorbed Kisha's plan and the gravity of the situation, Duke glanced over at Sparrow. Despite the seriousness of their circumstances, Sparrow seemed to be engaging in light banter with the newcomers, recounting snippets of their recent journey to City B with a hint of cheerfulness.

As Sparrow caught sight of Duke's gaze, he swiftly closed the distance, intuiting that he was likely about to be assigned a mission. The expressions on their faces, particularly Kisha's, hinted at something brewing, something that didn't seem entirely favorable not for them but for those she scheming against.

Having observed Kisha closely, he couldn't shake the feeling that she bore a striking resemblance to Duke, particularly in their approaches to handling traitors or adversaries. A pang of sympathy struck him for anyone foolish enough to cross the Winters.

He realized that their enemies weren't just up against Duke anymore; they now had another powerful opponent in Kisha, someone who might be even more skilled at leveraging the chaos of the apocalypse to their advantage, mastering strategy and manipulation to the utmost degree.

'They've definitely stirred up a hornet's nest this time.' Those who dared to provoke them would undoubtedly face dire consequences. Sparrow couldn't resist the anticipation of becoming the instrument of Duke and Kisha's will, eager to witness the unfolding events from the front row.

"Master, how may I assist you?" Sparrow inquired as he approached Duke and Kisha, a mere arm's length away.

Instead of Duke, it was Kisha who responded. "Sparrow, I need you to conduct reconnaissance in the southeast part. See if you can locate the enemy's hideout, assess their numbers, and gauge their current status. But be cautious; we don't want to tip them off. Can you handle it?"

Sparrow bowed his head briefly, contemplating his course of action and strategizing how to approach his mission. He understood that Kisha and Duke had likely devised a comprehensive plan extending beyond simple reconnaissance, though its details remained unknown to him.

As he considered the mission ahead, he meticulously evaluated potential obstacles, such as the presence of lookouts in strategic positions and lurking snipers concealed in the shadows.

After assessing his role, Sparrow lifted his gaze to meet Kisha's eyes, nodding with confidence. This was his moment to showcase his scouting prowess and leverage his gift, known as 'Hawk Eyesight.' He welcomed the opportunity to operate independently, free from the reliance on Kisha's drones that had previously surveyed the area.

With Sparrow's confirmation, Kisha and Duke swiftly dispatched him on his mission while they led the remaining group to a nearby building with strategic vantage points and multiple exits for rest. Before departing, they left subtle markings for Sparrow to follow upon his return, ensuring he could easily locate them.

"Master, why aren't we continuing our journey? And where's Sparrow off to?" one of the newcomers queried, brimming with curiosity. He couldn't help but marvel at Kisha's leadership, noting how she had navigated them through streets and alleys nearly devoid of zombies.

If he had not known better or experienced it himself he would easily believe that traversing this zombie-infested city might be as simple as strolling through a park.

Speculations buzzed among them, suggesting that Kisha might possess a radar-like device or some extraordinary awakened ability. If it were an ability, they eagerly entertained the notion that Kisha was a truly formidable awakened individual, evidenced by Duke's deference to her leadership, akin to a husband attentively heeding his wife's guidance.

Unbeknownst to them, their speculations were remarkably close to the truth, particularly in Duke's case, who would have been amused to hear their conclusion about him being Kisha's husband.

They couldn't help but notice Duke's attentiveness towards Kisha, particularly when it came to her input on important matters. He seemed to carefully consider her advice and often chose to follow it. This side of Duke was entirely novel to them; they were accustomed to him being the authoritative figure who issued commands and made the final decisions without entertaining input from others.

Especially when something grated on his nerves, Duke rarely accepted advice or direction from anyone.

It made sense given Duke's exceptional leadership qualities and sharp intellect. His position at the apex of their pyramid was a testament to his capabilities; he wouldn't have risen to the top of the hierarchy at such a young age or formed his own formidable force outside of the Winters' influence if he lacked these qualities.

Despite his impatience concerning his family's well-being, Duke chose to heed Kisha's directions, finding solace in the knowledge that his family was alive, albeit in a dire situation. In the past, he might have impulsively charged into danger, even through a horde of zombies, to rescue them.

However, now, while still strategic and cautious, he recognized the importance of patience and prioritizing the safety of both himself and his loved ones.

They didn't resent the changes in their master; in fact, they welcomed them, understanding that it meant Duke would be around for much longer. While Duke wasn't typically confrontational, his occasional impatience was evident. Having someone like Kisha to offer an additional perspective not only eased his burden but also prevented him from becoming a solitary ruler atop his throne.

Unbeknownst to them, they were gradually adopting roles akin to Vulture and Sparrow, silently recognizing Kisha as their future young madam.

After a long day of travel, particularly for Duke's group, and with darkness descending, Kisha reached into her inventory and retrieved something to cook. They were all in need of a well-deserved rest and nourishment.

Despite sending Sparrow on a mission, Kisha made sure to equip him with a pouch containing easy-to-eat food and a pair of night vision goggles sourced from Duke's secret stash at the farm.

Choosing to prepare a hearty meal, Kisha decided to whip up braised pork with boiled eggs served on a bed of rice, accompanied by steamed buns. As the group watched her seemingly conjure a fresh, sizable slice of pork belly out of nowhere, they couldn't help but gulp in anticipation. It had been a week since they'd enjoyed a proper meal, particularly one with meat and rice.

Their eyes practically gleamed with anticipation as Kisha began to work with the ingredients. Despite Duke's enjoyment of Kisha's cooking, akin to that of a pampered husband, he still assisted her with the preparation. Gradually, he took over some of the tasks, following her lead and allowing her to focus on the cooking process.

Duke's unexpected obedience around Kisha caught the newcomers off guard; they weren't accustomed to seeing their master so compliant with anyone. It was as if he transformed into a loyal, tail-wagging big dog in her presence.

However, when Kisha was out of sight, Duke reverted to his usual demeanor, resembling a rabid dog ready to snap at any moment, especially if his metaphorical tail was inadvertently stepped on.

Their reactions would surely intensify once they discovered that Duke had not only learned to cook but also prepared a substantial meal solely to comfort Kisha after she had cried her eyes out. Vulture observed their responses, reminiscing about his and Sparrow's own astonishment upon witnessing the unexpected scene.

Unable to contain himself, he quietly chuckled at the prospect of their eventually knowing this in the future.

Even Duke's own mother, whom he respected and loved deeply, had never received such treatment from him. Neither had his father, whom he respected and followed dutifully. Therefore, those who had spent the past few days with Duke and Kisha, witnessing their interactions up close, grasped the significance.

It became evident to them that Duke was resolute on making Kisha his future wife, despite not vocalizing it yet—or perhaps, he hadn't even realized it himself.