

## Apocalypse 698

Chapter 698 Hugo Benjamin

While she maintained her composed demeanor, she was already analyzing the group. Many of them stood in neutral side, meaning their allegiance could shift depending on circumstances. She needed to observe them carefully, ensuring they weren't easily swayed or prone to betrayal. For now, close monitoring was necessary.

"T-Thank you!" they all responded in unison, quickly lining up as they awaited Kisha's words. Their leader stood at the front, ready to negotiate on their behalf.

"I heard from Sparrow that you plan to return to your village and start farming," Kisha stated directly, her gaze sharp. "Do you have experience with farming or raising livestock?"

The leader hesitated for a moment, unsure why Kisha was asking, but he quickly stepped forward with a respectful nod, prepared to answer on behalf of the group.

"Yes, ma'am," the leader replied with unwavering honesty. "We plan to head to my village to start farming since we're not combatants. Trying to scavenge for supplies in the cities would only put us at risk, and if something happened to us, there'd be no one left to protect the children."

He spoke candidly, unafraid to admit their weaknesses. Lying about their capabilities would only lead to disaster later, and he knew that false promises could put lives at stake.

"Not everyone here knows how to farm or raise livestock," he continued, "but we're all willing to learn from each other to improve. Most of us come from labor-intensive backgrounds—many worked as porters at the docks, while others have experience in different trades. Hard work is what we can offer,

and while we may need to change our line of work, our willingness to put in the effort remains the same. I don't think anyone here would have trouble adapting to this way of life."

Kisha raised an eyebrow. Without her even asking, the man leading the newcomers had already laid out everything she wanted to know. It was as if he feared she might mistake them for freeloaders, so he openly admitted their weaknesses and emphasized their willingness to work hard to fit in. His honesty made things much easier for her.

'It really is easy to deal with smart people,' Kisha mused to herself.

As Kisha observed the man in front of her, she could see the nervousness in his stance, but he held his ground for the sake of the people behind him.

Though he appeared intimidated and lacked formal education—his past as a dock laborer limiting him to menial work—it was clear that he was quick-witted. His ability to survive this long and earn the trust of those following him spoke volumes.

After all, a blind man couldn't lead others without leading them to ruin. His leadership qualities and sound judgment only reinforced what Kisha had already seen in his status window.

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[Hugo Benjamin]

Level 0 (Exp: 0/100 X 0.0)

Strength: 12

Stamina: 12

Defense: 5

Agility: 8

Mental Capacity: 14

Charm: 13

Leadership: 19

Luck: 6

Mana: 0

Spiritual Energy: 0

Title: None

Skills: None

Passive None

Talent: Late Bloomer

Gift: Crisis Leader

Ability: None

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As Kisha studied the status window floating in front of her, she began to understand the meaning behind Hugo Benjamin's 'Talent: Late Bloomer' and 'Gift: Crisis Leader' without even needing to analyze them further.

From what Sparrow had mentioned earlier, Hugo and the others from Port City were once people who only knew how to rely on the strong, paralyzed by their fear of death.

They had been left behind after their combatants perished in battle against Sparrow's forces—following the conflict with Victor, Rakan's traitorous subordinate who sought to seize power.

Considering all of this, Kisha was certain that Hugo's 'Late Bloomer' talent signified his slow but inevitable emergence as a capable leader. Though uneducated and powerless before the apocalypse, his 'Gift: Crisis Leader', combined with the wisdom he had accumulated over the years, set him apart.

Having lived at the bottom of society, working among laborers from various ethnicities at the port, Hugo had long since grown his wings.

However, the rigid hierarchies of the past had shackled him. He had always held back, fearing that he wasn't enough—that he could never measure up to the educated men who held authority.

In short, he had been consciously insecure, choosing to toil away in the shadows rather than stepping forward. Now, however, circumstances had forced him to rise.

It wasn't until he faced the imminent threat of death during the tsunami that something within him truly awakened. Surrounded by helpless children and elderly who depended on the slowly disappearing hope at that time, he could no longer afford to hesitate.

Unlike before, when he was constantly overshadowed by the educated and powerful, this time, he was among people just like him—uneducated, struggling, and living at the bottom of society. There was no room for self-doubt or second-guessing.

And so, without resistance coming from within him, his 'Gift: Crisis Leader' took effect naturally, as if it had been waiting for this very moment to surface.

In situations like these, he was more than qualified to lead. He wasn't just a figurehead—he was someone capable of guiding his people out of their struggles and toward a safer future.

During a crisis, his mind worked sharper than most; he remained calm, collected, and always searching for a way to survive.

Just like now—choosing to return to his village and start farming instead of risking their lives scavenging in the city.

He understood their limitations, and after witnessing firsthand the horrors of the zombies, he knew their chances of surviving a direct confrontation were slim.

Rather than foolishly fighting a losing battle, he opted for a path where they could build something sustainable, something that gave them a real chance at life.

He successfully led his people to the forest, but their journey took a dangerous turn when they encountered the mutated tiger. Instead of panicking or running for their lives, Hugo made a decisive choice—he led them up into the trees.

Normally, a cat of that size would have no trouble climbing after them, so why did he make such a risky call instead of trying to outrun it or sacrificing a few to save the majority?

It was because of the combination of his 'Talent: Late Bloomer' and 'Gift: Crisis Leader', Hugo was able to assess the situation with a level of insight that others lacked.

He realized that the mutated tiger wasn't hunting them for food—it was toying with them for sport. The beast wasn't in a hurry to kill; it wanted to break their spirits first, to revel in their fear and desperation before delivering the final blow.

Hugo understood that if they panicked and scattered, they would only make themselves easy prey. Instead, he kept them together, making sure they remained as still and silent as possible while waiting for an opportunity.

And luck was on their side—the Winters' men arrived just in time, followed by Sparrow. With that, a new path opened for Hugo and his people. He seized the chance without hesitation, just as a true leader should.

Although Hugo appeared simple, he was far from foolish. In fact, he was just as quick-witted as Sparrow. This became evident when he willingly opened up to Kisha without her even needing to ask.