

Apocalypse 736

Chapter 736 - Appreciating What Was Lost

Sure enough, the moment Kisha felt his warmth wrapped around her hand, something inside her eased. Her chest loosened, and the weight pressing down on her heart lightened, even if just a little.

And so, just like that, Duke drove them toward their next destination—just outside City A. The goal was simple: to observe how Dracon and his people would handle a zombie horde and assess their coordination and combat effectiveness.

Sure, Dracon's group might be at a disadvantage when it came to facing mutated creatures, especially since none of them hadn't awakened any abilities yet. But what about regular zombies?

Although the events in City B had caused a surge in zombie evolution, pushing many to level 1, there were still plenty of level 0 zombies roaming around. Only a small percentage had reached level 1, which served to maintain a fragile balance between the steadily evolving humans and the undead.

This way, the zombies wouldn't be too weak compared to humans, and humans wouldn't have an easy time fighting them either. If Kisha were to estimate, perhaps around 58% to 65% of the zombie population had already evolved to level 1.

While most of these level 1 zombies hadn't awakened any special abilities like the higher-tier mutants, they had still become significantly faster and stronger than before.

That alone made them a terrifying threat—just imagine a zombie sprinting at you like it's competing in a track race, possibly even faster than you. Most ordinary humans wouldn't stand a chance. They'd trip, fall, and be caught in an instant. It had definitely become much scarier to face them now.

The Winters men from HOPE Base had already adapted to these faster, stronger zombies after enduring countless battles, so level 1 zombies were still manageable for them. After all, the HOPE Base members had also reached level 1 themselves, giving them a slight edge in terms of stats. Besides, these level 1 zombies were still considered "normal" and hadn't awakened any abilities.

However, the ones who would struggle the most to adjust were the Winters from the hidden base and Dracon's team, who had less experience and weaker awakened ability users under their belts.

Just like before, once they entered the highway, Duke gave way to Sparrow's truck, allowing it to take the lead and clear a path for the rest of the convoy. Duke's truck, along with the others, then began pushing Sparrow's truck from behind to give it enough force to shove aside the tightly packed, abandoned vehicles blocking the road.

The trucks pulling Dracon's humvees remained at the back of the convoy, as only one of them had enough power to push forward. The humvees themselves were too bulky and a hindrance while tied behind their trucks, making it difficult for the others to push and advance.

The resulting jolts made the truck shake slightly, causing Abby to panic. She hurried back to Dracon and clung to his arm in fear—until Keith calmly explained the situation.

"Don't worry," Keith said with a shrug. "Our trucks are just giving Truck 2 a push so it has enough momentum to move those abandoned cars out of the way. It's better than having to reroute and waste time driving the long way around."

With that, he casually tucked away the rag he'd been using to wipe down his beloved longbow.

"W-Where are we going? Are we heading back to your shelter?" Abby asked, her voice trembling, her eyes brimming with unshed tears as she looked at Keith, like a frightened rabbit.

Keith furrowed his brow, taken aback by the sight. For some reason, it reminded him of his sister when she was young—terrified of nearly everything, yet always putting his safety before her own fears.

He couldn't help but let out a soft smile at the memory, though his heart ached with sadness. He nodded, then quickly shook his head.

"No," he said, his voice quiet but steady. "We need to gather some metal drums first before heading back."

As he spoke, his mood shifted. A twinge of sadness lingered in his chest as he thought of Kisha. She used to be kind, gentle, and naive—easily frightened, but always protective, smart, and determined.

But now, she had become so indifferent, so cold. She was paranoid, constantly overthinking, always calculating the consequences of every action.

She had become distrustful of others, a far cry from the woman who once trusted people easily, sometimes too quickly.

Keith felt the weight of it all. Kisha had been pulled into a never-ending cycle of death and survival, and it had changed her in ways he couldn't fix.

Before, Keith had worried that Kisha would be easily deceived by people from the outside world. But now, his fears had shifted. He was no longer concerned about her vulnerability to others; instead, he feared that Kisha had become too independent, like a leader standing alone at the pinnacle, isolated by her strength.

It was that very strength that made him want to grow stronger, too—to give her a sense of security, to offer her all the support he could, so that she could finally relax. Maybe, just for a moment, she could focus on something beautiful, something other than survival.

He didn't dislike the woman Kisha had become—he admired her resilience. But it saddened him to think about how exhausting it must be for her to always be on guard, to constantly carry the weight of others' expectations.

It was too much for one person to bear, to always be strong for everyone else and to have others rely on her.

"What are those metal drums for? Aren't we gathering supplies instead?" Abby asked, her curiosity piqued. For some reason, the rattling of the truck didn't bother her as much anymore.

Her natural gossipy side kicked in, distracted by Keith's answer. At her age, it didn't take much to shift her focus—her fears quickly transformed into curiosity.

Keith wasn't tired of explaining. In fact, he felt a special connection to Abby. She was the only one his age in the entire group, and her presence brought a sense of comfort. Around her, he could be the big brother, protective and steady.

It gave him a sense of fulfillment, a feeling of strength he couldn't help but appreciate, especially surrounded by the stronger, older men who made up their group. So, he was more than happy to indulge her questions.

"Those drums? My sister said she needs them to make natural fertilizers for the crops," Keith explained simply, his tone matter-of-fact.

"Crops? Your shelter has a farm that grows fresh vegetables?" Abby exclaimed, clamping her hands over her mouth in surprise. Her wide eyes sparkled with genuine excitement, even though she tried to hide it.

She couldn't contain her enthusiasm. After all, in their shelter, they ate nothing but canned goods—different varieties of canned food and pickled items. That was all. There was no variety, no fresh food to break up the monotony.

Before the apocalypse, Abby had never liked vegetables. She'd been picky, always choosing sweets and avoiding anything green. But now, after everything that had happened, the thought of eating vegetables felt like a distant dream.

She missed them. Her body craved the nutrients they provided, and she realized only now how good her life had been before, when fresh food was abundant. Sometimes, at night, she cried herself to sleep, mourning the past and the simple things she had taken for granted.