

Apocalypse 741

Chapter 741 - Duke's Change

It just so happened that right after the final explanation and some additional instructions about their route and how they'd operate as a team, Eliot finished cooking the feast. The delicious aroma instantly stole everyone's attention, drawing eyes toward the food like moths to a flame.

Soon, Eliot and the others who had been assigned to help with the meal began setting up the table, arranging steaming pots and trays. If anyone wanted a dish, they simply had to ask, and someone behind the table would serve it up hot.

There was creamy corn soup, stir-fried beef with broccoli, sweet and sour pork, fluffy white rice, and a generous helping of stir-fried vegetables with pork.

Just the sight of it all had Dracon, Abby, and their team practically drooling where they stood. Seeing this, the Winters kindly let them go first in line.

It was hard to tell whether to laugh or feel sorry for them, especially as Dracon's group began jokingly competing to see whose stomach could growl the loudest. From the way they acted—and looked—it was clear they hadn't had a decent meal in quite some time.

And so, Dracon and his crew were ushered to the very front of the line. The steam rising from the food clouded their vision, and they swallowed hard in anticipation. Without even thinking, they handed over their sectioned plates to the servers.

Moments later, those plates were piled high with every available dish, and their bowls of rice looked like tiny mountains.

Just before they turned to find a place to sit, someone on the side handed them cold bottled water. One by one, they absentmindedly accepted everything being given to them, their hands gradually filling with food and drink.

By the time they found a spot on the ground to sit, they were fully loaded—plates brimming, water in hand. When they finally snapped out of their daze and took their first bite, most of them couldn't help but tear up.

The warmth of the food, the flavor, the comfort—it all hit them at once. It had been so long since they'd had a proper, hot meal. At that moment, it felt like the greatest luxury in the world.

And after everything they'd been through—after crawling through hardship and pushing themselves to the brink—this meal felt like a well-earned reward, filling not just their stomachs but their hearts.

As they ate, Dracon and his team couldn't hold back their emotions—tears and snot ran freely as they devoured the warm meal. The Winters watched in silence, their hearts heavy with sympathy.

They couldn't do much except offer second servings and kind smiles, quietly ensuring these survivors had as much food as they wanted.

On Kisha's side, Eliot initially tried to help serve her food, but Duke wouldn't allow it. Determined, Duke personally took it upon himself to get food not only for Kisha, but for his entire family and in-laws.

He made several trips back and forth, firmly refusing help from the Evans. To him, this wasn't just about food—it was a way to express his love and devotion as a husband, son, and grandson.

The elders watched with pride, especially the Patriarch, who was moved to see Duke taking on such a thoughtful and responsible role. Eventually, Keith stepped in to lend a hand, and Duke finally relented, letting his brother-in-law help carry the trays.

Together, the two of them served their whole family, carefully portioning out each dish. Afterward, Duke even used his ice-type awakened ability to chill their drinks, making sure everyone was comfortable and well cared for.

Only after Duke made sure that everyone had food on their plates and drinks in their hands did he finally sit beside Kisha to eat. Even then, he didn't forget to pass her extra portions of the dishes she liked most—straight from his own plate.

Kisha raised an eyebrow as she watched him. She hadn't even realized when Duke had started to change like this. In her previous life, he had been cold and distant—practical to a fault.

Back then, it took real effort just to convince him to cook for her, and even when he did, he'd simply sit and watch while she served herself.

But now... now it felt like Duke's love language had shifted to acts of service. He was constantly moving, always looking out for the people he cared about, especially her. And the way he did it—quiet, steady, without asking for recognition—made everyone gradually get used to his quiet acts of affection.

Maybe it was because Duke didn't want to carry regrets anymore. Maybe it was Kisha's presence that slowly softened his edges, allowing him to change in small but meaningful ways. He was learning to show his emotions, to care outwardly—not just wear that cold mask year-round. And to Kisha, that change was more than enough.

While everyone else enjoyed their meal with lively chatter and warm laughter, the Evans sat together in silence, gloomily picking at their food. It was painfully obvious that Kisha was deliberately ignoring them.

They felt the sting of it, but there was nothing they could do—not with Duke and Keith constantly stepping in, making sure Kisha never needed help from anyone outside the family. With no chance to get close to her, how could they possibly nurture any connection or foster their feelings?

All they could do was watch from a distance as Kisha smiled and laughed with her grandparents and in-laws, clearly at ease and happy. That sight alone stirred a mix of jealousy and regret in the hearts of the Evans.

Among them, Melody was the most affected. She sat silently, her expression dark, biting her nail in frustration. Her eyes gleamed with envy and brewing resentment, swirling with thoughts she dared not act on—at least, not yet.

Some of the Winters' men ate quickly, and once they were finished, they swapped places with those guarding the perimeter. As the shift changed, the earlier guards finally had their turn to eat, taking a much-needed break.

Without much fanfare, Kisha also released her Scarlet Bees, allowing them to assist with patrols. They buzzed through the area, discreetly scanning for hidden threats—like evolved zombies lurking in the shadows or any other unseen dangers that might have slipped past human eyes.

Once everyone had finished eating, they lingered for a while to make sure no one experienced any stomach discomfort. Meanwhile, Eliot and the rest of the team responsible for the food began cleaning up and packing away the supplies.

Fortunately, all the food had been eaten, so there was no need to store leftovers in the trucks—just the task of washing pots, plates, and utensils.

Some of the cleanup duties fell to members of the Evans family, while the survivors from Dracon's team, feeling a bit guilty for eating without contributing, eagerly stepped in to help.

Initially, they were concerned about where and how to wash the dishes, especially with no visible water source nearby. But then, one of the Winters' men—an awakened ability user with water-type powers—stepped forward and effortlessly conjured clean water, filling a large drum.

There were at least three water-type ability users in the group, and the water they produced was as clear and fresh as natural spring water—safe enough for drinking, let alone cleaning.