

Apocalypse 812

Chapter 812 Adam And Jason

Since this was everyone's first time doing it, they were still visibly disgusted—gagging occasionally as they worked. It took them a full hour to extract hundreds of crystal cores. When they finally finished, they wrapped the cores in a piece of cloth and brought them to Kisha.

The two group leaders stepped forward together to personally hand over the bundle and formally introduce themselves.

“Savior, thank you for saving us, for sharing such valuable information, and for extending an olive branch,” said the leader of the first group Kisha had met. He bowed deeply as he presented the cloth full of cores. “We won't forget this favor. If you ever need our help, please call on us—we'll do everything we can to support you and your base.”

Kisha accepted the crystal cores without hesitation.

“My name is Adam Lewis, by the way,” he added, straightening up.

At that moment, the leader of the opposing group stepped forward as well. His posture was firm and disciplined, both hands clasped behind his back like a soldier standing at attention.

“Boss! Thank you for giving us a new path to walk,” the man said, his voice filled with gratitude. “We'll never forget this favor, and we won't take it for granted either. We'll make the most of this opportunity.”

And if you ever need our help in the future, my brothers and I will come running—we'll support you however we can."

He gave a sheepish grin before adding, "Name's Jason Black. I'm from Gale City—though calling it a city's a stretch. It's more like a small, backward town."

He gave a shrug, clearly unbothered by the truth.

Adam also added, "I'm from Maple Leaf Town. It was just recently upgraded to a city after some major developments."

Their willingness to explain and openly reveal the locations of their settlements showed a level of sincerity and a clear effort to gain Kisha's trust. After all, Kisha had already told them she belonged to the HOPE Base—the only large base in City B.

Even if she turned out to be untrustworthy or had ulterior motives, like extracting information to lead a raid on their settlements, they had decided to take that risk. If that day ever came, they'd just have to fight back with everything they had.

But in truth, the reason these men so easily trusted Kisha wasn't just because she shared information about herself or the crystal cores. It wasn't even the promise of trade and cooperation. The real reason lay in her passive skill—"Likeability Boost."

Unbeknownst to them, this skill subtly influenced their first impression of her. Upon meeting her, they already had a default +5 likeability towards her. That may have only been 5 out of 100, but in a world

where first impressions could mean life or death, it was enough to tip the scales in her favor and earn their cautious trust.

Those 5 likeability points made a real difference compared to starting from zero. Now that Kisha had shared valuable information with them—and even made them extract the crystal cores themselves as proof that they truly came from zombie heads—it only increased their trust and favor towards her. On top of that, she offered a trade deal: all they had to do was put in the effort to kill zombies and harvest the cores, which they could then exchange for much-needed resources.

No matter how unbelievable it sounded, this opportunity was a huge help. Usually, when something seems too good to be true, it's often a scam—but they had to see it with their own eyes. If it turned out they'd walked straight into a den of thieves, well, that would just be their bad luck.

But because they had spent too much time harvesting the crystal cores, more zombies began to appear and close in on them. With no other option, they had to flee and follow Kisha.

"We can't stay here any longer. Just stick with me—our base is deeper into the city. We'll need to go at least 16 to 20 kilometers in before we reach the cleanup teams. They'll be able to provide cover for you," Kisha said between panting breaths. Her voice was slightly muffled, strained.

Without wasting another second, she turned and started running.

'Damn it!' Kisha cursed internally. 'No one ever told me that getting my awakened ability locked would make me feel this feverish and sluggish—like I'm going through my awakening in reverse. This is torture!'

Each step felt like a battle. Her blood pounded against her skull, her muscles sluggish and unresponsive. But unlike the burning heat she felt during her first awakening, this time her body was freezing. Her teeth chattered uncontrollably, and a bone-deep chill seeped into her core. Still, she forced herself to run. She had no choice.

And when had this all started?

Right when the two leaders came forward to introduce themselves—right when her mission had effectively failed.

Ding!

[Mission Class B: “Save the Damsel or Be the Villain” — Failed]

[Mission Objective: Not Met]

[Mission Failure Penalty Countdown: 10][9...][8...][3...][2...][1...]

[0...]

The moment the countdown hit zero, a jolt of strong electricity surged through Kisha’s brain. Her body seized for a split second, and then everything went numb—as if someone had yanked the plug on her consciousness. She nearly collapsed mid-stride, her vision blurring, the world tilting violently around her.

She had thought that having her awakened ability locked simply meant she wouldn't be able to use her powers for three days. No one told her it would feel like her entire self was being forcibly shut down for that duration.

Her limbs felt like lead, her senses dulled. It was like drowning in ice-cold molasses—slow, suffocating, and disorienting. As she ran, barely clinging to awareness, the edges of her vision darkened.

Cough!

Blood splattered from her lips as her lungs protested the effort. But she gritted her teeth and pushed forward. Failing the mission was one thing—but collapsing here would put everyone at risk.

Kisha coughed up blood, her chest tightening with pain as her heart pounded erratically. Her stomach churned violently, and it felt like an invisible fist was clenching her heart. Even the flow of her two core energies—spiritual energy and mana—was spiraling out of control.

'Damn it! So the system's punishment isn't as light as it sounds, huh?' she thought bitterly. The description made it seem manageable, but the reality was brutal. Her body felt as if it were being torn apart from the inside, her energies rampaging and colliding like wild beasts.

She had felt this sensation before—back when her energies first went berserk. But this time, she had one major advantage: Aura. Ever since she awakened and trained in aura, her body had undergone significant changes. Her bones were denser, her muscles stronger, her veins tougher—her entire vessel had been reinforced.

It was that strength which saved her now.

Her aura moved instinctively, acting like a buffer and barrier. It wrapped around her chaotic energies, slowing their clash, tempering the storm inside her. While she still felt like she was being gutted from within, it was no longer fatal—just agonizing.

Adam and Jason quickly noticed something was off. Kisha's movements had become stiff and unsteady, as if she were running on sheer willpower alone. They knew she hadn't been injured—just moments ago, she had emerged from battle unscathed, roaring with confidence like a charging bull. But now... she looked fragile. Almost pitiful.

They couldn't make sense of it, but when they saw her suddenly cough up blood, a wave of alarm swept over them. Without needing to speak, they instinctively tightened their formation around her, forming a protective barrier as they moved. Every one of them became alert, eyes scanning for danger, ready to fend off any zombie that came near.

Kisha glanced up and saw them circling her protectively. Despite the pain gripping her body, a faint smile tugged at the corner of her lips. At least her gamble hadn't failed—these people weren't just after personal gain. Even in her weakened state, when they could've easily taken advantage of her vulnerability, they chose to shield her instead.

So, Kisha stopped a few meters from where they had originally been, gasping for breath as her chest heaved. She fought to stay conscious, refusing to let herself collapse—not here, not now. But her vision was starting to fade, the world around her blurring like it was hidden behind a dusty, tinted glass.

She sank down into a cross-legged position, grounding herself. The others didn't understand what she was doing—they were in the middle of the street, completely exposed, like sitting ducks. But still, they stood around her protectively, without question.

When a zombie approached, two of them immediately sprang into action. One raised his rifle to keep the creature at bay, while the other flanked it, plunging a blade into its skull with practiced precision.

Meanwhile, Kisha began to meditate. She needed to stabilize herself—to calm the chaos of her conflicting energies and assess the damage inside her body. If she kept going like this, pushing forward without knowing her own state, she would only endanger everyone. They were far from her base, and these people were just regular humans with no special abilities.

Vulnerable.

Exposed.

And her own team was still dozens of kilometers away—no reinforcements, no support.

Out here, she had no one to rely on but herself.

“Hooo...” Kisha let out a long, dragging exhale, releasing a thin stream of spiritual energy from her mouth, as though she were purging impurities from within. Dark smoke curled at the corners of her lips, flickering like something inside her was burning.

But what exactly was she doing?