

Apocalypse 822

Chapter 822 Kickstarting The Trade 9

“Understood, Young Madam,” Tristan replied as he pulled out a small notepad and quickly jotted down the order. His gaze then shifted to the cured meat.

Upon hearing Kisha’s words, the stall owner’s eyes lit up, and he puffed out his chest with pride. Kisha had just complimented his product—and the recognition moved him so much that he nearly teared up. He had poured his heart into perfecting that cured meat, hoping it would become the highlight of his stall.

He never expected it to have such a remarkable effect, let alone be considered a special item. Those were usually high-value goods, and the fact that his was being treated as one made him feel like he’d just hit the jackpot. He could barely contain his joy.

Then, the ever-curious Jason stepped forward and examined the hanging cured meat. At first glance, he didn’t see anything unusual about it. Sure, it looked delicious and had an amazing aroma, but he couldn’t quite grasp what made it so special.

“Boss, what’s so special about this cured meat that it has to be categorized as a ‘special item’? And what exactly are support items?” he asked, scratching his head in confusion.

The others gathered around as well, their curiosity piqued. Most of them still weren’t familiar with many of the things they were seeing here at the HOPE Base. Almost everything felt new and unfamiliar, so they naturally turned to Kisha for an explanation.

“Well, as you saw earlier, some of my people possess superpowers. They’re known as superhumans—individuals who have awakened abilities due to the crystallization of the virus in their brains, which forms what we call an energy core. This is similar to a zombie’s crystal core, except there’s a major difference.”

“Zombie crystal cores are impure. They contain a high concentration of the virus, along with spiritual energy. In contrast, a superhuman’s energy core has been processed and purified during the awakening process, turning it into a clean, stable power source. That’s why crystal cores are considered valuable—superhumans can absorb them to grow stronger.”

“But for regular humans who haven’t awakened, taking in a crystal core would be fatal. The virus in the core would overwhelm their immune system, and they’d quickly turn into zombies.

“Once someone successfully awakens, they develop different types of abilities. What you’ve seen earlier were combat types, but there are also defensive, support, and even artisan-type superhumans.”

Kisha explained calmly, knowing that transparency would help establish trust. Since she was planning to open a trade route with them, it was better to share this essential knowledge now—especially after they witnessed awakened abilities firsthand. The more they understood, the more they would respect HOPE Base, strengthening their future cooperation.

After all, the second wave of awakenings could happen at any time, and there might already be awakened superhumans from the first batch wandering around. She couldn’t keep this a secret for long. It was better to take the initiative and use the information to her advantage. By revealing it now, she could position them to benefit early—giving their allied forces the chance to grow stronger.

And once they became stronger with HOPE Base's help, they would naturally start to think more favorably of HOPE Base and Kisha. Over time, that gratitude would evolve into trust and dependency—and eventually, into loyalty, whether they realized it or not.

“And the people here in the Marketplace are Artisan-type awakened ability users,” Kisha patiently explained. “Their powers allow them to create and enhance items. Through constant practice, they can gradually imbue their creations with spiritual energy and traces of their abilities.”

“Take this cured meat, for example—it may look ordinary, but it actually has additional effects. When consumed, it boosts stamina regeneration for 30 minutes and increases a person's strength by 3 points for a full hour.”

“Now, you might wonder—how much difference does 3 points of strength make? Well, imagine you used to struggle lifting a 60-kilogram sack of grain. With the boost, that same weight would feel noticeably lighter. Your punches would carry more force, and your overall physical performance would improve. It's not just food anymore—it becomes a support item.”

“For awakened ability users, a boost like this might seem like a minor upgrade,” Kisha continued, “but for regular humans who haven't awakened their powers yet, it could make a huge difference during expeditions outside the base. And the best part? There are no harmful side effects. Once the effect wears off, you can simply eat another piece to renew it. It's safe and reusable.”

“However,” she added thoughtfully, rubbing her chin, “I'm not entirely sure if the +3 strength bonus can be stacked—like taking another piece to push it to +6. That still needs testing.”

Her explanation made everyone glance at one another in surprise, especially the stall owner. He had never imagined that something he created could be this valuable. To have the City Lord herself

recognize his work, recommend raising the price, and categorize it as a special item—it wasn't just a compliment, it was protection. She was making sure his efforts wouldn't be exploited.

Overwhelmed with gratitude and pride, the stall owner felt more motivated than ever. If he continued improving, he wouldn't just be supporting the base's combatants—he'd also be earning the recognition of their City Lord and contributing to something greater.

More than anything, the stall owner felt genuinely grateful to have a City Lord like Kisha. Instead of exploiting their creations for personal gain, she stood up for them—making sure their work was properly valued and protected. That sense of fairness moved him deeply.

With heartfelt sincerity, he stepped forward and bowed low. "City Lord, please accept this as my tribute to the base!"

Kisha blinked in surprise, momentarily caught off guard by the sudden gesture. She glanced at Tristan, who simply gave a shrug, just as surprised as she was.

Smiling warmly, Kisha stepped closer and gently patted the stall owner's shoulder. "Thank you. Your dedication means a lot—not just to me, but to the entire base."

"Comrade, there's no need to give this to me," Kisha said with a kind smile. "I have more than enough strength—this special item would be wasted on someone like me. Instead, use it to your advantage. Keep it in your stall and sell it. That way, we can build this Marketplace into something bigger—somewhere survivors from outside the base know they can find valuable goods. If others see how successful you are, they'll be encouraged to rent stalls and trade here too."

Of course, Kisha said all this deliberately, making sure Jason, Adam, and their people overheard her. After all, what use was a Marketplace if only their own residents sold goods? If that were the case, she might as well distribute everything through the Supply Center and cut out the hassle.

But the true purpose of this Marketplace was greater: to draw in outsiders, foster trade, and spark interaction. It would encourage the exchange of information and normalize the use of crystal cores as currency. And once that system took root, Kisha wouldn't need to send her people out to scavenge supplies or gather intel—they could let the flow of people do that for them. That way, she and her team could focus entirely on training, growing stronger, and securing the base's future.