

Apocalypse 825

Chapter 825 Kickstarting The Trade 12

As he spoke, he crouched beneath his stall and pulled out a small box. With quick hands, he added a few extra items: three cured sausages, each at least seven inches long and two inches thick, a handful of bacon slices, and some strips of beef jerky.

Jason watched in amazement as the stall owner continued to stuff more into the box. He couldn't hide his joy—he felt like he had truly gotten his money's worth. The freebies made the hefty purchase feel even more rewarding, easing any lingering hesitation about spending so many crystal cores.

What Jason didn't know, however, was that the total value of those freebies was only around four to five crystal cores at most.

Stall owners like this one had small-scale cooperation agreements with the Supply Center, which provided them with discounted pricing on raw ingredients. In exchange, they were required to order no less than 50 kilograms of materials per batch. This arrangement ensured that ingredients sourced from the Territory Space didn't pile up in the warehouses, kept the inventory fresh, and allowed the Supply Center to rotate stock efficiently.

Since many of these stall owners specialized in preserved foods, the system worked perfectly for them—it was a win-win deal that kept their businesses thriving while also supporting the supply chain.

Seeing Jason haul away so many goods while the stall owner continued piling more into the box, Adam couldn't help but feel tempted himself. Though there was only one special item available earlier, he still decided to ask, "Sir, do you have any more of this kind of special item?"

The stall owner paused as he finished filling the box, gave it a satisfied tap, and handed it over to Jason and his companion.

“Hmm...” he muttered thoughtfully. “I’m not sure. There’s a chance, but I can’t promise anything. Getting a special item like this one is pretty much like hitting the jackpot. I have to be extremely lucky to produce even one from all the barrels I’ve cured.”

Then he looked up and noticed someone approaching. “But let me check for you. We’ll see if we get lucky today.”

At that moment, his son happened to arrive, pushing a cart loaded with more supplies. The stall owner gave him a quick signal to come over, already planning to search through the barrels for another potential gem.

“Dad, Mom said you might need more supplies since it’s opening day. She figured a lot of people would come to buy,” his son said, wiping the sweat from his forehead.

And she wasn’t wrong.

The marketplace wasn’t just open to outsiders—it welcomed anyone with crystal cores or items to trade. As the day wore on, even off-duty warriors, drawn by the growing buzz and activity, began to wander in. The sound of vendors calling out to showcase their goods filled the air, making the place feel like a bustling town fair.

Unlike the Supply Center, which mainly sold fresh produce, canned goods, and manufactured items, the marketplace was filled with rare finds—homemade cured meats, pickled vegetables, handcrafted tableware, and other practical tools. These were things rarely seen elsewhere.

For many of the warriors who had earned a few crystal cores from killing zombies, the allure was undeniable. Although most of them used their crystal cores to train, the thought of bringing home something useful or indulgent made it worth spending a few. It wasn't long before more and more people started trickling in, and the energy of the marketplace grew even more vibrant as the stall owners became increasingly enthusiastic.

Hearing what his son said, the stall owner beamed with pride and turned to Kisha again, silently asking for her help with a hopeful glance. Kisha let out a helpless chuckle and walked over to the cart. Inside were numerous crates, each neatly covered with clean cloth — a clear sign of how hygienic the cured meat producers were. That alone earned her approval.

Activating her 'Eye of Truth', Kisha carefully examined each item. One by one, she scanned the contents, but ultimately shook her head — nothing stood out as special among the batch on the main cart.

Just then, the stall owner's wife arrived, pushing a second cart that held only a few items. Curious, Kisha glanced over and immediately noticed another cured meat product — one that radiated the same faint special effect as the first one she'd seen earlier. She smiled and nodded in recognition, though this one was noticeably smaller.

"Honey, I brought the rejected ones," the woman said, brushing her hands off. "They're smaller, some a little deformed. I thought maybe we could give them away as freebies? We've got too much stock at home, and we can't possibly eat it all. Better to share it, don't you think?"

The stall owner stepped closer and peered into the cart. Inside was a cured pork hind leg — smaller than average and still wrapped in yellowing dried fat, but its scent was rich and its quality unmistakable.

Before the stall owner could respond, Kisha spoke first. “That cured meat is a special item — it’s the same as the one from earlier,” she said with a small smile, pointing directly at the piece in question.

The stall owner’s wife, still unaware of what was happening, quickly bowed out of respect upon realizing who Kisha was. She glanced at her husband, silently asking for an explanation, but all she saw was him hurrying to retrieve the cured meat from the cart.

“City Lord, do you mean this one?!” he asked eagerly, holding the cured meat up a little too close to her face.

Kisha instinctively leaned back slightly but gave a nod of confirmation. “Yes, among everything else, this is the only one that carries a buff effect,” she explained calmly. Its quality may only be rated B, but the enhancement is the same as the one she found earlier.

After Kisha confirmed it, the stall owner’s face paled slightly. They had nearly given away a special item — one worth dozens of crystal cores. He instinctively turned to look at his wife, unsure whether to thank her or be exasperated. She hadn’t done anything wrong, of course. Like him, she probably thought the rejected pieces with odd shapes or smaller sizes weren’t worth much. But this one? It could’ve cost them dearly.

His wife, noticing his look, scooted over and quietly asked what was going on. He kept his explanation short: “Special item. Worth dozens of crystal cores.”

His words hit her like a thunderclap. She froze on the spot, eyes wide as if her brain had just locked up trying to process it. Seeing her stunned expression, the stall owner couldn't help but smirk — glad he wasn't the only one who'd been flustered by the close call.

He placed the cured meat on the chopping board and carefully shaved off the yellowed dried fat until the reddish interior was exposed. Then, with practiced ease, he sliced off a thin piece and placed it on the same wooden plate, offering it to Adam. Once Adam gave an approving nod, the stall owner repeated what he had done earlier for Jason.

This time, since the cured meat was smaller, it yielded just over 7 kilograms — enough to provide Adam with 7 kg of stat-boosting meat.