

Apocalypse 856

Chapter 856 A Little Help

They both understood they couldn't rely on Clyde for everything. So when applications opened, she proudly stood in line, confident in her abilities. She explained her skills with enthusiasm, especially her talent for baking. To her, this job wasn't just a way to help her family; it was something she could truly enjoy and take pride in.

In fact, Aston had previously mentioned the idea of establishing a dedicated Military Cafeteria to Kisha, which was why he had one built outside. However, now that the Military Academy had its own internal cafeteria, the original one outside was starting to feel redundant. So, Aston decided to officially designate it as a communal cafeteria, a shift that made perfect sense, since it had already been serving that purpose informally for some time.

This way, warriors would have more dining options, while the communal cafeteria could better accommodate regular residents and, eventually, even outsiders. Previously, many civilians avoided the cafeteria, as it was often crowded with soldiers, and despite the good food, most residents chose to cook at home instead, something that took time and effort. Now, with this adjustment, the communal cafeteria could become more accessible and welcoming to the general public.

Aston also proposed treating the communal cafeteria as a base-run business. Its income, mostly in the form of work points, could be funneled back into the base's treasury. While work points weren't traditional currency, they still functioned as a reliable system of exchange.

These points could then be used to reward cafeteria staff and hire more workers as needed. After all, isn't that how economies worked? Resources circulate, and the system sustains itself. With this mindset, Aston began to implement the changes.

And with fewer warriors and soldiers expected to dine at the communal cafeteria, Aston realized that it could generate even more income by focusing on residents and outsiders.

Excited by the potential business, he discussed the idea with Tristan, who immediately saw the opportunity. Without hesitation, Tristan agreed and established a formal treasury system where the base's income, from businesses like the cafeteria, would be recorded and managed.

Although the majority of the supplies were actually coming through Kisha's Territory Space, no one outside of a select few knew about it. Everyone else believed their current abundance was the result of collective effort, good leadership, and the strategic organization of the base.

To keep it that way, and to give Kisha the freedom to continue providing under the guise of public funding, they needed a legitimate structure for financial flow, something that made it look like the crystal cores and other currency were being properly managed and earned.

After all, they had started as a survivor's shelter, but now they were transitioning into a functioning society with systems, order, and economy. With this shift came the responsibility of rebuilding governance, trade, and currency flow. That's why they established the marketplace: to stimulate individual businesses and generate movement in the local economy. And the treasury? It was just the beginning.

More importantly, this new system meant Tristan had significantly more responsibilities, but it was a necessary move. With a proper financial structure in place, the base could function more smoothly, especially in managing resources. It also gave Kisha the freedom to use crystal cores as needed without drawing suspicion or being questioned about hoarding them for herself.

Once Tristan completed the initial framework for the treasury, he and Aston presented the idea to Kisha. Since Aston didn't have much experience with business or economics, he had only contributed the core

idea, Tristan sought help from the Patriarch and Mr. Winters, both of whom had deeper expertise in finance and governance. Together, the three of them refined the structure, making sure it could realistically support their growing society.

When Kisha approved the plan, the finalized framework was handed over to Mr. Winters' department. As the Minister of Revenue, it was his responsibility to oversee the financial and business aspects of the base. While the treasury itself would be located within the City Lord's office, it was Mr. Winters who would be in charge of ensuring a steady flow of income to fill it.

The first source of income deposited into the treasury came from the Supply Center's operations. Fortunately, Fred and his team had brought in computers to streamline the workflow. Thanks to the structured financial framework, the staff simply needed to input data into the computerized ledger, making the process faster and more efficient.

In addition to the Supply Center's income, there was revenue from housing rent and marketplace stall rentals, both of which were now being taxed. With all these responsibilities piling up, Mr. Winters and his team found themselves overwhelmed.

To manage the growing workload, he issued a hiring notice on the mission board, opening new positions for clerical staff to handle paperwork and logistics roles requiring strong laborers to manage inventory and physical deliveries.

The base was now buzzing with activity as hiring notices kept popping up one after another. Almost everyone had found proper employment, and in fact, they were beginning to run short on manpower.

The only ones without formal work were the elders and children. But with growing demand, even Mrs. Winters, after learning about the establishment of the Military Academy and the treasury, began brainstorming ways to mobilize more people.

Currently, about 60% of the base's population is enlisted as warriors. The remaining 40% included around 2–3% children and roughly 5-8% elderly who had fled early enough to avoid the worst of the apocalypse.

Aside from the few idle residents gossiping or staying home, it was usually the elderly who took on babysitting duties. Since the welfare of children, the elderly, and non-combatant women fell under Mrs. Winters' jurisdiction, she decided to post a new hiring notice for them as well.

The notice opened up daily jobs for both elderly individuals and young children, where they would be paid based on the weight or quantity of their completed tasks. Mrs. Winters had the Military Academy's cafeteria in mind, given the large number of warriors and the building's time-distortion effect, food preparation and cooking would be a monumental task. Although many had already applied to help, she anticipated the need for even more hands.

And she wasn't wrong in her suspicion. Maybe at first, the cafeteria staff could manage despite the overwhelming workload, but if they kept it up continuously, their bodies wouldn't last. So, she came up with a solution: she allowed elders and children, those who were willing to earn work points, to help with time-consuming prep tasks like peeling garlic, onions, potatoes, and other vegetables.

Even if their productivity wasn't high, perhaps a work equivalent to one week's worth could only be used inside the building for a day, but it would still make a difference.

Their small contributions could have helped ease the pressure on the main kitchen staff, giving them a much-needed break, even if just for a day. It was a temporary measure, but until more manpower arrived or training at the Military Academy eased up, it was the best she could do to lighten the load.

Upon hearing that his wife would be helping out as well, Mr. Winters immediately sent a truckload of supplies to support the initiative. The shipment included onions as large as baseballs, garlic, carrots, potatoes, and other vegetables that required peeling, and transport them to the Military Academy.

This way, the helpers at the cafeteria would only need to rinse or cut them once more before cooking. He also sent leafy greens, so the helpers his wife hired could help sort them out and wash them, so the staff in the cafeteria could skip the tedious cleaning step and just rinse them once and then go straight to chopping. It was a thoughtful effort to lighten the burden and speed up meal prep once everyone got used to the rhythm.

Elders with children and no one else to rely on were the first to arrive at Mrs. Winters' office, eager to apply for the temporary work. They even saw the delivery trucks unloading crates of vegetables at a newly designated building where the prep work would take place. Many of these elders brought children with them, mostly between the ages of seven and ten, not only because they needed to be supervised, but because the kids could also lend a small hand.

Instead of idly waiting while the adults worked, the children sat on little stools, peeling garlic or cleaning vegetables alongside their guardians. This setup allowed the elders to keep an eye on them, while the children earned a few work points as well.

Due to the trauma and hardship of the apocalypse, these children had matured faster than most. They were quieter, more obedient, and fearful of having too much idle time. Keeping them gently involved gave them purpose and structure, something to help heal the scars left by the horrors they had witnessed.

"Grandma, are we really going to work here? And after that... we can buy meat from the Supply Center?" a ten-year-old boy asked quietly, looking up at his grandmother with wide, hopeful eyes.