

Apocalypse 896

Chapter 896 The Boomers

“Oh!” Jason and his team exchanged excited glances as they clipped their badges onto the left side of their chests, right over their hearts. They couldn’t help but puff their chests out a little with pride.

“So, when can we get our supplies?” Jason asked eagerly.

“Hmm,” the woman mused, eyeing their fresh badges. “Since you just registered, you’re still considered newbies. That means you’ll have to wait until next month for your first supply allotment. And because you’re starting at the beginner level, Copper Rank, you’ll only receive a basic package: a box of biscuits and water.”

She didn’t sugarcoat it. This was the standard for the lowest-ranking teams. But as time passed and their rank increased, those provisions could eventually shift from dry rations to packed meals, and eventually to fresh food. After all, fresh food was something they didn’t lack.

Upon hearing the announcement, everyone cheered. It might have seemed like a small gesture to some, but to them, a box of biscuits and bottled water was more than enough to bolster their food supply. These were practical rations—perfect for missions or travel between the camp and the base.

Deep down, they all understood that the HOPE Base wasn’t obligated to provide for them. After all, it wasn’t a government-funded facility, even if it was run by capable soldiers. Just having a system like this in place, a fair reward for hard work, was already more than they could have asked for. It pushed them to do better, motivated them to keep growing stronger.

In the long run, it would benefit them the most. With the knowledge that zombies were evolving and getting stronger, they knew that stagnation meant death. Relying too heavily on others could lead to their downfall, robbing them of the chance to witness the future they were fighting for.

So this subtle push from Kisha, this incentive to improve, was both wise and generous. It was her way of showing kindness, and none of them had any right to resent her for it, let alone ask for more.

Perhaps it was also because Jason and his group hadn't yet experienced the depths of deprivation that they were still able to maintain this level of awareness and goodwill. They could understand the deeper reasoning behind Kisha's decisions.

But not everyone would be so understanding. There would inevitably come a time when other outsiders would question HOPE Base's distribution, asking why the rations given were so minimal. After all, many people are like that: give them an inch, and they'll try to take a mile.

Once they start receiving, their greed often takes root, and before long, they begin expecting more, demanding that others meet their growing, insatiable expectations.

This was Kisha's way of distinguishing those who knew how to repay kindness with gratitude from those who would bite the hand that fed them. Through this method, she could easily identify and deal with people accordingly, rewarding those who deserved it, while putting the greedy and ungrateful in their place.

By showing kindness first, Kisha allowed others to see her as a just and fair leader. But when crossed, she wouldn't hesitate to respond with cold ruthlessness, making it clear that her compassion had limits. In a world where order had crumbled, this strict carrot-and-stick approach was the most effective kind of leadership.

Kisha deliberately let her guard down, not out of weakness, but as a test. She wanted to see who would be lured by opportunity, who would let their decency tip into greed. And when they did, she would strike without hesitation.

Letting people underestimate her was part of the plan. Because when she finally showed her true power, the fear she instilled would linger. A single misstep could become a nightmare they'd never forget, and a lasting reminder of who they were dealing with.

After Jason and his team finished accepting their mission, Adam and his group had just completed posting one of their own—a critical request for help to eliminate the mutated zombies lurking dangerously close to their shelter.

Unlike others, Adam's shelter was in a more urgent and dire situation. These mutated zombies weren't just wandering nearby; they were circling like predators, as if herding the survivors inside like sheep, waiting for the perfect moment to strike.

To ensure his request would be prioritized, Adam offered a hefty bounty: 350 crystal cores. It was a staggering amount, one that would undoubtedly tempt anyone who saw it.

After all, those who accepted the mission could collect crystal cores on the way by clearing regular zombies, and once they reached Adam's shelter, they would not only get to keep any crystal cores and spoils from the mutated zombies, but they would also still receive the full bounty. It was a clear win-win for any capable team.

Adam's calm demeanor earlier had merely been a front. In truth, he and the others were on edge, nervous, scared, and desperate. Posting the mission was their only hope, and all they could do now was pray that someone would notice it... and answer the call before it was too late.

“Are you guys done? Where should we go next?” the guide asked, glancing between Adam and Jason. Adam gave a nod, signaling that he was ready to move on with their original plans, until Jason spoke up.

“My team and I won’t be heading to the marketplace,” Jason said directly. “We just registered as hunters so we can start taking on missions and earning mission points and bounties. We’re running low on crystal cores, and with what little we have, we’d barely be able to bring anything back to our camp. So, we decided to complete a few missions to earn more crystal cores and supplies from the rewards.”

He didn’t sugarcoat anything and openly shared the information he and his team discovered at the mission board. After hearing this, Adam and his team couldn’t help but feel tempted.

Most of their remaining crystal cores had been used as a bounty for the mission they posted, so they didn’t have much left to buy anything at the market either. In the end, they followed Jason’s lead and registered themselves as hunters too.

They even came up with a team name—The Boomers—a playful nod to the fact that most of them were from the ‘90s generation. It was their way of proudly declaring, ‘We may be older, but we’ve still got it.’

After wrapping things up, Adam and his team also browsed the mission board and selected two Grade E missions, just like Jason’s group. They had the same mindset, to test the waters first before taking on more difficult challenges.

Right then and there, the two groups decided to form an alliance. This meant they agreed not to compete for resources, wouldn’t engage in conflict without cause, and would support each other when needed.

Once everything was settled, they parted ways, telling the guide he could rest for the night. They'd call on him again to show them around the base when they returned. As a token of appreciation, both Adam and Jason gave the guide two crystal cores each.

For someone like the guide, a regular soldier who rarely left the base and had little opportunity to gather crystal cores—this was a generous reward. Grateful and slightly moved, he warmed up to them and eagerly shared useful advice: what to watch out for outside the base, survival tips, and things they needed to remember to avoid getting themselves killed out there.