

Apocalypse 902

Chapter 902 A Place To Belong

By the time the weight of his actions caught up to him, it was already done; the machete had sliced cleanly through the zombie's arm, severing it at the wrist. The rest of the corpse tumbled off the truck, leaving only the dismembered hand still clenched around Fred's collar.

Fred turned to the warrior with a raised eyebrow. "Were you aiming for my head, or do you just have something against me?" he asked, half-joking, though his tone was laced with subtle tension.

The blade had passed so close, just inches from his face, that Fred had clearly seen the steel flash before his eyes, nearly grazing the tip of his nose. He'd be lying if he said he didn't break into a sweat.

Oddly enough, he was more nervous about that blade than the zombie itself. After all, as an awakened ability user, a scratch or bite wouldn't turn him into one of the undead. It would hurt, sure, but thanks to their stock of the vial of blue liquid, his life wouldn't be in real danger.

"No, sir!" The warrior shook his head like a rattle, his voice earnest. He hadn't meant any harm; his body had just reacted instinctively, faster than his mind could catch up.

Thankfully, it had been Fred who stepped up to the door. If it had been the earlier warrior, a regular human, he might have been scratched, and that would've been a death sentence. Fifteen minutes. That's all it would take before someone turned into a zombie.

Sure enough, when the warrior looked at Fred's neck, he spotted a shallow, bleeding scratch. Fred felt the sting, too. He leaned to the side, calmly prying the zombie's fingers off his collar one by one, and

flung the severed hand out of the truck. Then he touched the spot on his neck and glanced at the blood now smeared on his fingertips.

Still, he didn't panic. Instead, he pulled out a wad of cotton from his belt pouch and wiped it clean. It was just a scratch; no need to waste a vial of the blue liquid. That stuff was precious, expensive, and reserved for serious injuries. For something this minor, Fred didn't think it was worth using.

Everyone quietly watched as Fred tended to his injury. The atmosphere grew more serious, and the warriors guarding the rear door became noticeably more cautious. Two hours passed uneventfully, and the next batch rotated in for their watch. Rakan and his subordinates took over, moving with practiced ease.

In the midst of the transition, they almost forgot about Levi. He had been sitting silently at the side like a ghost, his presence so quiet it was easy to overlook, if not for the silver hair and strikingly handsome face that eventually caught one of Rakan's subordinates' attention.

Rakan approached him and said, "Kid, let's go. Stick with us and don't wander off alone." His voice was deep and commanding, his presence exuding the air of someone hardened by years in the underworld.

Levi's brows furrowed. Since enduring Young Master Colton's torture, he had become wary of men, especially when they got too close, his comfort boundary now a strict three-foot radius. Any closer, and his instincts would take over, snapping him into a defensive, feral state.

When he looked up at Rakan, his eyes flashed with a beast-like intensity. Even a seasoned man like Rakan, who had seen the darkest parts of life and clawed his way up from the bottom, felt the weight of Levi's gaze. There was a raw, haunting pain behind those eyes. Strong, but fragile. Dangerous, yet broken.

Something in Rakan shifted. The fierce aura around him softened. "Son... don't worry," he said gently, his voice stripped of intimidation. "We won't hurt you. We might look rough, but we know loyalty... and a little kindness, too."

Levi didn't respond. He remained guarded, his lips pressed into a tight line as he silently rose to his feet and took his position by the door. His actions spoke louder than words; he didn't want pity, nor did he intend to rely on anyone. He moved like a lone wolf, prepared to shoulder everything alone.

Watching him, Rakan couldn't help but see a reflection of his younger self. That familiar look of quiet defiance, the wall built around pain, it stirred something in him. He saw Levi as a young cub, wounded but still standing, and he felt a strong urge to protect him.

After all, Rakan's men were much like Levi, unwanted by society, discarded by those who were supposed to care. They were broken pieces that had come together under one banner. Rakan wasn't just their boss; he was a brother, even a father figure to them. That bond was the root of their loyalty.

So when they saw Rakan treat Levi with a rare gentleness, they immediately recognized the signs. Levi was one of them. A kindred spirit. And just like that, they began treating him as the youngest brother in their group, striking up conversations and making casual efforts to include him.

But Levi remained silent, unmoved by their words, as if he didn't hear any of it. Even so, the others weren't discouraged. On the contrary, their resolve deepened. After all, hadn't they all started from that same place, silent, angry, and alone, before they found a place to belong?

So, even though Levi didn't respond, Rakan's men kept talking to him as if chatting to a wall. He gave no reply, not even a glance, but they didn't seem to mind.

Their conversation drifted toward Rakan's younger days, how he challenged one mafia boss after another, clawing his way from rags to riches. He used nothing but his fists and unshakable will to send a message to those who once belittled him.

For the first time in over an hour and a half, Levi showed the faintest sign of reaction. He didn't look at them, but they noticed the subtle twitch in his ears, like he was perking up to listen.

Every now and then, when something particularly ridiculous or funny was said, the corner of his lips would twitch as well, betraying the quiet amusement he tried to suppress.

Their animated storytelling became so lively that even others in the truck couldn't help but tune in. Laughter spread like wildfire, and soon, many were smiling and chuckling along with Rakan's subordinates.

What started as a one-sided effort to break through Levi's silence had become a moment of shared warmth, one that slowly chipped away at the walls around him.

Because of the light-hearted storytelling, the tense atmosphere inside the truck gradually began to ease. Smiles spread and their shoulders relaxed, yet Rakan's subordinates and the warriors in his team remained alert.

Some kept their eyes fixed on the door, and others watched the back of the truck, ensuring that no zombies managed to latch on during the ride. They also made sure not to place Levi too close to the rear.

He was still a regular human, after all, and needed protection, so the awakened ability users took the outermost positions, followed by Rakan's trusted men.

As Levi sat there, watching the world pass by beyond the truck's opening, he felt something unfamiliar stir in his chest: relief. For the first time in a long while, he wasn't buried beneath layers of cold, suffocating darkness.

Instead of being locked away in the underground base, guarding the dungeon where his torturer was held, he was out here... seeing the world again. And only now did he begin to understand why Duke, their Vice City Lord, insisted he leave that place. 'You're still young, Levi,' Duke had said. 'Don't waste your life chasing vengeance. Use it to grow stronger.'

And now, for the first time since he was tortured and nearly killed, Levi smiled. It was faint and fleeting, and he tried to hide it, but Rakan noticed. And seeing that small change, Rakan let out a quiet, relieved breath.

He knew this was the beginning of Levi's healing. Real healing didn't start when wounds closed, but when the heart allowed light in. Levi had caged himself in pain and anger for so long, but now... perhaps he would start to climb out.

And one day, Rakan hoped, the boy would use that pain to rise—to break free from the darkness and finally stand under the sun.

Rakan had once lived in that same damp, dark place—emotionally and literally. As a young gangster, all he knew was rage. Anger at the world, at the injustice around him, and at his own powerlessness.

He let chaos consume his daily life, brawling in alleys, drinking himself numb, picking fights with civilians, and even committing crimes far worse, including taking lives. But none of it brought him satisfaction. The violence, the blood, the chaos, it didn't fill the void. It only deepened the shadows inside him.

Over time, the darkness grew. He became more paranoid, more bloodthirsty. Even when he climbed the ranks and eventually became the mafia boss that no one dared to challenge, there was no joy.