

Apocalypse 903

Chapter 903 A Sharp Blade

No fulfillment. Wealth didn't make him feel alive. Power didn't quiet the storm inside him. Authority feared him, yes, but fear wasn't loyalty, and respect born out of terror was nothing more than another form of isolation.

He had everything he once thought he wanted... and still felt completely hollow.

It was only after reaching the peak that he finally understood, power and wealth were just another illusion. Empty rewards that couldn't mend a broken soul. So instead of chasing more, he began to change himself.

He started picking up souls like his own, lost, wounded, and drifting in the shadows of alleys, slums, and forgotten corners of the world. He could spot them instantly. They all carried the same aura, like broken, wounded beasts lashing out at anything that came too close.

Hostile not out of cruelty, but out of defense. Isolation had become their shield, a choice born from the fear of betrayal... or worse, abandonment.

They knew the pain of being left behind. And they feared it more than anything else.

So when he saw Levi, Rakan recognized that familiar pain in his eyes. The boy was like him, scarred and closed off. But Rakan didn't hesitate. He knew Levi was meant to be part of his team.

Maybe, just maybe, the rowdy bunch of boys under his wing could help this lost soul. They weren't the same age, nor did they share the same stories, but they knew the same kind of pain. And with time, they could help Levi open up, find true companionship, and begin to heal.

Perhaps one day, Levi would learn to embrace his pain, not as something that broke him, but as the very thing that made him strong.

After all, a soul that has been broken and then pieced back together is often far stronger than one that's never known pain. True strength comes from surviving the fall and learning where that strength truly lies.

With a thoughtful nod, Rakan smiled as he glanced toward the door, while one of his subordinates continued babbling like a hyperactive radio. His energy filled the room, drawing laughter and interest.

Everyone was engaged, after all, it wasn't every day they got to hear firsthand stories from someone deep in the Mafia world, let alone from a Mafia boss's inner circle. The tales were raw, gritty, and fascinating.

Even Fred, who used to work for the government and was now pretending to nap in the corner, couldn't help but listen intently. Though his eyes were closed, his ears were fully alert, soaking up every word the subordinate said.

And just like that, their journey went smoothly, at least until they made their first stop at a supermarket on the outskirts of the city. Sparrow pulled the truck into the large parking lot, where a few vehicles still sat abandoned. Most of the lot was empty and silent, save for the eerie presence of dust-covered cars.

It seemed that when the apocalypse struck, there had only been a handful of customers around. Judging by the types of vehicles left behind, most of them probably belonged to the supermarket staff.

After turning off the engine, Sparrow climbed down from the driver's seat. Then, with a sharp rap of his palm against the side of the truck, he signaled for everyone to hop out.

"Alright, everyone," Sparrow called out once everyone had jumped down from the truck. "Let's set up a temporary camp here for a bit. We'll check if there's any edible food left inside before we move on. This is also a good chance for the newbies to get some live practice before we face tougher enemies."

"Yes, sir!" the group responded in unison.

Already divided into three teams, they quickly fanned out across the parking lot to clear the area of any lingering zombies. Each team leader took charge, guiding the new recruits and issuing instructions.

At first, the rookies moved stiffly, their fear making them slow and hesitant. But the seasoned leaders were strong and experienced; they knew exactly how to manage fear in battle and keep their teams focused.

On Rakan's side, however, one young fighter stood out.

Levi.

Unlike the others, he showed no hesitation. With a calm savagery, he charged forward, slicing through zombies one after another. His eyes were cold, unblinking, and his movements precise. It was as if he had done this a hundred times before.

Even the veterans had to glance his way, a flicker of surprise in their eyes.

As soon as Sparrow gave the order and Rakan's team split off from the rest, Levi immediately sprang into action. The first zombie he spotted was limping from behind a car, its right leg broken and dragging behind as it shuffled toward them.

Without hesitation, Levi drew his dagger from his waist. He easily sidestepped the zombie's outstretched arms, then drove the blade straight into its skull. With a sharp twist, he widened the wound to ensure a quick kill. As the corpse crumpled to the ground, Levi crouched beside it and began extracting the crystal core.

He inserted the tip of his dagger into the hole he had made, carefully probing until he felt the hard, crystal-like surface buried inside the brain. With practiced precision, he used the blade to dig it out—avoiding the need to use his hands.

Once the core was dislodged, he let it roll onto the ground. Then, using a clean towel, he picked it up, making it clear to everyone watching that he had no intention of touching the bloodied crystal barehanded, especially while it was still smeared with black blood and brain matter.

One of Rakan's team members scratched his head and offered, "How about I take over the task of collecting the crystal cores?"

He glanced at Levi, clearly aware that his own combat skills couldn't compare to Levi's savage yet efficient fighting style. Rather than slow the team down in battle, he figured taking on the support role would be the most useful contribution he could make.

Rakan immediately understood what his subordinate was thinking and gave a small nod of approval.

"Alright," he said, placing a firm hand on the man's shoulder. "You're in charge of collecting the crystal cores. Just make sure to stay alert and protect yourself out there."

"Got it, boss," the man replied with a grin, now feeling a renewed sense of purpose.

Levi, leading at the front, moved with fluid precision. As a zombie lunged at him, he spun around and delivered a swift roundhouse kick. The impact sent the creature flying, crashing into the back of an abandoned car. The force of the hit shattered the taillight and left a visible dent in the metal body.

But the zombie, unfazed by pain, began to rise again as if nothing had happened.

Levi didn't give it the chance.

Without hesitation, he charged forward, his dagger held firmly in both hands, his right hand gripping the hilt and his left bracing it for extra force. With his stance steady and powerful, he drove the blade straight into the zombie's skull as it lifted its head, now level with his chest.

The strike was clean and brutal.

Before the black blood could spray onto his clothes, Levi had already jumped back, landing a few feet away. The zombie collapsed face-first onto the spot where he had just stood, its blood oozing onto the cracked pavement like thick, black oil.

Without even glancing back, Levi set his sights on the next target. Rakan, too, wanted to charge alongside Levi, but before charging ahead, he made sure to ensure the safety of the team's support.

He left one more member behind to partner with the crystal core collector, so the two could watch each other's backs and guard against surprise attacks from blind spots.

Only once he was confident that everything was in place did Rakan return to the fray, joining the others in cutting down zombies one after another.

Levi, on the other hand, was relentless.

Even when his breath grew heavy and his chest rose and fell from exertion, his eyes never lost their razor-sharp focus. Every time he locked onto a target, he didn't stop until it was eliminated.

Levi hadn't always been this way.

Before the apocalypse, he had been driven and goal-oriented, yes, but there was still a gentleness to him, a hint of innocence, just like Reeve's. But after everything he had endured, that softness was gone. What remained was a honed edge, sharp, cold, and dangerous to anyone who dared get too close.

Right now, Levi was like a loose cannon who had finally found where he belonged. Despite the savagery of his fighting style, he managed to keep his clothes mostly clean, always mindful to avoid getting splattered with zombie blood or brain matter.

Rakan watched him closely, quietly impressed.

Levi had a natural constitution suited for martial arts. While his movements were still somewhat clumsy and left openings, what he lacked in technique, he made up for with unflinching decisiveness. His attacks were swift, bold, and carried no hesitation, traits that masked his inexperience and allowed him to take down zombie after zombie with ruthless efficiency.