

Apocalypse 94

Chapter 94 Clearing the Path

They weren't entirely off the mark; Bell did indeed look down on them, chuckling silently as it observed their struggles against the relentless tide of zombies, pushed around and tested by the chaos surrounding them.

Bell's obedience to Kisha stemmed from their deep bond as master and contracted beast, a connection that drove its loyalty and obedience. However, with Kisha unconscious, Bell had no one to answer to, and its softer side, reserved solely for Kisha, was dormant. Consequently, its proud and domineering demeanor came to the forefront, reflecting its independence and innate power.

With Bell's assistance, Tristan's team ascended to the 10th floor more swiftly and efficiently than initially anticipated. They also fortified their path by sealing off open emergency exits with earth walls, serving as a precautionary measure against potential attacks from zombies on both sides.

After being accustomed to the rhythm of their tasks, the team coordinated more effectively. At Mrs. Winters's urging, they enlisted her, her husband, and even the Patriarch to assist in retrieving crystal cores from the zombie heads while the rest focused on repelling the vanguard's onslaught.

At first, Mr. Winters was so worried that his wife would feel uncomfortable with the revolting task of retrieving the crystal cores from the rotting zombies but he did not expect that she would be even more enthusiastic about the task and did not show any signs of disdain or revulsion.

He let out a sigh of relief and felt a sense of admiration for his wife swelling in his heart, clearly, he was underestimating his wife by not believing in her capabilities. Maybe now that she found some use in herself, she stopped stressing herself about every little thing, coupled with the relief of knowing that her son was doing fine.

Now, Mrs. Winters appeared revitalized, her previous weakness and pallor replaced by a newfound vigor as if a surge of energy came crashing into her bloodstream. With enthusiasm akin to searching for treasures, she eagerly extracted the crystal cores. Having grasped the general idea from Tristan and Vulture about the potential use of these cores, she recognized their significance.

Increasing their supply could enhance their family's safety by bolstering their strength and this empowered her even more.

After retrieving the crystal cores, she meticulously deposited them into the belt bag her husband had provided, akin to a squirrel diligently storing food in its tree. Finding the task both enjoyable and purposeful, she was so engrossed that her mind effectively blocked out the putrid stench emanating from the corpses and the unpleasant squishy sensation as she handled the brains.

This additional helping hand has made it easier for the group to move forward because there's now a clear distribution of tasks and more time to rest in between their ascent to every floor.

After nearly three hours of climbing through the stairs, they finally arrived at the garden nestled on the 10th floor, where they decided to take a well-deserved break. This unique feature of the condominium, a balcony transformed into a lush garden, was open for residents to enjoy at any time, providing a serene recreational space for all.

Given the circumstances, the garden had become overrun with zombies, numbering more than five or six dozen. When the earthquake struck, residents of the higher floors lacked the opportunity to descend to ground level to avoid potential aftershocks. Their only viable option was to seek refuge in the garden, which provided ideal shelter against such threats.

Now that the former residents had transformed into zombies, they posed a new challenge for Tristan and his companions to handle.

"Sparrow, are you hearing me?" Vulture's hoarse voice crackled through the communicator.

"Yeah, I've got visual on your team too," Sparrow responded, spotting Tristan's group as they approached the garden several floors below the condominium's rooftop.

"Do you think we can reach the other building from here?" Vulture asked, his breath coming in ragged gasps. The effort of climbing and defending was compounded by the fact that he was still recovering from broken ribs, making every action strenuous for him.

Sparrow scanned the area once more. "I believe so," Sparrow affirmed. With confidence in his wind abilities, he descended from the opposite building, riding a whirlwind that carried him across the gap. To his comrades below, he appeared as a shadow descending from the dark night, a surreal sight amidst their ongoing battle with the approaching zombies.

Amidst their battle with the relentless zombies, they couldn't help but marvel at Sparrow's awakened ability. However, they knew they couldn't afford to pause and admire it, as their immediate priority was killing the oncoming horde of undead threats. So, they pressed on, focused on eliminating the zombies that continued to swarm towards them.

Sparrow stepped up his support by distributing the assault rifles and AWMs he was carrying among his comrades, making it easier for them to deal with the zombies. Fortunately, each assault rifle was equipped with a silencer, ensuring they could use them without drawing more undead attention their way.

After distributing the rifles, Sparrow ascended a tree in the garden to gain a better vantage point. From there, he could assess the number of zombies still advancing toward them and provide valuable guidance to his comrades, directing their focus where it was most needed. His scouting and communication proved invaluable, significantly easing the team's burden.

While the bees had been scouting earlier, using symbols to indicate safety or danger ahead, they found that human language was ultimately more effective. Therefore, Bell directed its bees to patrol within a 250-meter radius around them to ensure their safety. This allowed Sparrow to focus on providing closer support and scouting within the immediate vicinity.

After dispatching all the zombies lurking around the garden, the group secured the door from the outside to prevent any undead from exiting the building and disturbing their rest. With the area deemed safe, they collapsed onto the ground, feeling utterly drained of both physical energy and mental fortitude.

They felt as though they had been thrust into the midst of a war zone, overwhelmed by the stress and exhaustion.

"You all look like you've been through hell," Sparrow quipped to Vulture, the remark audible to Tristan, who sat nearby.

"Enlighten us. Tristan turned me into pulp," Vulture retorted, his breath labored as he gingerly supported his side, mindful of his broken rib.

"Clearly, you need more training," Tristan fired back at Vulture, who was in no shape to offer a rebuttal, prompting even Sparrow to chuckle at his expense.

It wasn't until he'd settled down that Vulture noticed Sparrow's arm, swathed in gauze with a hint of blood. Suddenly, he didn't feel quite as pitiful anymore, realizing that they were both equally battered and bruised, covered in wounds from the ordeal.

"Do you still have the vial of black liquid?" Sparrow asked Vulture after a moment's pause.

"I'm down to just two," Vulture sighed in response.

"I've still got one," Sparrow revealed, displaying his remaining vial to Vulture. With only the two of them awakened in their group, they were the sole reliance for the team in times of greater crisis, particularly with Kisha currently unconscious. The mana potion would serve as their covert ace for the time being.

After a brief respite, the trio embarked on another brainstorming session. Despite reaching the 10th floor, safety remained elusive, with hidden dangers lurking in every corner, their emergence unpredictable. The silver lining, however, was the increased yield of crystal cores obtained this time around, ensuring that each zombie killed contributed to their growing stockpile.

This bounty of crystal cores would be valuable to share with Kisha and Duke once they awoke. During their brief respite, Mrs. Winters dedicated herself to tallying the crystal cores they had amassed. Even the Patriarch joined in, eager to contribute in any way he could, unwilling to burden anyone further.

With no clean water readily available and energy levels at an all-time low, they resigned themselves to snacking on biscuits and dry rations, washing it down with what little water they had. Cooking seemed an insurmountable task in their current state; some could barely lift their arms, while others succumbed to sleep the moment they found a spot to rest.

Their journey from the basement to the 10th floor felt like conquering thirty floors, weighed down by the struggles and stress of relentless zombie attacks.

Right now it was almost as if they had momentarily forgotten the ongoing dangers that lurked outside, finding perhaps a semblance of reassurance in the presence of Bell, the formidable killing machine that stood like a guardian by their side.

Mrs. Winters paused in her counting when she noticed a hairy, thick foreleg of an insect delicately touching one of the crystal cores on the ground. The insect, Bell, seemed to take a keen interest in the cores, its actions suggesting some form of communication.

With a series of taps from its forelegs, Bell conveyed a message, its intentions shrouded in mystery yet intriguing to all who observed.