

## Chapter 83 Death

Kate brought down her mace onto a barely moving orc, the heavy weapon crushing everything below before it dug into the marble of the hall. She breathed out, hearing the groans of the creatures still out in the courtyard, feeling the vibrations of their steps, the vibrations of the steps of hundreds more undead running or stalking through city hall and the streets beyond.

*So many things to kill.* She ripped the weapon out of the ground, blood dripping from her scale armor and her weapon alike. Looking around herself, she could see the dead, piled up, crushed and destroyed by her very arms and magic, and her mace. The weight of it felt good in her hands but out there were two more ogres and two of the Overakar, scratching and striking the broad stone walls of this old structure, punching in windows, crushing the fence surrounding the courtyard.

She could face them, yes, could fight and kill, but these were big monsters. They were strong too. A few strikes, she could take, that she knew, but she would have to be smart about it.

Kate turned around and walked over the piled up bodies and limbs. She threw a few of them aside when she'd reached the top of the stairs and found what she'd been looking for. Throwing her mace aside, she reached down and grabbed onto the steel, setting down her foot against the tripod before she pulled, hearing something bend, then snap. The ammunition jangled slightly when she held up the heavy machine gun. She enjoyed the sound.

The weapon itself felt light, a part of her confused why she should even consider it before her axe, let alone her much heavier mace. The heaviest was the best, surely. And yet she'd seen what it had done to the undead, how it had torn through them. And there was quite a bit of ammo left. She could throw her axe and mace at the large monsters outside a few times to reduce her risk of getting killed but that just didn't seem particularly exciting.

The pistol on her belt had never quite felt up her alley, had never really felt like something she had wanted to wield, using her berserking skills or not.

But this, she thought, walking down over the bodies, the machine gun held with both her hands as the ammo belt slid over the dead.

*This might just do.*

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Christian ran, following Fred and the others through the ground floor of the parking garage a few streets away from city hall. Them and another group were the only two who'd gotten this route assigned. With their limited fire power against the large undead hordes, they employed diversion and flanking tactics to make sure everyone would make it out in the end. At least that was the hope.

They'd gotten into a small fight right after entering the large parking garage, killing the undead quickly and without using any gunfire.

Christian thought back to the massacre on the stairwell. He'd faced the undead, they all had, but numbers like that, he couldn't imagine facing such a horde and surviving. *Is she still alive?*

He shook his head. It wasn't his problem.

And still, he somehow felt guilty. The others had made the choice, Logan had called it as well, and he knew her the best. *Why do I feel guilty? She means nothing to me.*

He gulped and kept walking, checking the surroundings for any undead or other monsters that might've been hiding. They prepared to leave the garage and cross the street, the front half of the group already leaving when Christian heard a groan from behind himself.

He turned and saw Lukas down on one knee, the man holding his side.

"Wait, Lukas is-" he said but was interrupted when a loud screech and impact came down into the street, a Wyvern biting at one of the combatants, catching the large man's arm as the others started engaging, magic flashing out.

Christian glanced between himself and Lukas as he grit his teeth, seeing all the others engaged with the Wyvern already. He flung two small spheres of fire at the creature before he turned and rushed over to help the young man. "Lukas, come on, we have to go." He hesitated, then knelt down and grabbed on, helping the man stand.

At the same moment, Christian detonated the spheres of fire, the spells tearing into the right wing of the large creature. "You're injured?" he asked, glancing at Lukas.

"Thought I could ignore it," the man said, his face slightly pale. "They already had to heal me back in city hall."

Christian grit his teeth. He was about to call him out on his stupidity when he heard groans from nearby. A group of undead, rushing past the garage in front of them. He pushed Lukas to the side, into an open door before he closed it behind them.

*Shit.*

He listened, hearing more steps rushing past. There were undead in the garage. He grabbed his radio when something hit the door.

Christian staggered back. "No, no, no." He glanced at Lukas, the man still holding his side. "We have to move, come on," he said and grabbed on, then helped the man down the stairs, the only way forward.

They soon reached the underground part of the parking garage. At least the first floor of it. The light here was dim, open sections in the ceiling providing at least some illumination. Christian heard the door above slam against the wall, groans resounding a moment later.

"Hide, stay quiet," he said in a hushed tone, helping Lukas along as he looked around with frantic glances, finding a suitably large parked car and moving behind it. He helped Lukas down and checked him. His armored jacket was ripped, and there was blood below.

Christian bit his lip. He wasn't a healer. *How am I supposed to deal with this. Shit.*

He reached for his radio but heard steps in the same moment. The undead were on the same layer. And they were no longer groaning.

He could hear their measured steps. They were hunting.

Christian held his breath and waited. *They'll come and help us any moment. They just have to deal with that Wyvern. Come on. Stay calm. Don't lose it. You can fight a few undead. You'll get out of here alive.*

He waited quietly for a few minutes, still hearing the nearby undead. The dulled gunfire he'd heard had stopped but sometimes he heard more distant sounds. Roars, machine guns, and explosions too. But everything seemed to be farther and farther away. He gulped. *You're just imagining it.*

A machine gun fired, closer but still dulled. The sounds were apparently loud enough to attract the undead. He heard them start running, the creatures bounding up the stairwell they'd descended on.

*Now.*

"Dispatch, this is Christian, from the artillery team. We're stuck in a parking garage, got separated, is there someone nearby? Lukas is injured, I don't know how bad it is, I don't have any tinctures left and my mana is pretty low too. There were undead here just now, I don't know how many I can fight, do you hear me?"

He waited for a second, ready to say more when the radio crackled.

*"Christian, this is Veronica. I have your last location on the gps. I'm afraid you've been cut off but I'll see if anyone can break through. The hordes have split up and are hunting all of our teams. Find somewhere you can hide for some time and don't try to move up into the streets again. I repeat, stay where you are, wait, and hide. I'll send someone as soon as I can."*

Christian raised the radio to his mouth, ready to say something, to complain, to ask for help again but he knew this was it. This was what he'd get. *They just left us here.* He sat down and leaned against the car, his breathing getting faster. *They left us here.* "They left us here to die," he murmured when he felt something touch his hand.

He glanced over and saw Lukas looking back at him. The younger man didn't look well, his face pale. He held on to Christian's hand but his grip was weak.

"It'll be alright," Lukas said. "We'll be alright."

Christian took in a slow breath and focused. "You're injured. Don't exert yourself." He got his pack and opened it, looking for the first aid kit before he slowed. He had no idea what to do with it. Why had he already shared his tincture? He should've gotten more. They'd learned to patch minor injuries but he didn't even know if he should open Lukas' jacket or not. Wouldn't he bleed out?

But he couldn't move him either, that much he knew too. *Not that I could even lift him. Shit.*

He heard a noise. Slow steps. Did Veronica send someone? He leaned slightly around the car to get a look and froze. He stared at the side of a massive humanoid creature, its skin red, blood dripping to the ground. Its head looked like an animal skull, large antlers adorning it.

*Emissary.* The word came to his mind. They'd learned about them. They'd learned to avoid fighting them, to never look into their eyes. *Just in the dungeon. They were just in the dungeon.*

Christian forced himself to turn away right before the creature moved.

He could hear it, could hear the blood dripping to the concrete floor, could hear every step the monster took. It moved deliberately.

It was looking for something.

He heard it made a strange plopping noise. And then he heard it take a step towards them, then another, the monster touching one of the cars just three rows or so away.

*Shit.*

He couldn't fight that thing. He glanced down at Lukas, the young man's gaze barely lucid. *If it finds us, we're both dead.*

He grabbed a package of meds from his pack, held his breath, and threw it as far as he could to the side.

The package clattered to the ground and the Emissary moved, a whirling motion and fast steps.

Christian moved at the same time, his pack in hand, he went down another row, then another, glancing around a car to see the monster already on the hunt again. He checked for something else to throw, to divert the creature away from both himself and from Lukas when he heard the dripping sound again, closer.

He held his breath and carefully moved around the car. Going close to the floor, he looked to see the creature. What he saw were two bloody and clawed feet. He gulped and saw one foot stepping up, hearing the sound of groaning metal. Christian glanced up.

The Emissary held onto the top of the car, its antlered skull staring down at him, its eyes an abyss, an all consuming darkness. He could not move, could not think. Death was looming, and he was mere prey, mere flesh on the mound of nothingness. He could see then. An eye, darker even than the abyss, and all seeing, staring down at him as if death itself had turned around and looked his way. It felt cold at first, Christian feeling his mouth open. Tears ran down his cheeks, the pressure he felt before him unlike anything he'd felt before. He could feel his heart tremble, ready to burst.

And then the pressure was gone, as quickly as it had come it vanished and he breathed in hastily, whimpering as he looked up at the Emissary. Only its chest this time.

The creature no longer faced him, instead reaching behind its back and turning around, slipping on the car. A large axe was stuck in the creature's back, deep inside its spine, up to the handle. The creature moved and slid off the car, falling down a few meters away from Christian.

The monster struggled to stand up as it groaned with a strange sound, staggering before it fell again.

Something landed behind it. Entirely silent. Christian could see the humanoid form covered in red scales raise up their weapon. A red mace. No. A mace covered in bits and pieces of flesh, entirely drenched in blood. He opened his eyes wide, looking at the blood covered Executioner right before she brought down her heavy weapon, snapping through the half raised arm of the monster, steel biting deep into its thin and broad frame.

Christian could do nothing but watch as the human brought down her mace with brutal strikes, mangling the creature, breaking through its bones, and finally, shattering the very skull atop its shoulders.

He could hear her breathe out with a groan, leaving both the axe and mace stuck inside the creature she'd just slain. The creature she had hunted, he realized.

He didn't dare breathe.

She looked at him.

He jerked back slightly. "I... I'm sorry." He didn't know for what.

She looked at him and stepped over, not speaking a word as she raised her arm.

The mace made a squelching sound as it tore out of the dead body, whipping up into her slightly outstretched hand. She crouched down and got something from her belt.

A vial with something red inside.

She offered it to him.

"A..." His eyes went wide. "Lukas! He's injured. This way, come on, maybe this can save him!" He didn't care anymore. He'd looked into the eyes of death and lived. If he could get this monster to somehow help the young man, he'd risk whatever it took.

Christian rushed over and found that Lukas had collapsed, his head on his chest. At least it looked like the Emissary hadn't found him before Christian.

Kate reached Lukas before Christian could even say something, opening his mouth and dumping in the tincture of life. She checked his pulse and grunted. An affirming sound, Christian thought but he couldn't be sure.

He went close to Lukas and touched his arm. "Come on, be alive, you dumb fuck." He glanced at Kate, realizing he'd said that out loud. She didn't seem to care, looking at Lukas as well.

His skin looked a little less pale before he opened up his eyes and coughed, groaning in pain and holding his side. "Aw shit, that itches..." Lukas glared at Kate as soon as he saw her, bumping the back of his head against the car before he groaned again.

Christian sighed and chuckled to himself. "Jesus fucking Christ."

Kate grunted.

Christian took a few breaths to calm himself down, then spoke. "Veronica said we should wait here."

Kate glanced at him, moving her mace before she strapped it onto her pack somehow. She raised her arm and a few seconds later, a whistling sound came from beyond the nearby cars, her axe slapping into her hand. She strapped it to her pack as well and pointed at Lukas. "Injured."

He nodded. "Don't know if I can walk, I'm sorry." He looked away.

Christian glanced at her axe. *So that's why she threw it.* He smiled. *She threw it at the Emissary too. And saved my life.*

He sighed. *I won't live that one down. Good thing I only shared some of my concerns with the others. He still felt embarrassed. She still is kind of a monster. But I suppose when you have monsters as enemies, you might as well have a few on your side too.*

Kate reached down and grabbed Lukas as if he was a mere child, lifting him up in a princess carry before she glanced to Christian and started towards the exit.

When they reached the stairwell, she nodded towards the ground where Christian saw one of the heavy machine guns, sans the tripod that actually made it possible to be fired. There wasn't a lot of ammo left, he saw. "I can't use that," he said.

"Carry," she said.

He nodded. "Yes ma'am." The thing was ridiculously heavy but he just barely managed it. At least he only had a small pack on his back and nearly no other gear otherwise. They went up until they reached the door leading out onto the ground floor of the garage. He gulped. "Wait," he said.

Kate turned and looked at him as he set down the gun and grabbed his radio.

"Dispatch, Kate picked us up. She fed Lukas one of the tinctures but he's not looking great. Where do we go?"

*"She reached you. Good. The remaining undead are stalking through the streets. If Kate is there, we have several others stuck and potentially surrounded. The closest group should have a healer with them."*

Christian gulped as he looked at the intense glare of Kate. "What should we do?" he asked.

She turned towards the door, still carrying Lukas. "Hunt," she said.

"Hunt. Sure. Yes. Why not," Christian said and spoke into the radio. "Dispatch, Kate is ready to hunt. Please guide us to the first team, the one with the healer."

*"Understood Christian. Listen closely."*

Roars and gunfire resounded in the streets beyond. Christian twitched with every loud noise as he focused on carrying the heavy gun. He breathed hard as he tried to follow the fast gait of Kate.

They found a lot of corpses, none of them any fighters of the Union. A Wyvern lay dead a few streets ahead but they went into an alley instead, soon reaching the store where a group was supposedly stuck inside. Dozens of Undead creatures were prowling the area, a few of them trying to get into the large set of doors.

"Dispatch, Christian here with Kate, we've reached the store. Can you confirm our location?"

*"I see your gps signal, Christian. You're at the right spot. The group is waiting on the first floor up. I'll inform-"*

Christian no longer listened when Kate set Lukas down and grabbed the large gun out of his hands. He watched as she stepped to the end of their alley.

A sound came from the right somewhere, a clicking noise of some kind.

He watched her step out of their cover, and saw the undead rush to the right, following the noise he'd heard. Christian walked closer and saw the muzzle flare of her gun light up, the group of twenty or thirty undead turned into a mist of red chunks of flesh, not a sound coming from Kate or the massive machine gun that she wielded.

A few of the creatures on the edge of the group were still standing, three in total, only one of them uninjured.

Kate looked down at her gun and found the ammo was out. She grunted in a satisfied manner and threw the thing aside, dropping her pack as she walked towards the undead bounding her way. Christian watched the battle axe fling up from the ground and landing in her arms before she swung it wide, cutting through the entire width of the undead orc, two chunks of twitching flesh falling to the concrete like sacks of meat. She turned to the two last injured creatures, killing them with one strike each.

“Dispatch, we’ve cleared the area. Kate did, that is.”

“*Understood. I’ll let the others know,*” Veronica informed.

A roar resounded a few streets down.

Kate glanced his way, then behind him and towards Lukas.

He gulped, and nodded, to her but more so to himself. “We’ve got it from here. Go.”

Her eyes suggested that she was smiling, her hand raised before she caught her mace and started running in the direction of the sound.

Christian saw the group of Union fighters step out of the store in formation, a few of them glancing after Kate, the rest coming his way, the healer already rushing to the sitting Lukas behind him.

He breathed in deep and sighed.

The rumors had made her out to be some rampaging uncontrollable beast. He wasn’t really sure what to make of her now, really just glad to be alive.

“Did she carry that thing?” one of the others asked, pointing at the discarded gun on the ground.

“She just used it to wipe out those undead,” Christian said.

“No she didn’t. We would’ve heard that.”

Christian looked at the large shells on the ground, still sizzling in the snow. “Yeah. Don’t ask me.”