

Apocalypse 831

Chapter 831 Planning

Inside the convenience store, after clearing out the remaining zombies, Evelyn invited Jason and the others to sit down and take a break, urging them to hydrate. Rose and Fred, both formerly part of public safety, began discussing the safest route to take with the least amount of risk. Clyde joined in, pointing to the map and indicating the location of the car dealership he had mentioned earlier.

“Brother Fred, this main road has at least four to seven car dealerships from different brands,” Clyde explained, pointing to a spot on the map. “The Jeep Gladiator dealership is somewhere in the middle. See this road behind the buildings? It’s used by delivery trucks bringing in new stock. It’s wide enough, but the issue is that there was only one entry and exit point, so I’m not sure how safe or accessible it is.”

He traced the route with his finger, outlining the layout. The building they were planning to visit was part of a larger commercial complex managed by a single company. The car dealerships were all tenants, renting space from the same management.

“Each dealership has its own showroom and warehouse space at the back for new arrivals, but the entire complex is enclosed by one perimeter wall. There aren’t any roads dividing them,” Clyde continued. “They’re all connected, which is intentional. These are luxury car brands, and the layout is part of their marketing strategy. Buyers can easily compare models from different brands side by side without having to go to separate locations.”

He glanced at Fred. “Since all these brands have strong reputations and their own loyal collectors, they don’t see each other as threats. Instead, the setup benefits everyone—especially high-profile clients who value convenience. So far, it’s been working well. Everything’s been organized efficiently.”

Clyde only found out about this setup when he accompanied his father once to buy a Lamborghini. At the time, he had been just as baffled by the arrangement—why would all these competing brands choose to rent spaces under the same management, instead of building their own standalone dealerships? It would have made more sense to have separate buildings with direct access roads, especially so deliveries to the warehouses in the back could avoid using the same entry and exit points as everyone else.

He couldn't understand the logic behind it—until he asked one of the sales assistants, who simply shrugged and said, “Every time one of our neighboring competitors gets a new batch of cars delivered, it lights a fire under us. It pushes our sales team to work harder.”

Apparently, the pressure from close competition kept the staff sharp and motivated. Jealousy might be unpleasant, but it was also a powerful motivator—and in this case, it helped them sell more, just to avoid being left behind.

Thanks to this bit of knowledge, Clyde was able to point out a key detail everyone needed to know. The back of the building had only one entry and one exit, while approaching from the front meant going through the main road—which was already clogged with traffic and swarming with people who had abandoned their vehicles and turned into zombies.

If they tried going through the front, not only would their movement be slower, but they'd also risk getting trapped. The terrain there wasn't ideal for combat, making it extremely dangerous. That left them with only one real option: to approach from the back road.

However, even that route came with its own risks. They had to be extremely cautious not to alert the zombies on the main road. If the undead noticed them and swarmed from both ends of the back road, they'd be trapped with no way out—doomed to either be cornered inside the building or overrun outside.

No matter how they looked at it, it was a high-risk mission. But if they pulled it off—if they could get to the vehicles in the dealership without drawing attention—they could make a clean escape through the back road. The key was silence and speed. One wrong move, and the whole operation could fall apart.

Rose wore a deeply conflicted expression as she glanced at Clyde. “Do we really have to go that far? And do we really need to find that specific Jeep Gladiator just to give these people a ride home?” she asked, exasperated. “We could’ve just grabbed any car off the road, hijacked it, and it would’ve worked just fine.”

She gestured around and pointed at a random vehicle nearby—unfortunately, it had a shattered window and a flat tire. She tried again, pointing to another one, but it was smashed into the car beside it, its front end crumpled beyond use. Her frustration only grew more obvious.

Clyde shrugged, following the direction of Rose’s finger as she pointed at the various wrecks lining the road. “Sister Rose, as you can see, most of these vehicles are either smashed up or just plain unusable. Some of the damage came from our own people when they were trying to clear paths, and some was caused by those who tried to escape during the early chaos—pushing cars out of the way, ramming through blockades. And even if it wasn’t us, a lot of these wrecks are from the first days of the apocalypse. People who panicked, drove like maniacs trying to escape, and ended up crashing into each other or into poles.”

He gestured toward a charred husk nearby. “Some even exploded—probably from punctured fuel tanks igniting in the mess. So yeah, finding a working car out here is like looking for a needle in a haystack.”

Then he turned back to her. “Besides, we’re escorting Jason and the others. Why not do it properly and give them the best ride we can get? They’ll be traveling a long distance. If we just toss them in any half-broken car off the street, it could break down halfway, and that’s the last thing we want, especially after everything the City Lord has done to kickstart this trade deal with the other settlements. We’ve got to show them we’re serious.”

Although Clyde was young and often mischievous, he wasn't wrong. Their City Lord wouldn't go through all this trouble just for a simple escort mission—unless opening trade with the other settlement was truly important. Besides, both she and Clyde had previously worked in public security, so they understood the value of gathering intelligence through trusted channels. They could grasp, at least in part, what their City Lord was aiming to achieve through this operation.

And though Rose hated to admit it, even someone as young as Clyde understood the significance of their mission. She couldn't keep questioning it now. With a resigned shrug, she nodded in agreement. What they needed to focus on was tightening their defenses and improving coordination, because from here on, things were only going to get more serious.

“Alright, if that's the case—since we have no choice but to go for the best—how exactly are we supposed to get there without risking our necks or losing a finger or two?” Rose asked, casting a look at Fred and Clyde.

Clyde scratched the back of his head, offering only a sheepish smile. He was just as clueless, and while he had gathered some intel, that was the extent of his contribution for now. Still, he didn't stay completely silent.

“Maybe we could launch ourselves onto the rooftop of the building, then work our way down from there—clear a path and grab as many Jeep Gladiators as we can, then drive out?” he suggested, his tone casual, almost innocent.

Surprisingly, it wasn't a bad idea. In fact, it had potential.

Thankfully, they had brought along three members of the STAU. Originally, they had intended to bring all five, but Kisha had made the call to keep the other two back at the base in case they were needed

elsewhere. With three of the STAU at their side and access to a large storage space capable of carrying vehicles, their odds of pulling this off had just improved dramatically.

If they calculated it right, each STAU member could store up to two dozen vehicles in their space. With three of them on this mission, that meant they could potentially bring back over sixty vehicles. Even after giving four to Jason and his group, they'd still return to base with more than five dozen.

Those extra vehicles could easily be sold to other outsiders in need—likely for a high price paid in crystal cores—making this a highly profitable endeavor. It was a classic case of hitting two birds with one stone: helping their future allies and turning a solid profit at the same time.

The STAU members almost blended into the background, barely noticed by anyone. Having already experienced the dangers of venturing outside the safety of the base, they knew how dangerous it was beyond its walls. All they could do was stay close to the powerful offensive superhumans. Fortunately, the team was made up of strong captains with irregular but formidable awakened abilities. Knowing this, the STAU members kept their mouths shut and simply followed along.