

Apocalypse 899

Chapter 899 Gathering People

"I understand, Young Madam," Sparrow replied, his voice steady as he accepted the Talismans Kisha handed him. Without even needing to count, he could tell she had given him at least two dozen, more than enough to bring a sizable team. This was her silent way of entrusting the decision to him, of saying: 'Do what you believe is best.'

With a determined nod, Sparrow turned to leave, Vulture following close behind.

As they walked, Sparrow's thoughts shifted toward assembling the team. Since it would be a long journey away from the base, he'd need at least two Space-Type Awakened Ability Users (STAU) to manage storage and transport efficiently.

Keith was the first name on his list; he needed the experience. Next were Clyde and Reeve, both of whom had already tasted the harshness of the outside world, yet still had room to grow.

Then Sparrow thought of another name, Levi Adams. A quiet young man with silver hair and a tear-shaped mole under his eye. He had once been part of the same idol group as Reeve, but unlike the others, Levi bore deeper scars. He had survived the horrors of Young Master Colton's abuse. If kept locked inside the base for too long, Sparrow feared that darkness would fester within him.

'That kid needs fresh air and he needs to see there's still a world beyond pain.'

And so, Levi made the list too.

“Should we bring Young Madam’s grandparents too? After all, wasn’t your goal of taking her younger brother is to toughen him up so he wouldn’t remain her Achilles’ heel?” Vulture suggested, watching Sparrow sink into deep thought.

He had a point, and a good one at that, but Sparrow slowly shook his head.

“They might hesitate to join if they find out most of the group consists of younger folks,” he replied, a little unsure. “The Aldens couple is already in their senior years. Even though they took the immortal pill and regained some of their youth, they’re not exactly frontline fighters. Grandpa Alden might have offensive abilities, but Grandma Alden is more of a support type. I’d worry about putting them in harm’s way.”

“How would we know if we don’t ask?” Vulture countered. “Besides, we could assign Grandpa Aldens to protect Grandma Aldens and have them stay close to the STAU members. They might even provide better logistical support and emotional support to the younger ones, too. You know how grounding their presence can be.”

His point was valid. The older couple could cook, offer comfort, and give guidance to the younger members. And after considering it a moment longer, Sparrow gave a reluctant nod. “Alright. Let’s add them to the list after asking their opinion.”

Although Sparrow initially wanted to bring Ethan, Dracon, and Gavel on this mission as well, he and Vulture knew that Kisha hadn’t yet placed full trust in them. She hadn’t even allowed them access to the secret of her spatial territory or the passage linking City B’s HOPE Base with the hidden base. Because of this, they crossed the three names off the list.

Instead, Vulture suggested adding Rakan and his subordinates.

“I have a feeling Rakan will awaken his ability soon,” he said. “Better to train him and his team now so they can form their own squad in the future. Once they awaken, they’ll be able to take on missions like this on their own.”

Sparrow agreed. The plan had long-term value; they couldn’t always be in every mission themselves. If Rakan’s team could be shaped into reliable field agents, Sparrow and Vulture could eventually split their efforts to support more allied forces.

And so, with a nod of shared understanding, they added Rakan and his team to the roster.

He then added the usual core members, Evelyn and Fred, and as for the rest, Sparrow selected the best warriors from the first recruited batch, along with a few promising individuals from the new one.

He chose a balanced mix of awakened ability users and regular humans with strong combat and survival skills. Sparrow also brought recording equipment to document their outing, intending to use the footage as training material for the academy.

Following this selection, Aston decided to make such expeditions a regular part of the academy’s schedule. Talented warriors would be chosen for missions outside the base, with tasks drawn from the mission board. These missions would not only provide opportunities to earn crystal cores for training and supplies but also help them gain real-world experience.

For this initial outing, the new recruits needed to be guided by seasoned members. With Sparrow leading the first expedition, it marked the beginning of the academy’s official external mission program.

After finalizing the list, Sparrow and Vulture personally came to call out those who had been selected, instructing them to head to the military academy for the mission briefing. Although neither Sparrow nor Vulture explained the purpose of the meeting beforehand, everyone still showed up. The last to arrive was Keith, accompanied by his grandparents. He looked the most confused.

As they pushed the door open, they were met with the sight of a room full of people already seated. At the front stood Vulture and Sparrow, deep in discussion in front of a large whiteboard, debating the best route to take for the mission.

When they heard the door open, both men looked up. Their eyes met Keith's, and they gave him a nod and a welcoming smile before motioning for him to help his grandparents find a seat.

Only after everyone had settled did Sparrow set down the mission notice, now neatly stored in a folder. Beside him, Vulture stood tall and straight like a soldier, hands clasped behind his back, feet shoulder-width apart, an unmoving sentinel just watching over everyone.

"Thank you all for coming on such short notice," Sparrow began, his gaze sweeping over each of the people he had called in. They all looked sharp, ready."

"I've gathered you here because we've just accepted a mission to assist our new allied shelters located in Maple Leaf Town and Gale City. The two sites are fairly close to each other, so we're planning to take on both missions simultaneously." He paused, letting the weight of his words sink in. "However, these missions involve mutated zombies. This won't be a walk in the park, but it will be a valuable learning experience and a chance for all of you to put your training to practical use."

As he spoke, Sparrow slowly paced in front of the group, his hands clasped behind his back, his demeanor strict and authoritative, every bit like a respectable instructor.

“We’ll be dividing the spoils evenly among everyone,” Sparrow continued. “This mission might take several days before we return. While all of you were called here, you still have the choice to decline. If you decide not to join, we can arrange for a substitute.”

He paused briefly, his tone firm yet understanding. “That said, missions like this will only become more frequent moving forward. As our base continues to grow, it’s crucial that we extend our reach and support our allied shelters. This is how we strengthen our network, and ourselves.”