

Apocalypse 901

Chapter 901 Departure

"Brother, don't forget to eat your meals and take care of yourself out there, okay?" Clyde's sister said, her voice trembling as tears welled in her eyes. Their mother, on the other hand, was already crying as if Clyde were heading off to war and might never return.

Clyde's head throbbed. He wasn't sure whether to feel touched by how worried they were... or frustrated that they were practically mourning him before he'd even left. Without thinking, he reached out and lightly smacked the back of his sister's head.

She yelped in surprise, then immediately retaliated by swatting at him midair, puffing up like an angry little pufferfish. The sight made Clyde chuckle, and even managed to snap their mother out of her tears.

"What the hell are you spouting, you brat?" he grumbled, ruffling his sister's hair roughly, as if trying to scrub the nonsense out of her head. "Your brother's so powerful I could crush zombies without even letting them touch me—and you're acting like I'm marching to my death?"

"Aren't we allowed to be worried about you?" Clyde's sister huffed, crossing her arms with a dramatic flair. "This is your first time going far from the base. It just feels... weird. And besides, someone needs to remind you not to get too cocky or blindly rely on your awakened ability. The moment you think you're invincible is the moment you let your guard down."

She shot him a pointed look, standing as if she were scolding a wayward child. Clyde could only sigh.

Their mother stepped in quietly, handing Clyde his packed backpack with trembling hands. The three of them now stood in the open parking lot as the low rumble of modified military trucks filled the air. Around them, the other chosen team members were boarding the vehicle one by one.

Since the Advance team only had a little over a dozen members, they would be using just one truck. As usual, Sparrow would be driving while Vulture took the passenger seat. It was a setup the team had grown used to.

Sparrow liked to see the road clearly and make quick decisions as needed. By staying behind the wheel, he could adapt to whatever situation they encountered without raising alarms or putting the entire team on edge.

After all, constant alertness burned through stamina fast, and mental fatigue could be just as dangerous as any enemy outside the walls.

"All right, I'll keep that in mind. Just take care of Mom while I'm gone. I'll bring you a souvenir if I find one..." Clyde said with a small smile, gently nudging his sister toward their mother.

"What could you even bring back? A zombie's head to use as a soccer ball?" his sister shot back, raising an eyebrow in clear skepticism. She honestly couldn't imagine anything out there still worth calling a souvenir, maybe a few trinkets if they were lucky.

But considering her brother was heading out on a mission, she doubted he'd have time to go treasure hunting.

"That's actually a solid suggestion," Clyde chuckled as he hopped into the back of the truck, wearing a smug grin. "I might just bring one back for you."

"Try it and I swear, I'll make you eat shit!" she yelled, pretending to take off her shoe to hurl it at him.

Before she could follow through, their mother gave her a firm smack on the back of the head.

"Watch your language, young lady. Where did my elegant, graceful daughter go? When did you learn to curse and say such things?" their mother scolded gently, though the glint in her eyes betrayed her amusement. She clearly enjoyed watching her children bicker and laugh together.

She had never imagined they'd still be able to enjoy moments like this—so full of life—after everything they had been through.

Her daughter might no longer act like the refined young lady she once was, bound by the etiquette and restraint of high society, but now she was lively, expressive, and full of spirit. And for the first time in a long while, she truly looked her age, a carefree young woman.

Her daughter didn't answer, simply stuck her tongue out playfully before waving at Clyde as the truck began to pull away, rumbling toward the Southern gate. Clyde waved back from the rear, watching them until their figures were no longer in sight. Only then did he sit down, finally settling into his seat for the long journey ahead.

Meanwhile, his mother and sister turned and began making their way back to the military academy, hearts a little heavier, but smiles still lingering.

Not long after, Sparrow pulled up in front of the southern gate. The gatekeeper and stationed soldiers were already working to clear the path ahead of any lingering zombies. Only when the coast was completely clear did two soldiers begin pulling the heavy gates open.

As usual, before the gates were fully open, Sparrow revved the engine, then floored the gas pedal, darting through the half-open entrance at high speed. The soldiers and gatekeeper could only shake their heads helplessly, already used to Sparrow's reckless, but oddly effective, style of driving.

On the upside, it allowed them to quickly shut the gates again without worrying about any zombies sneaking in behind.

Soon enough, Sparrow had already sped far from the safety of the base walls. He casually reached for the walkie-talkie and said, "All right, everyone, we're officially out of the base..."

The entire truck jolted violently as Sparrow rammed through three zombies that had staggered onto the road. Their bodies thudded beneath the vehicle, causing the truck to creak under the impact. Without missing a beat, Sparrow grabbed the walkie-talkie and continued speaking.

"Group yourselves into three teams. The first batch will watch the back of the truck and eliminate any zombies that try to climb aboard. After two hours, rotate shifts with the next team. This way, not everyone will be on high alert the entire time, which could wear you out mentally before we even encounter a real horde."

His calm and steady instructions had an immediate effect; everyone seemed to relax just a little. The rotation system meant those not on watch duty could rest without guilt, knowing their turn would come.

It allowed them to conserve their energy and stay sharp when it mattered most, instead of burning themselves out with constant vigilance as they travel from the base all the way to their destination. A simple strategy, but one that could make all the difference.

"Roger that," Fred responded through the walkie-talkie before immediately getting to work organizing the groups. Reeve, Clyde, and several other trainee warriors, along with some of the more experienced fighters, were placed under his supervision. Rakan and his subordinates were grouped with Evelyn, while Fred kept the remaining team members with him.

The non-combatants, including Grandpa and Grandma Aldens, were secured in the innermost section of the truck, along with the STAU's for added protection. Keith, being close in age to Clyde and Reeve, was placed in their group to ensure smoother communication and better teamwork.

Fred and his unit were assigned the first watch, so they positioned themselves near the rear entrance of the truck. Although the truck's back door was elevated and only a half-door for security, there were still instances where zombies managed to cling onto the vehicle's ridges and attempt to climb aboard.

If no one noticed them in time—especially during moments when someone was about to step out—the situation could quickly turn dangerous. With non-awakened individuals among them, a single scratch or bite could spell disaster.

That was why someone always needed to keep an eye on the rear door. And as if the heavens had heard their concerns, a zombie suddenly plummeted from a balcony above. It crashed onto the roof of the moving truck with a loud thud, then rolled toward the back. Due to the truck's speed and the zombie's

momentum, it slid off the roof—but not completely. Its decaying fingers managed to latch onto the rear edge.

Everyone heard the ominous noise above them. One of Fred's team instinctively moved to check, and unfortunately, it happened to be a regular human. Fred's heart clenched with worry. He quickly grabbed the man's shoulder and yanked him back into a seated position before taking his place.

Bracing himself, Fred leaned closer to the half-door to peer outside. But just as he narrowed his eyes to get a better look, a withered, rotting arm suddenly shot out and grabbed his collar.

"Shit!" one of the men near the door cursed, reacting purely on instinct. Without a second thought, he drew his machete and swung it hard at the withered arm clutching Fred. His muscles moved faster than his brain, not even stopping to consider the risk of accidentally hitting Fred instead.