



The pair walked around the labyrinth of alleyways in search of zombies. Tan exhibited signs of pallor as they had just finished fighting a group of 5 zombies.

The wind carried with it the nauseating smells of rotten flesh.

Let alone the odors, the gruesome sights were enough to make even the most hardened of veterans queasy, let alone someone like Tan.

In fact, at the start of their journey, they encountered a child zombie with maggots squirming through its head causing him to vomit. Luckily for him, Azief wasn't too disturbed and sliced its head as it approached them.

In both of their encounters, Tan gawked in amazement at Azief's near inhuman movement and reflex speeds. He always flowed past the zombies like water while slicing them apart as if they were made out of soggy paper towels. Who knows how many heads he could have taken in the time it took to explain this.

Honestly, it was only thanks to Azief that their relatively short journey had been safe and secure thus far. If he was alone, Tan didn't think he would make it past the second house before he died.

Seemingly out of nowhere, Azief made a sharp turn and brought Tan elsewhere.

"There's another group of stiff's," Azief said as he pointed out a group of 4 zombies to Tan. "Prepare yourself. I'm going to attack them. Whatever you do, don't scream."

Tan nodded.

The last time he screamed he attracted 10 zombies. If not for Azief's quick reaction in killing all the zombies, Tan would already be dead. Even Azief was sweating at the time.

Though, not because of the fear of the 10 zombies, but because of the fear that the ten zombies would catalyze a chain reaction of infinitely more zombies. Although he was invincible when he fought a lone zombie or even a small group of them, but thousands of them? Even he would be overwhelmed. He wasn't a one man army.

Swift as the wind, Azief began to attack. He dashed forward, arriving just a few meters before the zombies. And with one slice one of the zombies was already crippled. Another zombie moved forward and tried to attack Azief, but, before it could, he crouched with lightning speed, ducking under the attack and crippling it too.

Comparing Azief and the zombie in terms of speed was like comparing an oxcart to a F1 sports car. It was simply incomparable.

Azief then jumped from his position, distancing him from the stiffs as he motioned for Tan to end their lives.

Tan, following Azief's instructions, came forward, steeling himself to smash the zombie with his staff.

Brain matter splattered everywhere and a vile smell entered both of the men's nostrils. Even Azief was about to puke.

This, combined with the gory sight, made Azief increase his killing speed.

The three zombies were made quick work of by the duo who then retreated. This was Azief's plan. To find isolated zombies and defeat them.

"Did you level up?" Azief inquired when they reached a safe place inside somebody's house.

“I’m level 4 now,” Tan answered while he was cleaning himself.

Azief got up and said, “Good, let’s check our loot.”

“They dropped a few potions. Some for stamina, some for vitality, and some for spirit.” Tan summarized as he took inventory.

Azief nodded in satisfaction and followed up with, “That is okay. That’s good.”

According to their distribution agreement Azief took the stamina and vitality potions while the spirit ones were all given to Tan.

“So what now?” Tan asked.

“We keep grinding and we will raid the mall tomorrow. The higher we level up, the easier it will be.”

Tan agreed and shortly thereafter, they went out and hunted some more zombies. Determined to “cleanse” their base of operations of zombies, they did this for the remainder of the evening.

By the time the sun had begun to fade into the horizons, Azief had leveled up to 19 and put all of his points into stamina causing it to reach 20 points.

With his improved stats, he rarely ever got tired as his stamina drained exceedingly slowly.

Tan had almost reached level 10 and learned Heal and Stamina Drain. Both of which made Azief rather envious.

Stamina Drain made it so that Tan rarely had a problem with his stamina, and while Azief also had Heal, when it was in a specialist’s hands there was a clear difference in efficacy.

It also served as a soft confirmation of his theory that the drops were customized to the killer. In other words, the World Orb chose the reward

based on the difficulty faced and gave a fitting reward. Of course this only was a theory, but it seemed somewhat credible given the circumstances.

They had now broken into another house, and seeing that it was relatively safe, the pair decided to stay the night.

They were currently both resting as the fight-filled day had exhausted both of them in more ways than one.

Tan had never felt so physically, mentally, or emotionally drained and Azief was only slightly better with all of the killing he experienced yesterday.

Looking back on the day, in total, they killed about 70 zombies and discovered that if someone wounded the zombies before another person finished it, they would share the experience.

In essence, it was a party system. They also had plentiful gains and Tan even got his own storage ring.

And, perhaps most importantly, Tan was now capable of holding his own.

Inside Azief's ring were countless supplies, but he still lacked a few necessities.

"How's your ring?" Azief asked Tan.

"It's good," Tan answered. "I store all the supplies in my ring now."

"Good."

"Should we continue?"

Azief looked outside and shook his head as he explained, "The night is fast approaching. My detection capabilities are somewhat weakened now and I'm pretty sure the zombies are stronger at night. We'll stay here for the night and get a move on in the morning. Board the front and back doors. Make sure there isn't anything in the house... Alive or dead."

After giving his orders he began to think.

Something was off about the mall.

The zombies were still swarming the area even though they'd normally if they couldn't detect anything.

Were there survivors in the mall?

Perhaps. He hoped that if there were, they wouldn't interfere with his plans...

Wait. He just realized he hadn't thought of how to break into the mall in the first place...

Back to Tan, he was going about the house and carefully executing Azief's orders.

By now it was clear that Azief took the leader position in the hierarchy.

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While Tan might be older, Azief was stronger. Not to mention he was generous. In Tan's eyes, Azief was his get-out-of-zombie-hell ticket. He was young, strong, and powerful.

Tan could only sigh in envy. In his mind, he thought that Azief was one of the brave ones that attacked the beasts in the beginning which led him to gaining such awesome power.

However, contrary to Tan's expectations, Azief was like him.

He too was fearful.

He too hid. The only difference was that Azief was too damn lucky.

He had always been one unlucky bastard, but perhaps all of his luck had been saved for that one decisive moment.

Once again going to Azief, he had just finished making his bed.

He looked outside the window and heaved a sigh of relief.

He had gained a great deal of strength today and with Tan's support, he was becoming more and more confident that the zombies no longer posed no threat to him.

He now had a combination of speed, strength, and endurance which eclipsed the zombies in every aspect. Now, as long as there wasn't a huge horde of them, they were equivalent to ants under his feet.

Smiling contentedly, he closed the windows. And outside, unbeknownst to him, a creature resembling an abnormally large cat was stalking the streets. Suddenly its nose twitched as it smelled its prey.

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Editor's Note: Hmm... Something about the dialogue comes off to me as a bit clunky. I'm still an amateur though, so there's not much I can do about it. It shall suffice as it is I guess.