



As he entered the mall, his clothes fluttered in the wind drafts. They both paused and looked at each other in silence before Sofia broke the silence.

“You.... are strong.” *N0velnext.c0m*

The awkward atmosphere between the two hadn't gone away, even after the shutters had closed.

“Hmm... Indeed...” Azief replied without an expression.

His eyes wandered around his surroundings before a light flashed around his body and his blade disappeared. “You survived, huh?” From his tone of voice, it seemed that he didn't think that someone like her was capable of surviving.

She only stared back in reply.

Complicated expressions could be seen drifting across their faces as they remembered their history.

Or maybe it was better put as their lack of one?

They weren't ever in a relationship, nor could they even be considered friends.

They were just acquaintances from the same sports school in Temerloh. She was the class athlete and he the class fool.

From years 1 to 3, he had been forced into such a position by peer pressure just to fit in. But in the last 2 years of high school, he had become much more unaccommodating as he just wanted to do well on his exams as he caught “senior fever”

Anyway, he and Sofia were classmates.

Nothing more, nothing less.

They neither hated, nor liked each other. Their only interactions were occasionally greeting each other to hold up pretenses.

Azief didn't change much. His face was only somewhat marred with acne and he now gave off a foreboding aura. Still nothing was too different physically.

Sofia was still slender and her face also didn't change much. She still sports long hair though she was a bit tanner than before.

Azief always had a problem remembering names. But faces? Even if he wanted to forget he couldn't. As for Sofia, although he hadn't left a strong impression on her, she had a great memory.

"How long have you been here?" Azief asked, putting his hood back on.

He was clearly intending to cut things short.

There were many things Azief needed to do right now. He just wanted some alone time to collect his thoughts, rest, and allocate his rewards.

He had experienced too much fucked up shit in one day to entertain Sofia any longer.

He really was suited to being a solo player.

Sofia was startled by this sudden change and replied, "2 days? Since the start of everything."

"Weapon?" he asked while conducting a quick scan with his divine sense. It turned up negative. She was the only other living being in the mall.

"Bow and arrow."

"Appropriate, considering your aptitude." he said as he turned towards her. His eye seemed to see through her and she felt that she couldn't hide any secrets from his gaze.

"You use a blade right?"

“Yes. Have you classed up?”

“Classed up?”

“You don’t know? What level are you???”

“7.”

Azief sighed.

It was true that most people could fight the zombies at such a level. He wasn’t special. But he was impressed when he examined the corpses. Each one was shot dead with one arrow to the head.

“When you hit level 10 you can class up. Choose carefully. I’m only going to be here for the night. I’ll leave tomorrow after I resupply,” Azief announced his intention.

He thought she might view herself as the territory’s boss, but considering their level disparity Azief wasn’t afraid of her attacking.

Even if she did, he could easily subdue her. He fought a gigantic tiger and survived to tell the tale. He could handle this girl.

“Can I come?” Sofia suddenly asked.

Azief sighed.

He had somewhat expected her to ask something like that, but Tan’s death had already been a blow to his confidence.

Now, he didn’t have the confidence to protect anyone, even with his power.

Though most creatures couldn’t harm him, having a companion was having a liability. Besides, they had different destinations.

“I’m going back to my village. There might be other beasts on the way and I can’t guarantee that you’ll be safer with me.”

When she heard this she trembled.

Still, her decision remained steady. With the power he had shown, he was definitely stronger than her.

She could only gamble on that power. After all, she knew she couldn't stay in the mall forever.

"It's fine."

"Fine... But if you're coming with me, you have to contribute. If you slow me down, I'll leave you. If you attract monsters, I'll leave you. If you try to harm me, I'll leave you."

Sofia was somewhat shocked as she tried to reconcile the current Azief with her image of the class clown.

It had truly been too long since they were in high school. 6 years had passed, and, with that time, the boy she remembered was no more.

Years of battling with depression and a low self-esteem had changed him. He now rarely trusted other people, including himself. Especially after Tan's death.

Looking towards the second story, he said coldly, "Now, pack some supplies. At dawn we leave."

He didn't want Sofia to think that he was some kind of hero who would help or sacrifice himself for her selflessly. Such thoughts would only lead to her death.

After pillaging the first floor for supplies, he directly leapt up to the second floor and left Sofia standing in amazement.

She could jump down from that height with ease, but ascending was another matter entirely.

Jumping down only required that she be light, jumping up also required great strength. Seeing this only reaffirmed her decision.

She wanted to use his strength to survive this new world.

And Sofia knew that Azief understood this too because while she was using him, he was using her. For what, she didn't quite know. But the fact he accepted her offer meant that he had some use in mind.

'Well, whatever's fine by me...' she thought as she smiled and relaxed for the first time since the Fall. Slowly climbing the stairs, her heart was calm.

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