



Upon entering Azief's first impression was that of the house's size.

It was simply massive.

Even in the darkness, the house gave off the aura of majesty.

If not for the fact that the apocalypse had wrought destruction across the lands, soiling the house's grandeur and cutting off its electricity, Azief would've felt that his very presence was unworthy of being there.

That said, the apocalypse had happened and he had no time to entertain such thoughts.

'The electricity has been cut off. Though perhaps that's for better,' he mused.

At least he wouldn't have to worry about attracting monsters here. With electricity, the sound of an alarm, the blaring of TV, or anything remotely obtrusive might draw zombies to the area.

Being someone from the lower caste of the old world, Azief couldn't even begin to describe the interior.

There were some expensive-looking paintings on the wall and even lying on the floor.

The wall itself was a work of art, while the interior design was themed with a lilac mauve color.

What was more impressive was the fact that, even with its current beauty, it could be said that the interior was a shadow of its former self.

Fragments of a plasma TV and shards of glass littered the floor and there were even some chandelier lights in the trash can.

'It must've been due to the earthquakes,' Azief mused as he sat down on the sofa.

The cushions were comforting, soothing, and clearly of higher quality. He even tried bouncing on them while the house's owner was preparing his drink. The man drank some cold water from the fridge and poured some into another glass to bring it to the living room.

Azief looked at the man in front of him and determined he was a middle-aged man. His guess hit the mark perfectly.

The man was a 35-year-old divorcee without children and a businessman who owned some shops in the Temerloh area.

He introduced himself with a long-ass name, but Azief just decided to call him "Tan". Fearing that Tan had ulterior motives, Azief questioned him with some more... forceful methods. He could never be too sure after all.

After an intense questioning session, Azief ascertained that Tan was indeed "clean" and that his house was safe.

Only after doing all of this did Azief sit down and completely relax. 'I guess being a rich man has some advantages even in the end times,' he mused. 'Then again, I'm not particularly planning to hunker down here.'

Azief only wanted to rest there for the night.

After that, in the morning, he would go to the mall and stock up on supplies.

Food, water, survival items, anything he could get his hands on.

From the moment he killed the badgers, he decided that he had to always be on the move.

Only then would he be able to guarantee his safety. 'I should stock up enough supplies to last until I find some type of safe haven. Maybe a government

base?' he thought, though he doubted the government's ability to survive, let alone drive back, this calamity.

Thinking about the fact that the politicians who abused their power wouldn't have that power anymore, he laughed gleefully. 'I'd like to kill a politician or two,' he thought. Just imagining it filled his heart with satisfaction.

His second objective was to return to his village.

Though his village wasn't far from the town, dangers now lurked everywhere.

One foul step and he could be hunted by all the zombies within the radius. He wasn't inclined to repeat that experience, after all, last time, it took him hours to shake the hoard.

Azief then looked at Tan and asked, "So what do you want?"

He wanted something. Azief wasn't naive enough to believe that someone would save him out of the goodness of their heart in these times.

The man sighed and stated, "You know I saw you, right?"

"Saw me?"

"Yes, I was on the second floor when the first meteors fell. I was terrified. So terrified, I couldn't even make any moves to run away. Though, in retrospect, that might've been a good thing."

"What do you mean?"

"I saw what happened to those who ran out of their home. Some called the police when the meteor first fell, but they never came. Others shoved and pushed each other as they scattered trying to escape the area. Many were trampled when the beasts came. Everyone that ran failed. Especially when the giant meerkat came."

“Then?” Azief asked, his eyes betrayed a trace of interest. He didn’t see such a beast when he was running.

“The meerkat cut dice a person to cubes of flesh with a single wipe. Those who ran were easily caught and eaten. I was petrified and thought that I would rather die in my house with some dignity than die outside like a bug. So, I closed the gate and locked my door to wait for the beast to come to my house.”

“And then?”

“It never came.”

“It never came?”

“Yes, it never came. All the monsters suddenly lost interest and moved elsewhere.”

“Why didn’t you go out after the beasts disappeared?”

“I was afraid there were other beasts in hiding, so I waited.”

Azief nodded in understanding.

They had similar circumstances.

Azief had to deal with the alien in the elementary school. Tan had to deal with the possibility of a beast lurking in the area.

The only reason Azief escaped was that he had the opportunity to do so. Azief knew that hiding would only get him caught and eaten in the long run.

‘This man...’ Azief thought and shook his head. ‘If he didn’t meet me would he stay in his house forever? If he did so, he only would be able to prolong his life for a bit. For someone like him, death was practically inevitable.???’

“You must not be the only one who survived by hiding? Surely there are others?” Azief asked.

“There were, but they were all found by the zombies and bitten.”

“Found! How?!”

“Noises, mainly. But they were also found due to strong smells. Also, most hiders had dead weight.”

“Like...?”

“Children. Some of the adults couldn’t handle the pressure and cracked, let alone a child. Some fools believed they were immortal and were eaten. Perhaps if there weren’t so many zombies, fighting might have been more effective...”

Hearing this story, Azief was only more convinced of the fragility of human life. Perhaps this was another mass extinction?

“I understand,” he said and took another sip.

For a while, the oppressive veil of silence covered the house.

“Other than me, everyone in my neighborhood has either been eaten or turned to zombies. The beast can be disregarded since they’ve probably left the area, leaving only the zombies.” Tan broke the silence.

“So, what do you want?” Azief asked sharply. “You invited me in, thus increasing your risk of being detected. You don’t know who I am and surely you didn’t save me selflessly.”

Tan smiled bitterly and said, “I want to ask a favor.”

“What?”

“Take me out of this area. Sooner or later the zombie will overrun this place. I can’t stay here forever. I still have food now, but later? I might even starve to death before the zombies get me.”

“Why me?”

“I said I saw you didn’t I? I saw you cut the zombies apart like pieces of paper. I saw you run fast as the wind, almost reaching the same levels of speed as the meerkat.”

“Oh? Hmm... I indeed can do that, but where do you want to go? Anywhere? I have my own goals too. If helping you requires that I diverge from my route I can’t help, you know?”

Azief’s priority right now was to gather supplies and to get to his village.

He didn’t have high hopes, but he still wanted to know.

Was his family still alive or not?

Considering the damage he saw in the city, it was highly likely his village was already ravaged. But either way, he needed to make sure. If they survived, he would surely shelter them and do his best to help. If not, he would do everything by himself.

The one thing he was sure of was that he wasn’t the only one who had gained power using the World Orb.

The starting line was unfair in the first place.

It was highly probable that there were people with much better stats than himself. There would be heroes and there would be criminals.

Azief recognized these possibilities from the very start of this nightmare. People with power would practically be gods. Heroes and villains. Snakes and dragons.

The existence of skillbooks only further threw everything into chaos.

Because they don’t drop that often, someone could form armies by promising skill books to their followers. Skillbooks would surely become a valuable resource to weather the coming storm.

The golden coin, too. Although Azief didn't know its use quite yet, he was sure that they were there for a reason

All these factors only lead to one conclusion: hoard everything.

Life wasn't fair.

Athletes and soldiers might've started 13 or 14 stamina or agility or even strength.

Children were unlikely to survive as their stats were probably lower than his at the start. [NovelNext.com](#)

There were countless people among the seven billion on Earth that had higher starting points than him, but were they as lucky as him?

Were they lucky enough to start by killing as many badgers and zombies as many as he did? If it wasn't for his luck, he definitely would've died a miserable death.

And if this applied to the humans, was it possible it applied to the zombies as well? Could they all have different starting points and abilities?

Azief sighed while thinking of all this and Tan could only shut his mouth to wait until Azief finished his thoughts.

Azief once again turned his mind to his family.

Even though Azief didn't have particularly strong feelings toward his family, at the end of the day, they were still his family.

He couldn't just leave them.

They still were his blood kin. Azief believed that family was stronger together, united. It was a complicated feeling. It was as if they were simultaneously family and not.

The more he thought about it, the more he thought that his situation was similar to playing house where everyone played a designated role.

The father was the moneymaker.

The mother was the homebody.

The children studied and worked while they ate the fruit of their parent's labor.

This game repeated daily until the parents were able to pass their roles down to their children perpetuating the cycle.

His family life was truly a travesty. Most of his family was just like him, stoic and emotionally stunted. All of them were too busy with their own problems anyway.

"One step at a time. Slowly. Slowly," he whispered so quietly only he could hear it.

Turning to Tan, he asked, "So how about it? You want me to get you out of here?"

"Yes, even if we have to settle your end first, I think following you has the highest chance of survival."

"I will allow that, but not without compensation first."

"Of course, I have money—"

"I don't want money. I want something else."

"What is it?"

"You'll know when the time comes," Azief said. Although, to tell the truth, he didn't know what he wanted, he just didn't want Tan to mooch off him without something in return. Money was just paper at this point. And though Tan didn't seem strong, even a rock could be turned into a knife if sharpened properly.

Tan nodded and said, "Whatever is required. When will we go? Tonight?" He was clearly afraid of attracting any aberrants.

"Tomorrow."

"Tomorrow?" Tan wanted to get far away, as fast as possible.

"Yes, tomorrow." Azief needed rest. If he overdrafted himself anymore he would be tearing himself apart from the seams.

"But the zombies are outside so wouldn't it b—"

"No, it's precisely because they're outside. Mr. Tan, I am tired and extremely exhausted. You saw me fighting those stiffies right? It's not easy. If I have to fight them again, in my condition, I don't think even I could survive, let alone help you."

"But in the morning it will be easier for us to be detected."

"Maybe. Maybe not. If we're lucky, the zombies will have moved to other areas by then. Wouldn't that be an even better time to escape? More so, considering you didn't kill the zombies, your level should still be 1 right? You'd be better off committing suicide than trying to fight the stiffies now. Only with my hel[at full power would we be able to survive."

Tan finally relented and asked, "So, what now?"

"Now you show me the way to a bedroom so I can rest. When I'm done in the morning we can go."

Tan just nodded and pointed to a spare room.

Azief, following his directions, went to the bedroom, then closed and locked the door.

Tan was still sitting on the sofa, drinking his water.

