

"So, where did you come from, stranger?"

After a silent walk for ten minutes she suddenly asked me that. During this time, I was totally absorbed in my own world.

In fact I never took what the old man told me before to the heart. I always thought he was lying. However all the things around me proved otherwise.

I didn't know how he did it, but I was teleported back in time, almost ninety-nine years, at the time of the beginning of the apocalypse.

It was such a hard time, where every single human life was challenged with each passing day.

The death toll of the apocalypse approximately exceeded ninety percent of the total population at this time. It wasn't only a severe blow to our civilization

where we lost everything we achieved for millennia, but it put the human race at the risk of extinction.

I didn't know if I should be grateful or resentful towards the old man. No one would ever like coming here and living this hell on his own accord. However I now had a chance. It was one of a kind chance to have a class of my own and change my own destiny.

"What tells you that I'm a stranger?" I plainly asked while trying to get my thoughts straight. I tried to recall everything I knew about the apocalypse. But I had one little problem here.

There were two totally different stories about what happened! One that I and everyone in my time lived to hear and believe in, and another that the old man narrated.

Strangely when putting the two against each other, I couldn't help but frown. The main line of events was similar, but the actions and deeds taken by people in such events were drastically different.

One story told how we only cared about our survival and didn't have a chance to do anything else. On the other hand the other told a legendary story of epic

battles and fierce resistance accompanied by many heroic actions and victories.

"C'mon, it's not that hard to tell," Isabella said before adding, "your name is weird and your clothes look strange. Not only your Asian features, but also your accent... it looks weird and funny."

I looked up at her and couldn't help but agree on her points. According to the old man she was a quick witted girl, a smart one who had a dream to become a president one day before the apocalypse.

Everything the old man told me about her looks and personality matched up with the young girl beside me. And that made me think about something he told me before sending me here.

Such a girl was destined to do great things in the apocalypse! How come she wasn't mentioned in the official records back in my time?

'If you have all of these amazing qualities, if many of the classless humans have such outstanding talents, how come their ancestors failed the days of the apocalypse this bad?'

The voice of the old man rang in my head, giving me a logical answer that I refused to believe before.

"You aren't telling?" she said in a sad tone.

"Tell me about yourself first," I tried to buy myself time to find a suitable and logical answer to her questions. After all, if what the old man said was true, then having this girl by my side was something important for my survival.

"Oh, that's bad of me," she realized she was asking without giving anything about herself first, "I'm from Washington DC, came here to attend the world student forum. I came with my friends of my high school, but they aren't that fun to be with."

"Bullying you?" I asked while trying to recall more info about her. Despite hearing the stories of the old man for endless times thanks to the annoying beads, I didn't truly remember everything.

My mind wasn't interested in hearing such lies, so many things didn't stick there. At this moment I regretted not listening, not taking these stories more seriously or else I would have more info about this girl.

"You can say that about them," she admitted in such a calm tone as if it was nothing, "but it's the last year there. After that I'll move to one of the big colleges, start my real life, and try to achieve my goals."

"Which are?" I tried to kill time by asking logical questions and let her speak instead of me.

"You'd laugh if I told you about them," she seemed hesitant and I couldn't prevent myself from smiling.

"Don't tell me you aim to become this country's president one day," I said while watching her facial expression diligently.

I wanted to know... Wanted to know if what I remembered about her was true or not... Wanted to know if she was truly the girl the old man once told me about or not.

"H... How can you guess that?!" as if I caught her red handed, her face showed a shocked expression. But it was nowhere near my shock.

'It's... Real!' I thought to myself, 'she is... Real!'

"I just said the hardest dream to achieve," as she was the real deal, I didn't give her any reason to doubt me here, "but it's a good dream for such a young girl like you."

"Speaking as if you are an old man yourself," she chuckled and her face beamed with happiness.

She seemed like a lonely girl who was mistreated and misunderstood by her peers. A girl with a great dream that no one believed in.

She was, strangely, like me. I felt like I could really understand her better than anyone she ever met. After all, we two were the same, trying to fight our own battles solo in such a harsh world and against all the odds.

"I just admire your ambition," I felt like giving her positive comments would help in getting her closer to me, "I wish I could have such big dreams as you."

"Then what are your dreams, Hi?" she asked and I couldn't help but correct her: "It's Hye, like Hey, not Hi."

"Still a funny name to me," she giggled before adding, "tell me about your dreams, Hye."

I looked up at her bright smile and couldn't help but be lost in thoughts.

All the hardships I lived through so far resurfaced in a flash inside my mind. All the injustice I was dealt with, all the blocks that stood tall in front of my path... Everything I experienced was there in front of my eyes, just like a faint dream I hardly recalled.

"I want... To just survive and thrive in this world," I slowly said.

"I believe you will do just fine," she didn't realize the deep meaning of my words, "oh, we arrived already, time really flew fast."

In front of me I saw the grand and famous central park of this city, the place I selected to be the starting point of my journey.

The place was crowded, just like everything else in New York. Just seeing people walking around, chatting and laughing, having peace in their lives, made me feel jealous.

I came from a world where I had to bow my head to survive, not to raise my eyes or voice or do anything that might enrage any of other races.

I always thought I was living my life before. However, seeing all these people with no death threats in their lives and only worrying about useless things like work and salary made me realize something.

I wasn't living my life before... I was living inside a prison! A grand prison that took away anything that could make life really exist and meaningful. And the most important thing they took from us, from me, was hope.

"Where do you want to go?" she asked after we entered the park, "to the Metropolitan museum of art? That's where the grand meeting will occur."

"We have time till that, right?" I recalled she said we still have a few hours left before that meeting which I knew wouldn't happen. The apocalypse was about to come to the world in less than an hour.

I needed to go somewhere before this happened, and I needed her to be with me at that moment.

"We have..." she looked at her phone before adding, "around three hours left."

"Good," I said, "let's go to the green lawn then."

"Aren't you hungry?" she suddenly asked, "why not pick food on our way there?"

I knew food as people of this world knew of wouldn't exist after the apocalypse. However I always heard legends about the fast food here, especially the burger that I never tasted before.

"Let's have a burger then," I firmly said while she nodded.

"Good choice, I also crave for one right now."

As we walked towards the nearest outlet to sell burgers, I started to finally make up my mind. 'I don't care who is right and wrong, all I want is to have a class of my own and survive this sh*t,' I said to myself, declaring my decision in my mind. 'I want to live not like a loser, but for once in my life... Like a winner, a real winner.'

I clenched my fists while slowly following Isabella's steps.