



The hooded man appeared in front of Hamad, looking down at him.

“Give that to me.”

A cold and commanding tone. Hamad was familiar with this kind of tone, but normally only his superiors would use it.

That didn’t stop the hooded man’s words from sending chills down his back, however.

It was almost like he was completely devoid of emotions.

Azief never had a good impression of the police. In his mind, all government cronies were corrupt.

Mobs like regular police officers took small bribes that might not even amount to 50 ringgit, while the higher-ups took enough bribes to comfortably fund a family for a lifetime.

Still, it wasn’t as if he hated the police, after all, if he was in their position, he’d take any bribes he could get too. At the end of the day, everyone needs money to live.

Back to the present, Hamad handed the bead back to Azief. He didn’t even hesitate. Or rather, he didn’t have the luxury to do so.

Azief radiated a crushing pressure and Hamad didn’t want to find out what would happen if he disobeyed.

Then, from behind, came a girly voice. “What’s that?” Sofia asked.

“My loot,” came the reply from Azief as he observed the bead. It felt solid, but a little bit squishy at the same time.

Now that he really thought about it, Azief didn't know what he could do with the little bead. A precious gem? Enchanting? Something else?

Did he have to... eat it? It didn't seem like any of the above and by following game logic wouldn't it be some type of consumable?

Well, regardless, he couldn't just do nothing. If he stored it into his ring and a beast somehow detected him, he wouldn't make it to tomorrow. As if to complicate things, there was an audience. Azief couldn't just break his imposing character to store it away.

Well, whatever.

Bringing it up to his mouth, Azief swallowed.

Unpleasant and bitter.

Those were the only words Azief could think of as the bead suddenly melted and his body became lighter.

Craaaack

An unpleasant sound rang out as waves of scorching pain attacked his mind. His body was undergoing a transformation. His bones broke and healed, growing stronger.

Break. Heal. Strengthen.

Break. Heal. Strengthen.

Break. Heal. Strengthen.

This painful cycle continued and Azief sank to the ground.

"Are you alright?" Sofia asked, shocked by what had just transpired. Let alone her, everyone on the scene was shocked that the hooded man would just eat the unknown bead. They might not know its use, but they couldn't imagine it was meant to be eaten.

Azief, preoccupied, could only raise his hand and motion for Sofia to stop. Lakshmi, on the other hand, was looking at the hooded man's expression. She did not expect that the hooded man would eat the bead.

Suddenly, the standstill was broken as Azief grinned.

You have eaten the Bead Of Life. 5 strength, 5 agility, and infection immunity against the Giant Fanged Cat have been rewarded.

'Should I go back and check the badger's corpse for another bead?' Azief thought.

Unfortunately, to do so, he'd have to go back to the area near the elementary school. Right now, that was too big a risk. Although he wasn't sure how strong the alien was, he was willing to bet it wasn't weak.

With great risks come great rewards, right?

No.

Maybe for the protagonist, but he certainly wasn't one. He didn't have plot armor. He wasn't blessed by the heavens. If he took unnecessary risks he'd die.

Azief may be greedy, but he wasn't suicidal. He'd much rather take the bird in hand, rather than covet the one in the bush.

Ever the opportunist, Azief crouched down next to the beast's body to check that he hadn't missed anything.

He didn't care if he offended the group that was watching him. If they were determined to fight him, he'd easily be able to kill them all with Sofia's support. He didn't think he needed to fear such a ragtag group even if he was by himself.

"Azi-" Sofia was about to ask what he was doing when she was interrupted by him.

“Shh!” Azief directed at her and said to the group in front of him, “My name is Lord Shadow.”

“Lord Shadow...” Hatta said absentmindedly as he realized that his character name didn’t need to be the same as his own.

Actually, thinking about it, names had no meaning in this new world. If anything, the purpose of naming yourself was to shed the old you and become reborn.

Upon this new realization, Hatta grew more excited. Who was he before the fall? Nobody.

He hung around a bad crowd and, ultimately, his life amounted to nothing. He was selfish, impulsive, and rash.

The mundanity and orderliness of his previous life stifled him. Only in the chaos of this new world could offer him something he wanted.

Surely the act of giving someone the opportunity to rename themselves was symbolic of giving them a chance to write a declaration of intentions.

But when it came time to name his character, he unconsciously chose Hatta.

As various thoughts were going through his head, Azief was looting the corpse and whistling in joy.

Enjoy the little things. The world may be ending, but if he didn’t enjoy the little things what would be left to do in life.

Wanting to be useful, Sofia approached the corpse and tried to strike at it. A sound akin to metal clashing against metal rang out. *Novelnext.com*

“This beast’s skin is too hard,” she complained, to which Azief nodded. Everyone could feel his displeasure and impatience. Following this, he surprised everybody by stabbing his hand directly into the beast’s corpse.

“Hey! Aren’t you afraid of getting infected?” the girl shouted.

“I have immunity,” Azief casually replied.

Hearing this, the bystanders all gasped. Infection immunity! To think such a thing existed!

Unfortunately, this was a misunderstanding on their part. Azief didn’t have immunity against all infections, but only against the fanged cat. The closest he had come to that was the special bonuses of his Shadow Lord set.

Nonetheless, Hamad’s group had been awed.

Looking into the cat’s corpse there was nothing but a black bile emitting an even blacker miasma. Ripping it out from the beast corpse, the system’s voice spoke in his head.

You have removed the poison from a beast’s body rendering the meat edible. Eating a mutated beast’s meat can increase your stats.

He looked back at the black bile. If both the bead and its meat gave him something, wouldn’t the bile do the same? Perhaps he could use it to make poisoned weapons?

The beast’s body was really a treasure trove. Unfortunately, all good things must come to an end, the only things left around them were the other group’s loot.

Gold coins littered the streets.

He didn’t know it could be used for and when he tried to check nothing appeared from the system.

Still, it wasn’t as if the monsters would drop it for no reason. It might just be that he needed to level up to access the coins functions.

Looking at Sofia, he ordered, “Store this thing inside your ring.”

“The corpse?” Sofia asked, bewildered.

“Yes.”

“What are you planning to do with it?”

“We’re going to eat it.”

“Can you-“

“Just do your job, would you?”

“Hmph, fine.”

Azief then began to steal the group’s coins. And although they couldn’t stand someone making off with their hard-earned loot, they couldn’t do anything for the fear of the repercussions.

In this new world, strength reigned king. If Azief was weaker than them he wouldn’t dare to be so overbearing. He could only look on in frustration as the group stole his loot and curse at his weakness if that was the case. Luckily he was strong and so the situation was reversed.

If anything, Hamad was thinking about asking this person to join them.

He was even willing to surrender his leader status if that would convince them. After all, it would be much safer if they could convince the hooded man to go to the capital with them.

It only took 5 minutes for the surroundings to be completely looted. And, as they finished, Azief looked at the group and said, “Thank you.”

After saying this, the two began to walk away unceremoniously.

From their actions, Hamad’s crew could see that they didn’t care about them, nor did they even care to try and form a relationship.

Azief was completely focused on his goals. He needed to get to his village and determine the status of his family.

Then he needed to challenge the alien at the elementary school. He didn't have time to babysit these people.

Although his objectiveness in delegating goals could be seen as somewhat cold, basically dehumanizing his family, doing so was the only way he could remain somewhat stable.

At the end of the day, they were still family after all. Even if he knew it was unrealistic for them to survive, he wanted to hope.

Sofia was the same. She had to get to her village and to see her mother. Moreso, she needed to grow stronger individually so the premise of safety in numbers was useless to her.

The two had already gotten what they wanted so it was only natural that they would leave, but just as they were about to, Hamad shouted.

"Wait, Lord Shadow! Would you join our group?"

Hearing this, Azief paused, and, for a moment that felt like an eternity, he did nothing.

Then he smiled a mysterious smile and the crowd waited suspensefully for an answer.

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