1929 First Generation

The shock of having killed an infected rattled Orum. He had slain several monsters in that strange dream of his... but those were monsters in the dream. The hideous creature in front of him had been a human once, and they were in the real world.

Monsters had no place in the real world.

...But killers had.

After all, the real world was not that different from a nightmare.

Wiping his sweat, he turned away, pulled his sister close, and shielded her from the gruesome sight.

'We can't stay still. We need to get away from this district before the fire spreads.'

"Orie..."

He looked at his sister and forced out a smile.

"It's fine. I'm not hurt. It's... it's all going to be fine."

He remembered hearing the ghostly voice say that he had received something... some kind of memory. That was not the first time he had heard these words, but their meaning escaped him.

He was certain that he would not forget these terrible days for as long as he was alive, but wasn't it natural to retain the memories of what happened to you? Why had the voice felt the need to announce such a strange thing?

Gritting his teeth, Orum stood up, gasped at the pain in his wounded leg, then picked up his sister and started to limp away. The rag he had used to bandage the wound was already soaked in blood, which was now pooling in his shoe. Ignoring the repulsive sensation, he hurried his steps.

'l‘hen, hearing another howl, he ignored the pain and ran.

Orum ran as fast as he could — which was incredibly fast, compared to what he had been capable of just a few days ago. His body had grown unbelievably strong after the strange dream, reaching a pinnacle of what humans should be capable of. It was all very magical.

And yet, it wasn't enough.

Pretty soon, Orum stopped, looking around in desperation.

They were on a wide intersection, surrounded by burning tanks. There... there was nowhere to run, anymore.

That was because several infected had been feasting on the corpses of the soldiers that littered the ground here, and were now staring at him with bestial eyes. Several more were rushing from behind, only a few seconds away from catching up.

Orum held his sister tighter, not knowing what to do.

No, he knew what he had to do. He had to fight. It was just that fighting these monsters was suicide, even if he still had the gun.

Or... he could try to escape. Alone. If he lost the pack of supplies weighing him down... as well as his sister...

He shuddered, revolted and loathing himself for the momentary thought.

He would not leave his sister behind, ever, and that meant... that meant that both of them were going to die here.

Orum slowly lowered the little girl to the ground, then picked up a length of iron pipe that lay nearby, slightly bent and heavy in his grip.

If he was going to die, then he would die fighting. He would die taking as many of these monsters with him as he could.

However...

Orum did not die.

Just when the infected were prepared to lunge at him, something whistled in the air, and the head of one of the infected exploded.

A split second later, another fell to the ground, and then one more.

Each was hit directly in the eye.

He shook off his shock and raised the ground in front of them akin to a wall, the cracked asphalt scattering into the air. The wall shuddered when two monstrous creatures crashed into her, producing an appalling sound of breaking bones. Orum toppled the wall of earth onto them and raised his pipe, bringing it down on the cracked skull of the first creature to emerge from beneath the debris.

The ghostly voice whispered into his ear again:

[You have slain...]

He killed the second infected, as well, although that one took several blows.

By then, their pursuers were already upon them — or rather, they were sprawled on the ground, blood flowing from jagged holes in their heads.

Orum tiredly lowered his pipe, took his sister's hand, and looked around in confusion.

A few moments later, he froze.

Someone had walked out of the smoke. It was a beautiful young woman in dark military clothes, visibly one or two sizes too large for her frame. She had gorgeous raven-black hair and a confident gaze, using a high— powered magnetic rifle as a walking stick to help her walk.

And she needed the help, because she... she seemed to be late into her pregnancy. Her belly protruded forward like a ripe fruit, and she was using her other hand to support it.

Orum recognized her as his savior and bowed hurriedly.

"Th— thank you..."

The young woman glanced at him, then hung the rifle over her shoulder and outstretched a hand. His eyes widened when a scary-looking hunting knife appeared in it, seemingly out of thin air.

She studied him for a moment, then smiled lightly.

"What's your name, boy?"

Orum gulped.

"It's... it's Orie."

She nodded, then smiled wider and offered him the strange knife.

"Well, what are you waiting for? We need to get the shards before more of them appear. And it's a bit hard for me to bend down, at the moment... so..."

He stared at her in incomprehension.

"The... the shards? What shards? Wait, where did this knife come from? How did you..."

The young woman blinked a couple of times.

"Right. I guess not everyone has figured these things out inside the trial. Well, worry not, Orie... I'll explain to you what a soul shard is, what a Memory is, and how to survive the end of the world."

She lingered for a moment, and then added with a smile:

"Oh, I'm Jiwon, by the way... Song Jiwon."

She patted her belly.

"And this little bean is my future daughter. She'll be a real princess, no doubt..."