

No one goes outside the safezone. It was one of those common sense things. Like, *you need air to live, or, water is important, or pain hurts.* One of those things. The only difference being, it wasn't always like that. Not since ten years ago. Not since when the world ended and became this shithole.

A wave flushed him. Ten years. A decade of his life since ...

Since they came.

Black figures swayed on his scope. They were obscured by the dead trees, only ever being visible in the moonshine. They lingered along the shore.

Monsters. Devils.

Stealers. In the far distance, past the gray and decayed land, there was a small silhouette. There were houses. Broken, old, withered houses.

There was a pillar that loomed over the rest. A clock tower. He bit his lip. Would it still be ticking? Or would it be forever frozen at that moment?

The scope zoomed in. Three monsters patrolled the area. Under the naked eye at night, they would've blended in. Hell, he could barely see them now. They had twisted arms. They had claws that sprung out of their fingers. And they had that *swaying*.

Like silk ribbons that could fly from a wind's touch. But of course, silk ribbons couldn't kill as much as them.

Zooming back, one figure moved across. Like a spider, it navigated through the shore. Four legs and two arms, they twitched with each movement it made.

A chill broke his slow breath.

There it went. Crawling deeper into the shore. Its legs teetered on the edge. The waves crashed down, and for a second, it almost met the monster's legs. It never did.

Like all devils, they could never cross the Great River. The single buffer between him and them. No one knew why. They ran their muddy presence through every other body of water. But not this one.

A few flies flickered along his ear. He threw his hand out and turned around.

Silence. The only sound was the buzz of the flies, but that wasn't much of a surprise. Being this close to the safezone. There was no sound of grass to brush his ear, no trees, and even the wind abandoned this place.

Only dirt and grime lived here.

Szun squinted. People lived here.

The losers of the game of luck. Born here, they slept in houses made of loose straws, ate whatever unfortunate animals they could find, and worked until their backs broke. The lowest class. Even a homeless back home had it easier than them.

He turned his head to the right. Beyond there was a thin, two story building. The inn.

Sadisha, Kei, and Boein were probably fast asleep there, but for him, the day had begun.

A whisk of orange sunlight shone through the sky.

Szun looked down. His hands weren't trembling. His legs stood tall as he stood up.

It was peaceful. It was silent. It was the calm before the storm. Because tomorrow ...

He put his hand on his chest. Because tomorrow, he was going outside. Since ten years ago, he was finally going outside the safezone.

