

Prologue

I always knew that Korean parents were dedicated to having their children learn English at any cost, but it wasn't until Zombies struck that the idea was proved to me without a doubt. Today is the end of the world, and yet I've spent my day teaching like any other day. Well, perhaps it wasn't just like any other day, with the barricades, the explosions, and everything else, but it's pretty close. I'll run it down for those of you still alive with Internet access not fighting the Zombie hoard yet...

Working at private academies would be the death of me. I just never knew it would be the death of so many others all around me. I'm blogging like it's the end of the world...because it is....

Chapter 1: The Encounter

I went out for my morning walk with my small dog Yoshi. We do a fairly regular lap around the block for exercise. I happened to take Yoshi near the park, which he simply loves. He showed his appreciation by tugging on his leash as he struggled against the restraint. Yoshi loves rolling in the grass as we walk through the park, and I don't mind letting him enjoy his time outside before I have to go to work and leave him on the veranda all day to wait for his owners to return. I had actually taken the detour through the park as a way to investigate some loud booms and crash sounds I had heard over breakfast. As Yoshi and I were walking through the grass, I saw a strange looking man swaying in the middle of the park with his back facing me.

He was rocking back and forth with the wind as he stared into the sky. I thought he might have been looking at something high in the sky far off in the distance, but he didn't have his hands up to protect his eyes from the glare. His suit was covered in dirt and something dark running down his shoulders. Having seen lost and confused businessmen waking up after a long of drinking had left them to crash in the park inebriated, this man looked as if he had reached the point where alcohol had overwhelmed his body's ability to move. He looked as if was undergoing some sort of "soft reboot" of his brain. His liver was offline and he was simply waiting for it to start working again so he could stumble home.

His head snapped down with an audible crack and grind, like gristle being chewed on a tough steak, and he turned his shoulders to face me. His eyes were blank and emotionless, but yet he stared directly at me in a way that gave me chills. He was missing his lower jaw, and his upper teeth were exposed from a tear in his cheek. His tongue flopped disgustingly where his lower jaw used to be, like a fish thrashing to be returned to the water. A ghastly moan came from what remained of his mouth as he stuck out an arm and started rocking his legs and hips towards me and my dog. The moan startled Yoshi as much as it did me, and we quickly reversed direction, walking backwards to keep our view of the man. The moaning got louder and more desperate as the man, or what resembled one, began to follow us.

We ran in the direction of our apartment, backpedaling. As we crossed the street, I scooped up Yoshi in

my arms. Yoshi is normally a friendly dog, but started barking immediately after the man started his chase. The man was stumbling and jerking his knee outwards on each step as his shoulders hunched. He would thrust a hip forward, then collapse his shoulders inward, lean back, then a leg would burst forward and he would take another step. Dog in hand, I and ran across the street and up the steps leading to our apartment complex. From our stoop, I lost sight of the man briefly, but could tell from his sounds he was farther off than before. His particular form of locomotion was too odd and slow to give effective chase.

He had tried to follow us across the street but had fell off the curb and had collapsed in the middle of the road. His leg had broken and stuck out of his soiled pants, thus explaining his slowed speed. He was crawling, dragging himself forward with his arms, intact leg, and what remained of his upper teeth. His wailing moan didn't stop even as he used his teeth to pull himself towards us.

Filled with adrenaline from this relentless pursuit, I rushed back to the apartment to tell my wife I had seen something completely unbelievable. There was a flurry of activity on the first floor of the apartment buildings I passed, and our own security guard was shouting orders as cars were being moved in front of the entrances. I squeezed past the barricades and went up to our apartment. My wife was waiting at the door with the Korean news already on. There had been an announcement from the security guard via the apartment intercom system that everyone should turn on the television and prepare weapons. Something was wrong.

Chapter 2: The Crisis

The news had this to say: “For reasons unknown, the dead have risen and are devouring the flesh of the living. The Zombie Uprising started locally sometime this morning. Attacks around the world have been reported, but the majority of them remain largely unconfirmed.”

“Locally, The National Cemetery seems to be where the initial outbreak was centered in the Daejeon area. The first reported attacks this morning were from people near and around Hanbat University, the highest populated area around the cemetery. There have also been reports of mountainside attacks: people were being attacked by relatives they were visiting for ancestral funeral rights.”

Devoured by your own great-grandfather, how's that for irony? It's rather fortunate most people are cremated these days.

“After the National Cemetery and rural attacks, the survivors swarmed to understaffed hospitals ill prepared for treating such emergencies. Hospitals are now unsafe and choked with the dead. Repeat. Do not go to hospitals as they are overrun and are dangerous.”

You can easily get your upper eyelid sliced to look more Western in Daejeon, but quarantining a viral zombie outbreak? Dr. Lee's plastic surgery doesn't even have the procedures to begin such an undertaking. It wasn't a surprise the entire city was crawling, limping, and squirming with the undead.

“Stay at home. Everyone must follow the previously discussed evacuation plan. Repeat, stay at home. Stockpile food and fresh water. Make your home safe from attacks. Officials expect that a large number of attacks will occur as the zombies move from the Nation Cemetery in the west into more populated areas in the eastern parts of the city. Apartment complexes in Seogu region should be on high alert. Check on your neighbors and make sure they follow the evacuation plan. Check on the elderly. Children should be...”

“Seogu is under high alert? We live in Seogu!” my wife shouted.

The news broadcast then started to repeat itself. My head spun, as if I was in a tunnel with flickering lights that were flashing out of sync. Things didn’t make sense. Just then, my phone buzzed in my pocket distracting me from the television broadcast. Emergency alerts were sent out to everyone with phones suggesting that we were not to picnic in the National Cemetery, or go hiking in the mountains until the Zombies (좀비) (*Chom-bi*, No “Z” sound in Korean) were properly eliminated. So, no picnics in Zombie central. Gotcha. Thanks for the update Emergency Center! That’s the kind of quick, helpful response for which they are known.

A worldwide outbreak of the living dead seemed like a good enough reason to call in sick for work, or at least barricade my family in the house for the rest of our lives. Not soon after we had “zombie proofed” the house by setting up the table in behind our door did I get a call from my director.

“Of course you know, there has been a problem outside of town. Some people are getting bitten, and I wanted to know if you were okay. Is it possible for you to come to class and teach?”

“Teach? Are you kidding me?! It’s the apocalypse. Ah-pock-oh-lip-suh! The news said to stay home and stockpile food and water. Why would I want to go outside to teach?”

“That’s true, but the mothers of the students still want their children to learn English. We will prepare a special lesson for today about life after the Zombie Uprising. They will need to learn English to coordinate with other survivors. They will need English to survive after their parents have been eaten.”

“After their parents have been...eaten?”

“Yes. We will have classes today. Please come a little early to help with the barricades. Bring some food and some weapons. Anything useful you think you might need. Don’t take the subway. It’s very crowded with the dead. Goodbye.”

I always knew that Korean parents were dedicated to having their children learn English at any cost, but it wasn’t until Zombies struck that the idea was proved to me without a doubt. Today is the end of the world,

and I still have to teach. Perfect.

This was above and beyond the call of duty. Sure, the undead rising and eating the flesh of the living in an unholy orgy of chaos and destruction is terrible, but have you ever had to deal with immigration when you don't have the proper documents upon completion of a contract? Talk about hell on Earth! Assuming there was a safe country to escape to, if such a place existed, the proper paperwork from immigration and release letters would be the only way I'd be allowed to get out of the country with my wife and dog.

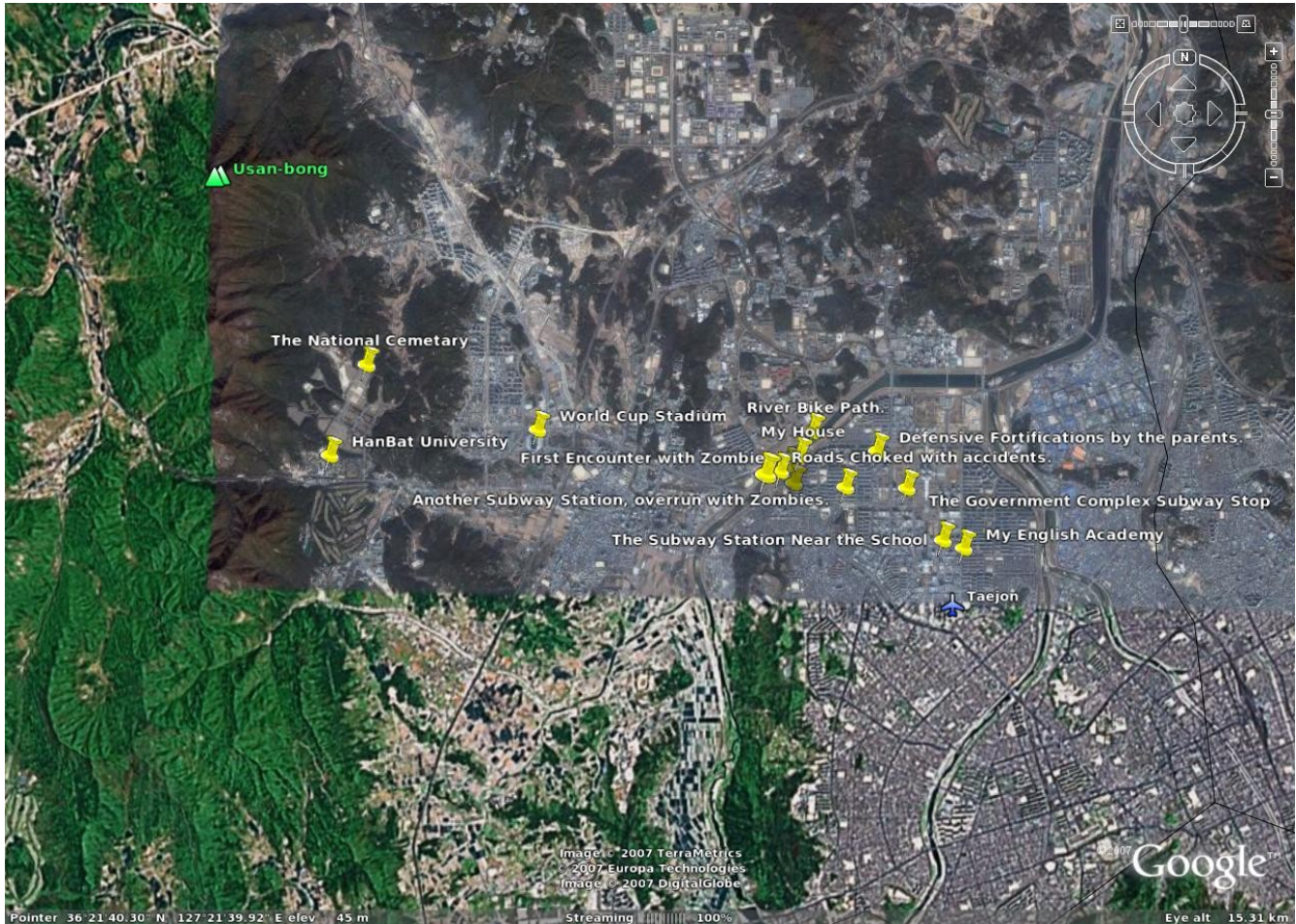
Despite my wife's protests, I got ready to go to work. She had a day off, not because her director had canceled classes, but because her director had been eaten. Just my luck she'd get to stay home to fend for her life while I still had to go to work. She promised to keep herself, and Yoshi safe until I returned.

Our apartment complex had turned into a fairly defensible position while I had chatted with my wife. People had destroyed the first flight of stairs, and had turned off the elevator. The fire exits had always been blocked with a mass of bicycles, old kimchi fermenting pots, and deflated soccer balls. They were impassable long before the dead had risen and turned them into a possible security concern. The security guards simply piled more furniture from residents on top of the existing mess.

As I left, old women were preparing to bunker down as I left by massing hot peppers, and cabbage and other kimchi ingredients. They might go down, but they'd go down eating well with their smelly cultural dish scattered all around them. The smell of fermented cabbage hung in the air heavily. The men, of all ages past puberty were wearing their military uniforms and saluting each other. At least they had learned Taekwondo while they were conscripted in the army for two years. The only self defense training I ever had was when I watched "Karate Kid" back in Elementary school. "Wax On, Wax Off" didn't seem like it would keep the zombies at bay.

Despite the heat, I had worn thick pants and a thickly layered jacket. My leather bag was filled with my house's largest butcher knife. Carefully wrapped inside were some bandages, some aspirin, gauze, and rubbing alcohol. My wife said these were for the certitude that I'd cut myself seriously just walking around with the knife long before I ever encountered the living dead. She told me she placed a enough food for a few days, and some water, and a book to stave off boredom in my bag as well.

I released my own bicycle from the abstract tangle that blocked the fire escape and worked my way down the steps carrying the bicycle on my shoulders. I lowered the bicycle from the destroyed set of steps, and squeezed my way past the security guard again that had set up a rudimentary defense of gas lines from an upper apartment connected to a hose with what looked to be a gas range spark lighter attached on the end. He was testing the homemade flamethrower by torching a pile of leaves, which sent off a thick black smoke obscuring the surroundings. Despite his urging to practice with his weapon I rode off in the direction of my school under the cover of a heavy smoke fog, uncertain who was going to try to eat my brains.



(Via Google Earth)

Chapter 3: The Commute

I rode on my bike through the city streets, on my way back to where I had last seen the man that had chased me. Thinking over this new information from the broadcast as I went, the focal point of the outbreak, The National Cemetery, laid out of town to the west of our apartment building. A subway connects these outlying areas at a few stops as it travels eastward through the heart of the city. There was a stop at the National cemetery, the World Cup Stadium, and another stop not far from the park where I had encountered the man that had chased me. What my director had said about the subway being choked full of the dead must have been true. My encounter this morning must have been with an undead subway commuter. He had traveled the 6 kilometers from his grave to the park underground. Most of the undead, if they were headed this direction, were on foot and were hopefully still far enough away that preparations could be made.

On a normal day, I would take this same subway to work, as it stopped a half a block from my school, but instead I had a 2.5 kilometer ride between my apartment and work by bike. I never owned a car, and I didn't have a license in Korea. Even if I had decided to steal a car, it wouldn't be much help anyway. The

streets that led away from the National Cemetery and mountains were flooded with people that had tried to drive away from their problems. Signs of accidents were more apparent as you got to major arteries.

The sounds I had set out to investigate this morning must have been the first people driving to swerve to avoid the zombies that ran onto the streets after people had run panicked out of the subway stations. These accidents had caused snarling pile ups, and the remains of zombies, drivers, and burning cars were strewn in greater intensity as you approached larger roads. The occasional motorcycles and bike still weaved their way through the debris heading east to apartments on this side of the river, away from the cemetery.

The zombie that had chased me before was easy to find. I wanted to see what we were “up against” so to speak. If I was going to be rushing through the city, I wanted to see what I would be running from. He had been flattened by a vehicle as he had tried to cross the street. His arm had fallen off in the crawl over to the middle yellow line, but the marks where a large truck had hit him were easy to pick out. His head had been crushed and a long, greasy gray stain marked the end of his progress. I snapped a picture with my phone, just in case my director wouldn’t believe my story. I kept my bike at a distance, ready to pedal like mad if there were any further signs of movement in the remains on the street.

From where I was on my bike I could see movement further down the street, closer to the subway station. I decided I’d have to take the “long way” to work even in a time of crisis, and stick near the river. A bicycle path wound its way around near the river and it led for wide open views of the surroundings while pointing in the general direction I was headed.

My phone buzzed. I jumped, thinking the detached arm of the zombie had crawled over and was going to get its revenge for being left in the street. It was a Text Message from my wife: Yoshi & Me safe. With neighbors. They have kimchi and rice for us. Be Careful. Keep student safe! Fighting! Love you. Bye.

I put the phone back into my pocket and scanned the horizon. No one was walking their dog in the park now. I had the place entirely to myself as I went along the river on my bike. I suppose everyone else had the sense to stay home from work and prepare for what was to come.

My apartment block was the first immediately after the river to the west. The river then curved and formed a shallow moat, blocking off the city of Yuseong to the west, and even further, the National cemetery. As I rode along east, I eventually had to leave the bike path and head through the apartments that housed the students I usually taught. I passed the various apartment blocks on the way to work with a sign of a student helping their parents.

I saw that there was a frenzy of activity as people worked on fortifications, as each apartment block tried to become a self-sustained community during the “siege from the west” they had predicted on the news. Since I was a foreigner on a bicycle, people didn’t seem to treat me as a threat as I rolled past. I clearly had too much coordination riding a bike to be a zombie. They seemed to know where I was headed, and

would pull cars blocking the streets out of the way for me.

Parents just looked on in amazement as I rode towards my destination. I got a few salutes from fathers, and a lot of tearful looks of appreciation from mothers. What the hell was going on? Why was everyone looking at a foreigner going to work like I was some sort of hero? Why weren't they trying to draft me into helping them block gates and prepare weapons? Where were all the children? Shouldn't they be running around, or crying somewhere? The only explanation I could think of was that the children must all be locked up at home while their parents work on the apartment. I had something more pressing to worry about.

Apartment block after apartment block peeled its layers of defenses behind me as I went towards the center of the neighborhood where my school was located. Between me and my destination was one more subway station. The Government complex subway stop would probably be crawling with the undead. After my last encounter in the park, I dreaded going too close. I heard another loud boom in the distance and thought it odd that there were still cars exploding this far east. Surely traffic had stopped moving long ago.

The Government complex was surrounded by large fields, and a low gate fence. On most days, armed guards blocked every entrance and carried machine guns to stop cars at the gate leading up to the largest government buildings outside of Seoul. Today the place was being descended upon by military helicopters. The four identical gray buildings each had a helicopter flying about or circling around its peak. They were evacuating the staff of the governmental offices. This was not a good sign of things to come.

The Government Complex subway station had been imploded. Some military officials waved me past on my bike as they surveyed the results of their work. I went past the military barricades without needing to explain a word about where I was headed. The exits of the subway station had all been closed, and the street between them had collapsed from the detonation. If the Zombies were crawling through the subways, they wouldn't get farther than the Government Complex.

First the parents let me by, then the military. All this so a foreigner could go to work. They really did take English education seriously. Still, I hadn't seen a single child on my entire ride as I passed through the last of the apartment blocks and rolled up near the school. Perhaps school would be canceled despite what my director said, and I wouldn't have to teach after all. Then I could go back home and think about living just a little longer.

Chapter 4: Work

I was finally close enough to start my approach to the school. When I was only a few blocks away I figured out why I hadn't seen any children on my bike ride through town. They were all here. All of them. The entire population of the city under the age of 15 had been brought to this location. This was the

center of all the apartments in this region. Different groups of students gathered around their different schools. Some looked scared. Others looked like they were enjoying an opportunity to hang out with friends.

“Teacher! Teacher!”

I heard the cry of one of my students. He was sitting on the ground, holding his knee. His English name was, “Mike”.

“Hey Mike, what’s wrong?” I shouted. I parked my bike at the overcrowded bike stand. Thousands of bikes lined the streets, along with scooters, kick boards, skateboards, and any other form of childhood locomotion available. Mike was wearing inline skates and a helmet and was clutching a bloody knee.

I rummaged through my bag to find my bandages. I dove my hand into the bag. I cursed my forgetfulness as I felt the long handle of the knife in my hand. I was lucky not to have sliced off a finger. I carefully removed my knife, and then dug through the remaining supplies to come up with the anti-bacterial medicine for his leg. A quick dive through the exterior pockets of the bag and I had the needed supplies laid out in front of me.

I went about cleaning up his wound.

“So, when did you get here? What’s going on?” I asked him.

“I put on my skates and came here with my friends. My mom and dad are at home. They got a message on their phone. They said not to worry. They told me to go to English school. Teacher, what is happening?”

I finished wiping his leg with the alcohol and went to apply his bandage. “I wish I knew Mike. I wish I knew.”

Mike, with his newly bandaged leg, got up and skated around me in a circle. “Let’s go find the Director. She told me to come into work. She’ll know what’s going on.”

We climbed the steps to the school. Some strange children I didn’t recognize were cooking ramyeon noodles with a gas burner on the stairwell. I went up the stairs, and Mike trudged up behind me with his inline skates still on his feet.

“We found him! Teacher’s here!” Mike shouted as he rolled into the school behind me. “I brought him!”

A gaggle of middle school students flocked around me. “Whatwasgoingon? Whyarewehere?”

WHYAREYOUHERE? WHENCANWEGOHOME?" they questioned in unison. Mike circled them shouting, "Don't ask him he doesn't know anything! Really!"

Such a vote of confidence.

"To answer your questions, I'm not sure. I'm sure it's to keep you safe, I wish I knew, and maybe never." I replied. This seemed to quiet the girls down for a little bit as they collectively put their heads together to parse my answer. I took the opportunity to escape their ring and took a look around. Where was my director? Where were my coworkers?

While most of the students I saw were familiar to me, I saw a few I had never met before hanging out with their friends. There were about a hundred. Some of the students must be visiting friends at other schools, or were assigned to stay at one of the other hundreds of schools in the area. Despite the seriousness of the situation, they were treating the entire experience like a unique social event. The girls had organized half the rooms in the school with beds, one room was filled with gas ranges and piles of ramyeon noodles, and I even saw some boys in one of the classrooms huddled over something. A computer!

"BOOM! HEADSHOT!" a student yelled as I entered the make shift PC-room. The students scattered as I approached the owner of the laptop.

"Sorry, I'm going to need to use this," I said, picking up the portable computer and exiting out of a game called "Sudden Attack" to check the news online.

Mike followed behind into the room with his arms crossed. "I told you shouldn't play games in school. Teacher's gonna take your notebook and you'll be in big trouble."

The students eyed me cautiously. "No, I just need to take a look at something. Don't worry. I'll give it back."

With the help of Mike to translate and navigate the maze of Korean pages related to what was happening all across the world, we finally found the summary of the "Evacuation plan" for Daejeon. It could be summarized as follows:

The children's parents had sent them into the inner sanctum of private academies and schools that made up the neighborhood where I worked. This centralized location made it easy for children to be transported, organized, and in theory, kept safe. The parents had entrusted me as an English speaking teacher to watch after their children while they fought the approach of the zombies. Only a few elected teachers from each school were placed in charge of the children. Every other person was needed to help defend.

The idea of keeping the children away from the battlefield was that, the people fighting would have no distractions while fighting. They knew that their children were somewhere safe...as long as their apartment and the others held a defensive line together. This was a sort of “sandbag” approach to zombie defense. As long as your neighborhood held, you hoped everyone else fought as hard to protect their own children. As long as the line held, everyone in the middle would be safe from the flood of zombies. There were several layers of apartments acting as defensive zones. Even if one apartment fell, the one behind it could continue to fight off the zombies until more help could arrive.

After reading the plan, I handed the computer back to the boy who I had seen playing a game earlier. Mike huffed in annoyance and rolled backwards out of the classroom.

I tried to comprehend the enormous trust put forth by the parents of this city to entrust me with the future of their children. It gave me a headache. I was responsible for these children? I had always taken my teaching responsibilities somewhat seriously, but this was madness. What was I supposed to do to prepare children for surviving after zombies had destroyed their town?

I went to the teacher’s office. Despite students piling up their sleeping bags and ranyeon in other classrooms, the teacher’s room remained unoccupied. I opened my bag and emptied out it’s contents. One knife, the rest of the bandages, some aspirin, gauze, and rubbing alcohol. I took a look at the food and settled on one of the sandwiches. I got some water from the machine outside the office, and took a look at the book she had packed for me. The Zombie Survival Guide. Interesting.

I went over to the door. Mike shot past, roaring down the hallway at break neck pace to buzz around the middle school girls who sat huddled around in a circle reading comic books and listening to their mp3 players. I shut the door to keep the noise down. There was no one above the age of 15 in the entire school. I was “in charge” and I didn’t have a clue what I should do. I returned to my desk, sat down, ate, took some aspirin, and started to read.

Chapter 5: A Lesson in Survival

The Zombie Survival Guide was something I had stumbled upon when shopping in Seoul. It was a serious look at “zombie survival” when the threat of “Zombies” was something to be taken humorously. I had been playing Urban Dead, a MMORPG game when I bought it. I wanted some background in “Zombie Survival” as a way to add some flavor text to my character. The book had sat, languishing on a shelf in the corner of my computer room for two years after I stopped playing the game until my wife’s amazing memory had picked it back up and put it in my bag.

Reviewing the book once again, there were some general tips for survivors that seemed extremely valuable to the situation at hand. I went through, reading quickly, and took notes. If things were going to go bad, and the barricades around us fell, I wanted to help as many people as possible survive. That is what I was here for, right? That was the task I was given.

I left the teacher's office and went to the director's room. I took over the speaker system in the school to make an announcement. "Class will start in 10 minutes. Be ready. Everyone must attend." There was a roar of confusion, and the students were in a panic.

"Teacher! TEACHER! NO BOOKS! We have no books! I didn't bring my homework!" the cacophony of voices shouted.

"Don't worry about that. We're going to learn something new today. Get ready for a lesson. Bring notebooks, pencils, and any weapons you have. We're going to study how to kill a zombie."

"BOOM! HEADSHOT" the boy from the PC-room shouted again.

"Exactly."

I had gathered the students present in the largest room in the school. Since I worked at a private academy, the school was simply a floor in an office building that had been divided up into smaller classes. Besides desks and white boards, there was nothing school like about the environment. The largest room had its desks and books cleared, save for my podium at the front. Students now crammed inside, some slurping cups of ramyeon, others messaging their friends.

"I need to tell you why we are all here today."

The room chatter continued.

Without raising my voice, I repeated, "I need to tell you why we are all here today." I added, "If you do not listen to me, you will all die."

Empty threats were common in private English schools. The students hardly batted a wink. I was the one teacher that didn't actually hit them when they misbehaved. Why would they listen to me? The clatter of students moving around increased. Who wanted to study in times like this with your teacher going on about death?

"You are going to die, and so will your parents, your friends, and everyone you love in the city. If you don't get serious, right now, and listen to what I have to say: We are under attack."

"Sudden Attack!" the boy with the notebook on his lap shouted.

"Actually, yes. This morning, there was an attack."

“Who, teacher? What?” students were confused. Parents had shipped their kids off without a clue. Would they believe me? Did children live in a world that small and carefree that they really had no idea what was befalling their family members right now as they grappled with the undead? Did I have a right to let them know the fate that possibly befell them?

“Zombies. Monsters, from The National Cemetery. Dead people are walking again. They are coming to eat people in Daejeon. Right now. That’s why you are here. Your parents and I, everyone in this city, are trying to keep you safe from them.”

Mike, in the back of the classroom, dutifully recited, “Zombies are undead people. They eat brains. They are ugly. They are dumb. We know Zombies Teacher!” with mild annoyance, “You taught us this during Halloween Monster of the Week last year!”

This was true. I had picked a monster every October to cover as extra material as I taught the students about Halloween, my favorite holiday. Students that were in my classes knew how to kill Vampires, Werewolves, how to identify different kinds of ghosts, and what zombies were. It’s been a standard part of my curriculum for years.

“How do you stop zombies?” I asked.

“Silver Bullet! HOLY WATER! STAKE TO THE HEART!” the mob of children shouted. This had gotten their attention.

“No! Good try, but you don’t know zombies?! You forgot!? That’s for other monsters! Who can remember how to kill Zombies? Think hard.”

Then, a nine year old girl shot up her hand. “You shoot the brains!”

“That’s exactly right! We need to get their brains!” I praised her with a high five.

The boy with the notebook computer raised his hand. “But teacher. We don’t have guns. What should we do?”

“Well, that’s just one problem. We’ll have to worry about that a little later. First, let’s talk about what were going to do.

I held up a copy of the The Zombie Survival Guide. “From now on, this will be our text book. We will learn how to survive the best we can. Then, when help from the military comes, we will help others. Okay?”

“But teacher? We can’t read that book. It’s too hard.”

“Don’t worry. I will help you read it. It’s my job. I’m a teacher.” Cue that dramatic music. It’s time for that teaching montage right about now. We got to work right away.

I had made a list of everything from the book that might have been important from our current situation. I send students to the various copy machines located around the school with instructions to duplicate the book, in part, following my instructions. No time for written consent from the author now, we had an actual zombie apocalypse to worry about.

Students organize themselves by reading level into different groups. Middle school students would help younger students. Students with electronic dictionaries translated difficult passages. Everyone would get the basics out of what they needed to do to increase their chances of living. We became a school again, but instead of grammar and journals, we had weapons and talked about fatal kill zones on the body.

Say what you will about violent video games, but they are a big help when trying to explain where to strike a zombie. Everyone knew “Head Shot” immediately. I just hoped it never came to that.

Chapter 6: The Siege

The zombies struck the exterior defenses of the great onion wall of apartments that guarded the school at around 5 PM. I had commandeered the notebook computer from the student who was helping his friends craft weapons from chair legs and desks. This was a life long dream for students. Look around the school. Grab anything you can to make weapons. Make them. Who wouldn’t want to go around destroying a school instead of looking at “news” updates?

Video of the attacks from Daejeon residents was pouring in from phones. People were posting up the directions they had seen people fleeing, where and when they were getting attacked, and their current position. My apartment had held up well in the initial rush of zombies from the west. From the reports I had eagerly scoured, there was a very good chance my wife and the majority of people in her apartment complex were fine. They currently were surrounded on all sides, but holding their own. The bikes and debris on the fire escapes were holding, and the only other entrances were destroyed.

The Zombies had flowed down the streets between apartments, like an wave of arms, teeth, and bones unable to find ways into the more defended positions. They met resistance even in the streets. There were cars blocking their path, and brave fighters with close range weapons, or simple with their hands and fists who tried to slow them down. This is where the Daejeon residents suffered their highest casualties. The bite of a zombie wasn’t fatal immediately, but it was only a matter of time until the resident turned and became the enemy. As the Zombies numbers grew, the faster the streets became impassable. The apartments quickly became inaccessible islands in the middle of a flow of zombies.

Another Text Message from Emergency Center: The first line has fallen. Regroup. FIGHTING!

They were closer to the center of the city, and we were closer to destruction.

The second line fell not long after. I had always thought the lack of American soldiers in Daejeon was a boon to my safety as a foreigner in South Korea. How I wished there were a few squads of American soldiers helping the sparse troops I saw holding the last line of defenses. Of course the bulk of Korean forces were in Seoul, fighting off any attack that was happening simultaneously there. The small crew that had blown the subway station was all that remained of the armed forces in Daejeon. We were on our own, just like any other area in the world, fighting off the undead.

We heard the first gunshots at 11:00 PM. It had been quiet for so long, but peering out the windows you could occasionally see a light spray of gunfire. They were close. Very close.

Weapons had been forged. Books had been slung together to make weights to drop on rotting heads. Tae kwon do belts and backpack straps had reinforced barricades full of desks and chair legs. Even my bike had been added to the barricade. We were on the second floor of the office building. Students had raided the pharmacy below us for medicine and supplies. Food from the supermarkets, and enough supplies to feed children for several days were piled in the back room.

Students looked out the windows nervously. If our position fell, the only possible retreat was a large window that faced the ledge of a building across a small alley. We had created a makeshift bridge that would let students cross, but what to do then? The streets would be overrun. The other building would be no safer. We'd only be running into the jaws of the horde of undead.

If we were going to make a stand, it would be here. Now. The first of the zombies would be near the building in a matter of minutes.

I got another text. MY WIFE! She was ALIVE! I choked back a tear as I read her message. It read: The Kimchi. Use the Kimchi. They hate the smell. They left after they smelled kimchi.

The undead were driven off by the stench of rotting cabbage? As I thought about what I had seen as I had prepared to go to work, I remember the large kimchi rations the old women had been preparing. Those pots had smelled strongly. Could it be that the smell of the kimchi had thrown off their ability to find prey? Is that why they had flocked to the streets instead of attacking the thousands of people in high rise apartments? Kimchi?

There was no time to wait. The gunfire had fallen silent. The zombies were past the last barricade. They were outside.

“Students! We must find Kimchi! NOW!”

Mike and I ran quickly to the supply room. “Spicy ramyeon, snacks, cola, cider...where is the kimchi?” I yelled.

The nine year old girl came up to me and tugged on my shirt. “My mom packed me some kimchi in my bag.” She pointed to a large pink bag, stacked by the corner of the room. “I’ve got kimchi, and kimbap rolls, and some juice too!”

“Thank you! You might have saved us all!”

“Will I get some stickers? I want to get some stickers as a reward.”

“Yes, you’ll get a hundred, no a THOUSAND stickers if there is Kimchi in this bag.”

“Ass-ah! 1000 stickers for me! Here you go teacher!”

I tore open the bag. There was a small, lunch box with a small fist shape lump of red, spicy kimchi sitting firmly in the middle. I grabbed the box and took out the kimchi.

“Here goes.” I dumped the box of kimchi on my head. The odor of garlic and cabbage overwhelmed my senses. I rolled in the red side dish around my hair. The juice rolled down my neck. It stained my clothes. I was a walking kimchi man.

“Not far from here, there is a delicious restaurant with the smelliest, stinkiest kimchi imaginable. They keep it in a secret storage container for two years in a mountain and bring it down to serve only when it’s extra ripe. It’s strong enough to knock you off your feet. I’m going to take that kimchi back to the school. We’ll be safe from the zombies once I get back. Just wait here.”

“But teacher?! We don’t have the kimchi smell! They will find us! They will find you! They will eat your brain!” the young girl began to cry.

“I’ll be fine, Thanks to you. When I get back, I’ll give you those 1000 stickers”.

“Well, okay then. You BETTER make it back,” she wiped away a tear.

Chapter 7: The Rescue

Leave the school to go get some stinky kimchi to defend against a Zombie attack? This was NOT on my job description. I had Mike and some other students help me move the barricade far enough from the

A desk came down from the window above. It collapsed the shoulder of the zombie where it struck, and the leg impaled the creature squarely in the head. “Teacher! BE CAREFUL!” they called down.

“A million stickers for who ever helped throw down that desk!” I called back up.

“As-sah! A million, one thousand stickers!” a familiar voice called back.

Chapter 8: The Kimchi Heist.

I ran from the alley, and made it to the restaurant without further incident. The two surviving zombies in the alley were getting pelted with school supplies as I turned the corner for the restaurant.

I’m the only foreigner that eats the “2 year secret kimchi” at the local noodle shop. Most people don’t order dishes that include the special side dish. I had been eating at the restaurant for years, and I knew exactly why. The stuff was incredibly potent. If you didn’t know better, you’d think there was some sort of chemical solvent to strip paint from walls added before they served it to you.

I tossed a rock into the window of the closed store, and got lucky. The glass door shattered, and I was able to enter. The smell of kimchi should keep all the zombies that heard the loud noise at bay...shouldn’t it? I had no time to test the hypothesis.

I grabbed the largest trash can I could find, stuffed a large trash bag inside, and went into the kitchen. There were knives lining the walls, but I wanted a far more potent weapon. The two year old kimchi sat in a special pot all by itself, wrapped in what appeared to be a thousand layers of plastic wrap.

I grabbed a knife from the wall and began cutting away at the wrap. From outside, I could hear the crunch of shuffling feet on glass. “So, they don’t like Kimchi huh?”

The scent of a putrid, festering corpse filled the kitchen. I gagged, choking back the sandwich I had earlier. A few more layers to go. I turned my head, trying to see how much time I had until my assailant reached the open kitchen door. My hand peeled back the plastic wrap as I went back to hacking with the knife. Slice, slice. Damn it. I cut my hand. My wife **was** right. Knives were going to be more dangerous in my hand than me running across any zombie. At least, I hope she was right.

The shuffling, crunching steps of zombies entering the restaurant increased. I was already trapped in the corner of the kitchen, without a door or any way back out. It was either now or never.

My injured hand tore off the last, blood soaked wrapping of plastic, and I tossed the lid of the heavy ceramic pot aside. A stench blossomed in the room, easily overpowering the five shuffling sets of feet that were now behind me in the kitchen.

There was a roar of agony, “Grraaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaannnnnnnnnnnnnaaaaaa!” as the shuffling stopped. The zombie closest to the kimchi pot began to shutter and convulse as it stood. A brittle finger snapped off from the twitching zombie and flew across the room, striking me in the forehead. It left a dirt brown mark.

The other zombies began to twitch as well, shaking themselves to pieces and losing balance as the stench overpowered their ability to move. After a minute, the kitchen was covered in husks of shattered bodies. I continued transferring the kimchi into the garbage bag, thankful that this potent smell had saved my life.

Chapter 9: The Return

I hauled the new weapon back with me to the school. There was a crowd of zombies around the entrance now, but they all backed away as the smell started to overpower their senses. I dropped a large chunk of the extra potent kimchi near the entrance of the building. It would act as a barrier to their entrance. I stepped over the barricades of bikes and desks, telling the students to make room for me. There was no more immediate threat. Peering out a window, we could see the horde had moved on.

Another Emergency Center message made my phone buzz: “Use kimchi to keep the zombies at bay! They will not go near kimchi! Fighting!” I rolled my eyes.

At least everyone else would know by now. Everyone could be safe. Soon other schools would soon be hurling their own supplies of fermented kimchi at their undead attackers. We knew how to beat them, and now everyone was going to be safe.

The parents that had survived that hellish night came to pick up their children the next morning. My wife came too, with Yoshi in her arms. They had ridden out the apocalypse safely too. She put down the dog and was hugging me, tears streaming down her face, mixing with my red fermented tears. She rubbed my forehead clean, then noticed my bleeding hand. She bandaged my hand from the supplies she had packed, scolding my carelessness with knives. I told her about the kitchen, and how I had survived because of her help. We smiled at each other and hugged again, happy to be reunited.

We all smelled of fermented cabbage, children, parents, teachers, alike. The last of the zombies had been dispatched by elderly women with stockpiles of extra spicy kimchi hanging from bags around their necks and elderly security guards in tow with potent pickled turnips clubbing them into small dusty piles.

The school was destroyed. The city was destroyed, but the future of the city lived on. The students lived on. I awarded everyone in the school a Million stickers, and they rejoiced and cheered my name. I was a hero.

The End.

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