2461 Brave Old World  
  
Sunny swayed, struggling to stay on his feet.  
  
'Ah! D—damnation!'  
  
He was impossibly weak! He was terribly frail! He was beaten and battered, exhausted beyond imagination, and ready to collapse! His body was torturously slow and clumsy, and on top of that, he was limited to only being aware of what was in front of his eyes. The shadows did not respond to his senses, and without them, he felt blind like a bat.  
  
It seemed impossible that anyone could exist in this pitifully powerless, woefully limited, and creepily dull state.  
  
'Wait… isn't that… simply what being mundane felt like?'  
  
Sunny blinked a few times in complete shock.  
  
Right, he was not under some harrowing hex that maimed his body and soul. He was simply reduced to being mundane once again. In fact, he was far stronger, faster, and resilient than he had ever been as a mundane person — after all, he was currently in a somewhat ragged, but still trained and tampered body of a well-fed adult, not that of a malnourished teenager.  
  
He was Detective Sunny of the Mirage City Police Department.  
  
'What the actuаl…'  
  
Before, his memories seemed like a dream, while the Devil Detective's personality felt like his true self. Now, the positions were reversed — Sunny was himself once again, while the memories of the jaded detective felt like a vague, distant dream.  
  
The senses of his other incarnations were just as vague, as if reaching him through a vast mass of water… or maybe through the silver surface of a great mirror.  
  
He was in a mundane body. He did not have his Aspect or his Attributes, no essence, no cores. His Domain was gone. He did not have his shades and Shadows, either… while his own shadow was not an invaluable helper anymore! It was just silent and unresponsive, following him like a dead thing.  
  
Just a few moments before, this simplistic and inadequate state of existence seemed perfectly normal to him. But now, Sunny felt like he had been crippled — like all his limbs had been severed, and all his senses were dulled!  
  
It felt terrible.  
  
He grabbed Effie's hand desperately and used it as support to keep himself from falling. A low groan escaped from his lips, followed by a stifled curse.  
  
"Curses..."  
  
As Sunny was trying to come to terms with being mundane once again, a perplexed voice resounded above his head.  
  
"Hey there, buddy… are you alright? Mr. Devil Detective?"  
  
Looking up in dismay, Sunny grimaced and spat through gritted teeth:  
  
"What damn Devil Detective?! No, I'm not alright! I am… mundane? !"  
  
Effie stared at him in confusion for a couple of moments. Then, her eyes widened.  
  
"Shadow Boy? Is that really you?! You remembered?!"  
  
Sunny let go of Effie's hand and straightened, slowly regaining his composure.  
  
"Stop calling me Shadow Boy, damn it! And… yes, it's me. I did remember. How the hell…"  
  
But before he could finish talking, Effie suddenly pressed her palm against his mouth, shutting him up. Surprise and confusion drained from her eyes, replaced by alarm. Looking around warily, she remained silent for a few moments, and then said:  
  
"Not here. Not where someone can hear us. How about… we go find somewhere more private to talk?"  
  
Sunny frowned, then gestured to the car. It was only then that Effie removed her hand and grinned.  
  
"Well then, let's go, partner! Personally, I — a rookie homicide detective of Mirage PD — am starving. What about you?"  
  
He wanted to retort, but couldn't… because now that he was mundane, he suddenly needed to eat food as sustenance again. So, actually, Sunny was quite hungry too.  
  
'..What a chore.'  
  
"Yeah. I can eat."  
  
She studied him for a moment, then nodded and climbed into the car. Sunny did, as well, finding himself in the driver's seat. A completely unfamiliar control system met him, which he somehow knew how to operate. After spending a few seconds studying the weird PTV's dashboard, Sunny inserted the key into the ignition with a dubious expression, then gave it a tentative turn.  
  
The PTV roared with a level of noise that could only be called obnoxious, vibrated like a trembling animal dying from fear in front of a predator, and spat a thick stream of noxious gas from its back.  
  
Sunny blinked a few times, aghast at the barbarity of this primitive machine, and looked at Effie.  
  
He had already surmised that the odd world they had found themselves in resembled the waking world before the Dark Times, but this… this was an entirely new level of absurdity.  
  
"...Did people really drive these monstrous things?"  
  
Effie arched an eyebrow.  
  
"How would I know?"  
  
Sunny put his hands on the wheel and sighed.  
  
"Fair."  
  
He spent a few moments allowing the muscle memory of the Devil Detective to take over, and a few more convincing himself to trust it. Then, he drove off, painfully aware that since he was somehow a mundane human again, driving the archaic PTV into a street lamp may very well result in his death.  
  
It was really quite offensive. Him, the Sovereign of Death? Being killed by a street lamp? Who the hell would actually go and die from something as frivolous as a high-speed collision?  
  
Luckily, he did not hit anything immediately, and after a minute or two, controlling the loud, stench-producing machine started to feel natural to him. He even got used to the weird vibrations until they blended into the background.  
  
"Where are we going?"  
  
Effie shrugged.  
  
"Try to dig in the fake you's memory, find a rundown and desolate diner he used to frequent. Considering that grumpy malcontent's character, there should be at least one."  
  
Sunny tried not to think about how weird the advice was and did just that. He tried to reach into the Devil Detective's memory, and after a while, a location did magically come to his mind, complete with the knowledge on how to get there.  
  
'...How convenient.'  
  
It was very strange.  
  
He narrowed his eyes and sent the PTV rolling in the right direction.  
  
Before too long, though, it let out a series of strange noises and abruptly grew quiet, seemingly losing power. Sunny barely managed to park it at the side of the road before the vehicle completely lost momentum.  
  
Both he and Effie were startled and confused.  
  
"Huh? What… what is wrong with it?"  
  
Sunny stared at the unfamiliar dashboard, then turned the key this way and that. The PTV let out a few suffocating sniffles, but did not start again.  
  
The two of them looked at each other. After a while, Effie offered a suggestion in an uncertain tone:  
  
"Is it… out of power? Do we need to charge it?"  
  
Sunny scratched the back of his head.  
  
"I'm not sure. Maybe? How do we charge this thing, though?"  
  
He thought for a bit, then said hesitantly:  
  
"I think it's more like a military PTV than a normal one? I mean, it can self-charge if you deposit a fuel cell into it."  
  
Effie coughed.  
  
"I, uh… I think they use liquid fuel? Some kind of petroleum derivative. That stuff was still abundant before the Dark Times."  
  
Sunny stared at her with wide eyes.  
  
"Are you crazy? What kind of idiot would fuel their vehicle with a flammable substance?"  
  
Effie blinked a couple of times.  
  
"Oh, this vehicle is using an internal combustion engine. Basically, it moves by harnessing the power of numerous tiny explosions. We learned about them in history class… that's why that thing over there is called the ignition!"  
  
Sunny laughed.  
  
"Yeah, right."  
  
Millions of people riding around on streams of tiny explosions… Effie's jokes were really too much.  
  
Noticing that she was looking at him earnestly, though, Sunny slowly lost the smile.  
  
"Wait, you're being serious?"  
  
He looked down, at the place where the PTV's engine was hidden, with a hint of horror in his eyes.  
  
After a while, Sunny inhaled deeply and shook his head.  
  
"No wonder these people blew up half of the world…"