2471 A Happy Family  
  
The young heir of the Valor Group seemed friendly and easygoing — charming, even, with his elegant manners and disarming smile. And yet, Sunny and Effie saw subtle signs of tension and wariness reflected back to them from his mirror-like eyes.  
  
Tension and wariness written on their own faces.  
  
How could they not be alarmed? This was Mordret, the Prince of Nothing… a man who was no different from a wicked demon, only more sinister by far. Sure, Sunny had foiled Mordret's plans repeatedly, but that did not make the mirror wraith any less threatening.  
  
The remains of the House of Night could attest to that.  
  
From the mild and innocent look in the Valor Group CEO's eyes, though, he did not seem to remember his true self. But then again, this was Mordret they were talking about — the man was more adept in deception and acting than even Sunny himself was. Had he truly forgotten who he was, or was he merely pretending?  
  
There was no way to tell.  
  
Sunny and Effie glanced at each other. Then, he spoke with a neutral expression:  
  
"Good morning, Mr. Mordret. I am Detective Sunless, and this is Detective Athena from the Homicide Division of the Mirage City Police. We were hoping to speak to you regarding an ongoing investigation."  
  
Mordret studied them for a moment.  
  
"Well, in that case, why don't we speak in my office? If there is anything I can do to help you catch that terrible man, naturally, I must help."  
  
Sunny blinked.  
  
'That easy? What is he playing at?'  
  
At that moment, one of the bodyguards whispered something in Mordret's ear. Mordret glanced at Sunny, then shrugged with a faint smile.  
  
"Oh, I am sure that Detective Sunless had his reasons. There must have been some misunderstanding."  
  
With that, he gestured to the elevators.  
  
"Please, follow me."  
  
Sunny and Effie followed him, only to find out that there was a separate, far more luxurious elevator that seemed to be accessible only to the CEO. As they ascended the impressive length of the Valor Tower, Mordret's bodyguards were drilling holes in their backs with hostile stares — their employer, meanwhile, seemed perfectly at ease.  
  
"Detective Athena… I am quite sorry to presume, but have we met before? You seem familiar."  
  
Sunny frowned, wondering if that was Mordret's way of hinting that he remembered them. Effie forced out a smile.  
  
"I really don't think so. Where would a humble public servant like me meet the illustrious CEO of the Valor Group?"  
  
Mordret lingered a little bit, then suddenly beamed.  
  
"Athena… oh! Why, of course. Weren't you a national athlete? You really made us proud! I still remember the spear throw that won you the first golden medal… it was such a marvelous sight. I can't believe I get to meet you!"  
  
Effie coughed.  
  
"Oh, that… right. That was so many years ago, though. I'm surprised you remember."  
  
Mordret smiled.  
  
"Our family is very passionate about sports. A representative of Mirage City bringing home a whole collection of medals — how could I ever forget?"  
  
'What the hell is going on?'  
  
Sunny suddenly felt out of place. Why was hе riding an elevator with Mordret, and why was Mordet fanboying over meeting Effie? What kind of bizarreness was this?  
  
Soon enough, they arrived in a lavish office that took up most of the uppermost floor of the Valor Tower. The walls were made out of armored glass, so one could see most of Mirage City from here, sprawled far below and stretching toward the horizon. The people populating it looked like ants from the height… and perhaps that was what they were for someone as powerful as the CEO of the Valor Group.  
  
The most stunning thing in Mordret's office was not the view, though, and not the unimaginably expensive decor either. Rather, it was a large framed photo hanging on the wall like a cherished art piece.  
  
On it, a smiling man and a beautiful woman were looking into the camera, embracing a sullen teenage boy and an adorable girl with black locks. There were a few other people there, as well, all surrounded by a happy and affectionate atmosphere.  
  
Sunny recognized them, of course — they were the Valor family, both those whom he met and those who had perished many years ago.  
  
The teenage boy and the younger girl were Mordret and Morgan. The beautiful woman was Gwyn of Valor… the smiling man was Anvil.  
  
Sunny stared at the photo with wide eyes.  
  
Never in his wildest dreams had he imagined that he would see the King of Swords smiling happily one day.  
  
'What the...'  
  
Noticing his gaze, Mordret smiled as well.  
  
"Not as scary as people say, are we?"  
  
He chuckled and pointed at a dignified old man standing behind the smiling pair.  
  
"This is my grandfather, the founder of the Valor Group — an outstanding engineer and a man of keen business acumen. Everything around us exists because of his hard work and leadership. He is retired now, of course, spending his days tinkering with old machines and pestering his grandkids to hurry up and produce newer models — great grandkids, I mean — for him to boss around. "  
  
Sunny looked at the old man.  
  
'Warden of Valor…'  
  
Mordret, meanwhile, pointed to the happy couple.  
  
"You must be familiar with my parents. As much as the Valor Group only exists because of grandpa, it became what it is today thanks to my father. Oh, they mostly devote themselves to traveling and charitable work these days… really, mom and dad hatched a plan to escape into early retirement as soon as I was old enough to become the CEO. How heartless!"  
  
Mordret chuckled again, then glanced at the little girl in the photo and fell silent for a moment. Then, he smiled pleasantly and gestured to an opulent sofa.  
  
"Please, take a seat. Your… chocolate milk?... will be here in a moment."  
  
Sunny and Effie glanced at each other.  
  
'What the hell is this?'  
  
Warden of Valor had perished in the Third Nightmare. Gwyn died in childbirth when Mordret was around two. Anvil was slain by Sunny in Godgrave… where did this vision of a happy family come from?  
  
Why had the Palace of Imagination created this fantasy foг Mordret?  
  
And why was Mordret acting as if it was the most natural thing in the world? He hated his family… his hatred of Valor was so scathing and deep that a whole Great Clan had been callously used as kindling to fuel his vengеance.  
  
Did he… really not remember anything?  
  
Even if he didn't, wasn't this persona too big of a departure from his true self? The Devil Detective and his rookie partner were not Sunny and Effie, true, but they were similar people.  
  
This version of Mordret, though, seemed… eerily well-adjusted and harmless. Not like his true self at all.  
  
As they sat down, Mordret lowered himself into a chair and asked in a pleasant tone:  
  
"So, what did you want to discuss?"  
  
Sunny lingered for a few moments, then said in a measured tone:  
  
"We wanted to discuss the Nihilist."  
  
He watched Mordret closely, hoping to see a reaction.  
  
However, Mordret did not react in any paгticular way… as if there was no connection between him and the deranged serial killer at all.  
  
Sunny frowned.  
  
'But there is. There definitely is... Is there?'