1597 Tragedy of Imperfection

Pancakes and waffles.

The two were almost identical, but also infinitely different, like two sides of the same coin. Just like both the gods and the Chaos Creatures were born from the everlasting Void, both pancakes and waffles were made from the same ingredients. However, the end result was not the same.

Perhaps there was a deep philosophical lesson to be learned from how two things made from the same ingredients could end up so vastly different, but Sunny did not particularly care.

He did, however, care about waffles and pancakes.

It wasn't hard to make either, but there was endless depth in the deceiving simplicity of these staple breakfast foods. Making pancakes was both an art and a kind of science. Waffles were even more elusive.

Even with Sunny's potent Transcendent mind and perfect physical coordination, it took him a long time to master the challenging art of making them. Still, his ultimate goal — a perfect pancake and a perfect waffle — were still out of reach.

And doomed to stay forever out of reach, because imperfection was one of the governing laws of existence.

It was... tragic.

'Perfection might not exist, but I've gotten damn close to it...'

Every cook had their own approach, but as far as Sunny was concerned, the secret of a near-perfect waffle was letting the batter rest in the icebox for exactly one night. Which was why he had prepared it in advance yesterday.

For pancakes, though, he preferred to use fresh batter. Not wishing to make the guests wait, he manifested his shadow as an avatar and went about preparing both at the same time.

While his avatar was busy with the waffles, Sunny used his original body to make the pancakes.

The process was both simple and intricately complex.

First, he broke and separated the eggs, then poured the yolks and the whites into separate bowls. He then carefully blended milk and melted butter into the yolks while whisking the whole thing. At the Same time, Sunny manifested a pair of shadow hands to whisk the whites, using a bit of his Transcendent strength and speed to hasten the process. Finally, he combined baking soda with vinegar and mixed that with flour, sugar, and salt.

Baking powder would have worked, as well, but it was currently in short supply in Bastion. So, soda and vinegar were going to have to do...

Aiko glanced at him — both of him, with all his six arms — shook her head, and returned to her work.

Now came the most important part. As soon as the whites were beaten to have stiff peaks, Sunny carefully combined the flour mix, the yolk mix, and the whipped whites together, creating batter.

This was where most wars were fought among the pancake enthusiasts. Some swore on lumpy batter, some considered anything except a perfectly smooth blend heretical. There were various factions in between the two extremist camps, too.

Sunny himself was a moderate, standing by a precise and immaculate balance between smoothness and lumpiness, which he had painstakingly discovered after countless attempts. Most things worked best in moderation, after all.

When the batter was ready, he put a pan on the fire and waited for it to grow hot, while simultaneously letting the batter rest a bit. Then, he used a large spoon to pour a portion of the batter into the pan, watching with satisfaction as it formed into a neat circle.

The rest was just a matter of skill. Sunny waited until bubbles broke on the surface of the pancake, then flipped it with one smooth, precise motion. Years of sword practice helped him perform the flip in the most efficient and spectacular manner.

‘One serving of transcendent pancakes coming right up...'

Soon, both the pancakes and the waffles were ready. For the final step, Sunny places a scoop of vanilla ice cream on each serving of the waffles, adding freshly cut strawberries on top.

As for the pancakes...

Sunny took a deep breath.

Ancient texts mentioned that pancakes were ritually served with something called maple syrup. However, such a thing did not exist in the world anymore, and the ancient tradition could not be maintained. There were a few substitutes, sure — especially here in Bastion, which was famous for its forests.

But the most popular one... he grimaced.

Shaking his head, Sunny put butter on the pancakes, then retrieved a glass jar from the cupboard with a shaking hand. Finally, he poured some... s—some... some honey on top.

'Disgusting. Gods! I just don't understand people...'

Hiding his discomfort behind a polite expression, he picked up all three plates, dismissed the avatar, and went to serve breakfast to the guests.

"Aiko, make two coffees..."

Beth, Kim, and Luster grew lively at the sight of the pancakes and waffles he had cooked up. Sunny took a step back and secretly watched them take their first bites. He made an effort to hide his pride.

Kim's eyes widened a little.

"These... these waffles have no vulnerabilities..."

He smirked subtly.

‘Of course, they don't. These waffles were made by a Saint!'

Soon, Aiko came out of the kitchen with two cups of coffee. She placed them in front of Luster and Kim and walked away.

At that point, Sunny noticed that the bottle of whiskey he had brought out earlier was still untouched. As he contemplated why the three survivors of the Antarctic Center ordered hard liquor early in the morning, Beth turned and waved at him.

"Oh... can we get two more glasses, actually? We are waiting for someone."

Sunny lingered for a moment, then nodded and turned around to walk to the kitchen. As he did, he noticed that Aiko was still loitering near the entrance, for some reason.

"What are you doing?"

The petite girl flinched, then glanced at him and touched her hair nervously.

"W—what? Nothing..."

Just then, the Silver Bell rang once more, and a new customer walked in from the street, bringing with him the smell of verdant leaves.

It was a gallant man wearing a suit of enchanted armor. His reserved, but pleasant smile possessed a hint ofwarmth to it, which made his already handsome face even more attractive.

The man was followed by an Echo that resembled a monstrous hound, its fur as black as night.

Aiko suddenly straightened and met the new customer with a bright smile.

"Master Quentin! Welcome. Uh... the weather is very fine this morning, isn't it?"