1600 Beast Farm

Sunny had experienced a lot of bizarre things in his life, but the nameless guy really took the cake.

It must have been one hell of a conversation when Effie came back from a routine mission as a Saint, with a baby in tow despite only being in the third month of her pregnancy, saying that the baby... was somehow also a Saint.

Sunny did not even want to imagine.

In any case, Effie and the nameless guy seemed to have worked things out in the end. In fact, their relationship was strangely picturesque and idyllic. Their son was growing up happily, too, bathed in endless care and affection.

His mom was now one of the five Transcendent powerhouses of the government, as well as one of the most well-known and beloved protectors of humanity. His dad, meanwhile, had gone into the Dream Realm on the winter solstice, a month after the cohort returned from the Tomb of Ariel, and became an Awakened. He possessed a Utility Aspect having to do with mending, restoration, and cultivation... as well as golden hands.

Now, the nameless guy was managing a large farm that he and Effie had established on the beautiful meadow contained within her Supreme Memory. That farm was the source of many ingredients Sunny used in the Brilliant Emporium, so he received visits from the nameless farmer often.

Which was why the Marvelous Mimic was afraid of Little Ling. The cute boy possessed an endless amount of enthusiasm, like all children did, and the power of a Transcendent being. Therefore, he was nothing short of a walking disaster for furniture, appliances, and even buildings.

Sunny did not know how Effie's house was still standing, but the Mimic had suffered greatly despite being a powerful devil.

...Sunny had suffered greatly, too.

As he extricated himself from Little Ling's embrace, thanking Bone Weave for keeping his ribs intact, Sunny shook his head in dejection.

'Well, it's my own fault.'

He just couldn't resist the adorable brat, so every time they visited, Sunny treated him to something tasty, like hot chocolate, waffles, or ice cream.

Who knew that a child's fondness could be bought that easily? Therefore, Sunny didn't have anyone but himself to blame for being the target of Little Ling's affection.

As soon as the little boy let go, he looked at Sunny with huge eyes and smiled bashfully.

"...Auntie Aiko?"

'Sorry, Aiko.'

Sunny smiled and pointed behind himself.

"Oh, she's in the kitchen."

His only saving grace was that Aiko seemed to be the energetic puppy's favorite. So, he heartlessly hid behind the petite girl every time the duo arrived.

"Yay!"

Little Ling disappeared behind the door. A moment later, the Marvelous Mimic seemed to shake a little.

The nameless guy had brought his large cart over, by that point. Sunny looked at him and nodded poli tely.

"Nice to see you, Ling's Dad. How is it today?"

Ling's Dad panted for a few moments, then grinned.

"Great! We were finally able to cultivate a strip of raspberries, in addition to what we already grow in the garden. The fields are taking well to the new fertilizer, too. Oh, and we are thinking of procuring more cattle, considering how high the demand for fresh milk has been lately."

He pointed to the cart.

"Plus, with all the enchanted items you made for us, my life has become much easier. So, this time, I was able to bring everything on the list. Milk, eggs, tomatoes, flour..."

He listed all the things in the cart, leaving Sunny to contemplate for a few moments.

'That's good. I won't have to search for many substitutes in the waking world. Still, Bastion is still far away from being self-sufficient, so there is no choice but to go...'

Indeed, although humanity's presence in the Dream Realm had expanded dramatically, they were still dependent on the waking world for countless things. As far as Sunny was concerned, things like coffee beans, chocolate, salt, and a bunch of other commodities could only be procured on the other side.

Which was a bit of a pain, considering that he had to act as a Master. So, every time Sunny wanted to go to the waking world, he had to enter the Castle and pretend to use the Gateway there.

At least he didn't need to come back through the Dream Gate. That would force him to interact with people from Valor way more often, and way more closely, than he wished to.

He nodded at Ling's Dad and offered him a hand:

"Let me help you unload everything."

As they were unloading the cart, he asked nonchalantly:

"Oh, how is your wife doing, by the way?"

Ling Dad smiled, a glint appearing in his eyes.

"Effie? She is doing great. Soul Reaper and she have just returned from suppressing a minor Gate Crisis in the Eastern Quadrant. The casualties were minimal, so everyone is celebrating..."

Sunny sighed.

As much as the situation in the Dream Realm had improved for humans, the situation in the waking world was slowly getting worse. There were more Gates, and those Gates were more powerful. Even with resource shortages being greatly relieved by the mass migration to the other world, the infrastructure was still reeling from losing Antarctica.

So, the government was busier than ever. Not only were they working to establish a firmer foothold in the rapidly changing Dream Realm, but they were also working hard to contain the growing menace of the Nightmare Spell.

Luckily, it was not only the Legacy Clans that had become much stronger after the Chain of Nightmares. Although the government did not have many Saints, their Awakened forces had grown tremendously in recent years — mostly due to many veterans of the Evacuation Army choosing to remain in service.

And the few Saints the government did have were up there with the mightiest champions of the Great Clans. Soul Reaper Jet, Raised by Wolves, and Nightingale... the three of them were worth a dozen less powerful Transcendent, if not more.

Ling's Dad straightened, wiped his brow, then almost blinded Sunny with a smile.

"Ah! Sorry, I forgot to mention... she'll be coming by in a short while."

Sunny blinked a couple times.

"She... Transcendent Athena? She'll be coming by?"

The nameless guy nodded happily.

"Yes. She had a meeting to attend in the Castle, so I just told her to meet us here..."

Sunny froze.