

Villain laughed, evilly.

"What, are you joking?!" They asked, nearly rolling on the floor with amusement.

"Me? Help YOU? With your poor little lost animals?"

Darling frowned. "I... no, I'm really not." She tilted her head to the side a bit.

"Nobody could be *that* mean. Not ev'n you."

Villain blinked up at her. Frozen in place.

"I mean, just think about it..." Darling continued, looking off into the distance. "All those poor critters... lost and cold, sick from the rain? All soft and wide-eyed, wonderin' where the barn is?"

Villain... paused. Actually thought about this for a second.

They didn't like the idea of that... those small, cute animals, all lonely and scared...

They felt the sting of tears in their eyes.

"Alright! Alright, I'll do it!" They said, getting back up again. "You don't have to use your... sappy *methods* on me!"

Darling hid a faint smile. "I didn't say anything."

"Yes you did!" Villain insisted, stamping their little nub on the ground as they said it. Huffing a bit.

They shook their head, regaining their composure. "Anyways! Onto mission! Where was the last you saw these cute... soft, baby little animals?"

"The barn..." Darling said, sadly. "Right where we are now. I think they ran right out the door when they got the chance..."

Villain hummed, nodding. Trying to look like a detective as they held their chin. "I see... classic animal escape, then."

They moved over to the barn entrance, humming as they did.

"Classic...?" Darling echoed, following them.

"Mmmhm. It's all coming together," Villain promised. "It's simple. They all ran out the barn door."

"...That's what I told you," Darling said, clearly unimpressed.

"Which is the *key*!" Villain insisted, triumphant. "If they all *left* via this door, that means that they probably went *this way*," They pointed out, towards the distance.

"So! You stay here just in case they come back, and I'll go out and search for them!"

Darling paused, and just... stood there for a second. Taking in all of Villain's dramatic antics for a bit. Processing. "...Alright," She said, finally.

"Wonderful!" Villain said with a flourish, "No worries, I will find the lost pets!"

...They paused for a second. Stuck their tongue out, disgusted. Ugh, those words tasted *heroic* in their mouth. Disgusting. Let's try that again.

They cleared their throat, and did a small evil laugh.

"I'll find those lost pets, BEFORE ANYONE ELSE CAN!" They said, turning their laugh into a cackle, leaning their head back as they did... they had everything but the dramatic lightning.

There, that was better. That was a little more evil. Darling still seemed pretty confused by the display, but that didn't matter. What mattered was that they had retained their dignity.

Then, they were off, out the barn door.

"Moff! Baa! Where are you!" They called out into the fields. Darling's farm was pretty big, and even on days when they were trying to sneak in to cause mayhem, Villain always found themselves getting lost in there. It felt like it went on forever...

...They could hear something.

A soft jingling of a bell. They whirled around, and saw something skitter away.

"Oh, no, you don't!" They called out at it, making chase. Whatever this was, it was *fast*, and it didn't seem to want to stick around. They only had this one shot, they had to give it all they could, before the rain started!

"Gotchya!" They shouted, as they lept at it, and-

Fell flat on their face. Jingling sound getting farther and farther away...

They groaned. This wasn't working.

They felt something soft paw at them. They grumbled, shooing at it with one of their nubs. "Go away."

A soft noise. Whatever it was kept trying to hug them.

"Ugggh, go away-" Villain sat up, and then their eyes went wide.

Oh my gosh, they'd found the moff.

They laughed softly, and then loudly, as they hugged it, just glad to have found at least one of the two. The moff cooed softly as it accepted the hug, snuggling right up against Villain. Its snowy smell reminded them of home... at least, one of their homes. The evil lair on top of the mountain, as any good villain has.

Gosh, it was soft. They wondered if Darling would mind if they took one, ever... not the time for wondering about that, though.

"One down," They said to themselves, getting back up again, holding the moff. It made another surprised noise as it was picked up. "Where the *heck* is that other thing?!"

They heard something. Another small jingle.

"AHA!" They said, whirling around to face it. It was running again, but Villain had a spark of genius. A plan.

"Get it!" They said, letting go of the moff. "Go! Hug time!"

The moff gasped softly, and began to sprint wildly towards the jingling noise, humming as it did. It was clearly happy - it was most definitely faster than Villain, they'd noticed, as they chased after it. Hopefully, they wouldn't lose it again-

Wham!

Villain managed to catch up - it had tackled the strange, jingling creature, which... yes! Villain could identify it now completely, it was the baa Darling was talking

about. It shook its head back and forth, a little frustrated, jingling its bell even louder.

"Gotchya!" Villain said, laughing a little. "Thought you could outsmart *me*, huh? I never lose!"

They picked up the baa gently, and watched as the moff rubbed up against them, almost purring happily. They snickered.

"You'd make a good minion!" They hummed, before leading the two lost animals back to the barn...

The rain had just begun to start by the time they'd gotten back.

"Oh, you found them!" Darling said, running up to reunite with her animals. "All safe and sound, too... just before the rain! Thank you!"

Villain chuckled a little, proud of their work. "Don't mention it... I always am triumphant!"

They struck a quick pose. Darling stared.

"Well... feel free to come by the farm whenever you'd like, so long as you behave!" She said, still smiling as she got out some soft blankets for the moff and baa to snuggle up in.

"Hah! I'll never need to return, but I appreciate the gratitude, civilian," Villain said, still smirking. But...

They considered it. Just a little.

Maybe someday.