

Context: this story happens between forewarning and the emergence

Mentions of guns, implied death [mercy killing], body horror

Three days had passed since the rockslide had blocked off the cave that held the portal back to Savar, leaving The Farmer stranded on Skire with the entirety of Sealight village. Unfortunately whatever phenomenon that had the land in its grasp had affected him as well, as he wasn't able to open a rift back home. He was able to briefly have a moment with Pleiades, who had tagged along as well, and unfortunately her multidimensional abilities seemed to also no longer work. Whatever it was it was powerful, strong enough to even weaken primordial entity's like Concepts and Matria. However it was not the time to give up now, if they were going to get through this they needed to act, not hide.

Ma and The Farmer had agreed that The Farmer should go out on an expedition to find supplies, or anyone displaced from their homes, joining up with Anise and Azael in order to keep them safe, as so far, it seemed The Farmers gun was the only thing that was somewhat effective against the Ichor beasts. Both Anise and Azael were in their Centaur forms, making it easier for them to pull two wagons behind them, as The Farmer sat on Azaels back backwards in order to keep an eye on anything that could possibly sneak up on them from behind. They walked along the mountain side, traveling more inland towards where some of the larger cities once were, or at least, what was left of them after the fissures first hit. Silence hung in the air, the tension was thick, which made The Farmer uncomfortable. He tried his best to break the silence.

“So... I guess it's finally nice to actually meet you guys... your mother talks a lot about you. Though I wish it was under... better circumstances...” He said with a nervous chuckle. Both Anise and Azael glanced at each other for a moment before Anise responded.

“It's nice to meet you too, we're glad Ma found someone who makes her happy, and that Astril has a new place to explore.” Anise said with a smile as she looked at The Farmer. “Astril haven't stopped talking about Bingus, or about the... what do you call them, small beans on the farm?” The Farmer chuckled at this.

“Well, the correct pronunciation is Smol Beans, but yes, there are many back on the farm. They're a species of my own design really... sort of.” The Farmer said as he scratched his head.

“Well, now I'm interested, you can't just leave us hanging, tell us more!” Azael said, now more intrigued than ever. The Farmer laughed hearing his enthusiasm.

“Oh well, to be honest it was such a long time ago, around the time I first arrived on Savar looking for a place to settle down. Oh that had to be a few thousand or more years ago, I was

looking around to find a place to settle, when I came across this pond of clear glowing liquid. It sounds stupid thinking about it now, but I just assumed that's what water looked like on Savar, so I drank it.” The Farmer said with a nervous chuckle.

“It wasn't water was it?” Anise asked, causing the Farmer to let out another chortle.

“Oh far from it, it turns out it was dragon's blood, which, that's a story for another day, but essentially, dragon's blood is pure liquid magic. The majority of life on Savar evolved thanks to dragon's blood. Well as it turns out drinking it directly is not recommended, thankfully as a Matria I'm much more resilient to that kind of stuff, but I did still have a reaction. I ended up getting sick later that night, and wouldn't you know it, when I threw up, instead of dragon's blood, all that came out of my mouth was an egg! The first smol bean egg to be exact.” The Farmer said, causing both Azael and Anise to stop walking for a moment and look at him. “What? It was the first and only smol bean egg I've thrown up, they weren't all made like that!” He said as he crossed his arms, a bit embarrassed. Azael only shook his head and Anise only giggled as they continued to walk.

“So, that egg hatched into the first Smol Bean?” Anise asked, and The Farmer nodded.

“Yes, in fact, it was Bean who hatched from that egg, he was the first, and surprisingly he's still alive to this day. All smol beans live for a long while, a few hundred years, but they do pass eventually, but not Bean, it seems he's different from the others, he's like my son in a weird way, I guess that's why we're so close.” The Farmer said.

“Bean, that was the little guy that came with you right?” Azael asked, and the Farmer nodded.

“You know, Anise, your mother told me you run a bakery, maybe when all of this is over, if you'd like, you would be more than welcome to come visit the farm, there are quite a few smol beans there I'm sure you could collect from that would be useful to you, like milk beans, butter beans, I think there are a few egg beans as well.” The Farmer said, going on about the many types of beans over at the farm. Anise laughed as she nodded.

“Of course, once this is over, I'll be sure to visit then.” She said with a smile, and Azael couldn't help but smile as well.

As they finished their conversation, they had made it to their first destination, a small town far from the epicenter of this madness, but closer to it than Sealight. The town had sustained massive damage, as a fissure had opened up in the center of town, swallowing entire homes and buildings. It didn't seem like anyone was around, but they had to keep an eye out.

“Stay close, not only may there be Ichor beasts around, but this village is mostly humans, they may not be too kind to see us... or me especially.” Azael said, mumbling the last part. The Farmer and Anise nodded, though the Farmer wasn't quite sure what Azael ment by that last part. The Farmer decided to shift into his human form, as his normal form was not something anyone outside of Sealight village had seen. With all the chaos going on, it was one less thing he wasn't others to worry about. They walked slowly through the abandoned streets, keeping an eye and ear out for any signs of people, or ichor beasts that may be around. As they walked they made their way to a convenience store, empty and abandoned like the rest of the town. They stopped in front as Anise and Azael both un-latched their wagons from themselves.

“we'll head inside with and grab what we can, you think you can wait outside and keep guard Farmer?” Azael asked. The Farmer nodded and gave a thumbs up as he jumped off of Azaels back. Azael and Anise smiled as they walked onto the convenience store to savage what they could. The Farmer had his back turned, his gun held close as he scanned his surroundings. The sight was devastating and hard to look at, but he persisted regardless. As he watched, he heard the sound of rocks shifting, which grabbed his attention. He lifted his gun and pointed it at the direction the rocks had fallen.

“Who's there?” He said sternly, standing his ground. He waited for a moment, waiting to see who or what would come around the corner. Slowly, a small child had made their way around the corner. Their small frame was shaking, as tears and snot ran down their face. The Farmer stood there for a moment, as Azael and Anise came out, holding several canned goods.

“Is everything alright-” Azael started before his eyes met the childs. The child, startled seeing Azael quickly turned to flee, and Azael looked at Anise and The Farmer. “Go after him and make sure he's alright, I'll keep an eye on the wagons.” He said quickly, Anise and The Farmer nodded, Anise quickly placed what she had in her wagon as they both then set out to chase after the young child. Anise ran up behind the Farmer and grabbed him by the back of his shirt, hoisting him up and onto her back as she ran after the child. They watched as the kid ducked into a collapsed building, and they ran to the entrance where the kid had gone in, Anise stopped to let the Farmer off of her back. They exchanged worried looks as they both entered slowly.

As they entered, the place was in ruins, empty cans littered the floor, along with other discarded food packaging. Broken appliances and pictures were scattered around, and in the corner was the child, their knees huddled close to their chest as they stared at The Farmer and Anise. The Farmer approached slowly, crouching down to be more on eye level with the child, he noticed that the kid was a young boy, not even barely four.

“Hey kid, are you okay?” The Farmer asked softly. The kid sniffled as he rubbed his face. “Don't worry, we're here to help, we can take you somewhere safe.” The Farmer continued.

“My... my daddy says not to trust Crooks...” The kid said softly. The Farmer seemed confused as he turned to look at Anise, who seemed uncomfortable. The Farmer looked back at the kid with a forced smile.

“I'm not sure what your daddy said about Crooks, but trust me, our freind is really nice, he wouldn't hurt anyone, especially not you.” He said as he reached out his hand. “You can trust me, okay?” The Farmer said with a soft smile. The boy looked at him for a while, before reaching out and grabbing the Farmers hand. The Farmer was gentle as he helped the boy to his feet. “That's it, see, we're all friends here, let's get you someplace safe now.” The Farmer said as he went to lead the kid out of the house, but the kid stopped.

“Wait! My mommy and daddy, they're upstairs, they haven't left their room In days, they said they were sick and locked themselves in there so that I wouldn't get sick. You gotta go and get them!” The boy said, his little hands tugging on the Farmers overalls as he looked up at him with large misty eyes. The Farmer and Anise exchanged glances before the Farmer nodded.

“I'll go see what I can do about your parents, you can go with Anise, I'll meet up with you two in a bit.” The Farmer said as he picked up the boy, placing him on Anise's back. The boy placed his hand on Anise's shoulder, distracted by her fur.

“Your fur is soft.” He mumbled as he rested his face on Anise's back. A small smile crept up on Anise's face as she made her way out of the house, returning back to Azael.

The Farmer however, had a skinking feeling in his stomach as he made his way up the stairs. With every creak of the stairs his heart rate increased, until he made it to the top of the stairs. His heart almost stopped, as he quickly figured out which room was the parents. From underneath the door crept out vain like growths of ichor, on which he saw what looked like small buds. He felt his legs shake as he stepped forward, he hadn't felt much dread in a long time, as this stuff, this ichor, was something powerful enough to dampen his powers, if not possibly hurt him if he wasn't careful.

As he got closer, he noticed the ichor had managed to rot the metal hinges on the door, more then likely the result of the metal being produced by magic. He was able to grab the door, and with a quick jerk, it was freed from its rusted hinges. He turned and looked inside, and he froze. The walls of the rooms were covered in ichor, it oozed from the walls and cracks, seeping into every nook and cranny. On the itchor, we're bright white flowers with dark purple centers, they seemed to somehow thrive on the ichor itself, and in the center, where most of the flowers had bloomed, were two bodies, in what appeared to be their final embrace.

The Farmer swallowed hard as he stepped forward, looking over the two bodies. He thought them deceased, until he saw one of them take a weak gasp of air, as it slowly looked at him, the sight made his skin crawl, as his grip on his gun tightened.

“**M y... s o n**” it said slowly, sounding garbled, as ichor oozed from its mouth, the Farmer couldn't tell if it was the father or mother at this point.

“He's safe... we're taking him to Sealight, there are plenty of people there, he'll be safe.” The Farmer said. He was about to leave, but he noticed the figure had reached for his gun, grabbing the barrel, making him jump a bit.

“**P l e a s e . . .**” Was all it said. The Farmer realized what it wanted, and it made him sick. But he put his emotions aside as he took a deep breath and nodded.

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“Why do you have six legs? Or do you have six arms?” The boy asked Anise as he continued to pet her fur. Anise chuckled a bit.

“That's just one of the many forms we take, we have quite a few, this one we use to help us get around faster and help us pull our wagons to gather supplies.” She said as she rounded the corner, spotting Azael still by the carts. As the boy saw him he tried to hide behind Anise's upper torso. “Hey its Alright, he's friendly.” Anise said as he walked closer. The boy peeked and looked at Azael, who waved. The boy seemed curious.

“You have six legs too... and you have paws.” The boy said as he made grabby hands. Azael chuckled as he held out his paw, and the boy grabbed it, and gently started to play with it, giggling as he squished his paw beans. For a moment, all three of them seemed to forget the horrors of the last few weeks, and were able to enjoy a moment of peace. Unfortunately, it didn't last forever, as a loud shot rang out in the distance, causing all of them to jump. The boy looked up at both of them in fear, as they both looked at each other, keeping close to try and comfort the child.

“It's okay, we'll keep you safe.” Azael said, still holding onto the boy's hand. They stood there for a while looking around for any signs of the Farmer, or worse, an ichor beast, but all seemed still. Soon, the Farmer did return, he was walking fast, but he seemed to be distracted.

“Farmer!” Azael called out, which seemed to snap the Farmer back to reality. He looked up at them, and tried to put on a confident face.

“Don't worry, there was only one beast, but I was able to scare it off.” The Farmer said as he walked over to them.

“What about my parents?” The boy asked. Azael noticed the Farmers face showed a flash of regret before he pulled it back together.

“They'll be fine, they said they just needed to rest some more, they'll come and join us when they're better, I told them where we're going.” The Farmer said as he forced a smile. The boy smiled back as he looked up at Anise with hopeful eyes. Anise smiled back, but it was clearly forced.

Anise and Azael both hooked their wagons back onto their bodies, and as Anise went ahead, Azael stopped the Farmer, giving him a serious look.

“You didn't.” Azael said, his voice full of dread, as he already knew the answer deep down.

“I didn't want too... I did what they asked... no one deserves to die like that, not like that...” the Farmer said shaking his head.

“And the kid-” Azael started, but the Farmer cut him off harshly.

“We absolutely do *NOT* tell him what happened, we do not give him a shred of the truth, not now... not when he's so young.” The Farmer said as he tone started to become softer as he spoke. Azael only stared at him, but said nothing. Both he and the Farmer followed behind Anise, only this time, the Farmer walked himself.