

It had been a few weeks working at the Heavenly Embassy. Every morning, at the crack of dawn, Abel would make the nauseating journey up to the embassy, work the greenhouse until sundown, then make it down to his humble hovel to tend to his menagerie of imps. It was a regular, rigorous routine, but one that Abel appreciated. He enjoyed seeing the flowers start to take root and sprout, and he delighted in eliminating any threat to the health and growth of the flowers by chasing away any of the rare scrappy imps that made it to the Heavenly Embassy or pulling weeds that are just about to take root. He even started to make small talk with Primrose, who didn't seem to particularly appreciate the effort. Nevertheless, Abel felt he was starting to better understand Primrose, at the very least, as a fellow gardener. It was nice, in a sense, to see Primrose lower his guard when tending to the garden, inspecting every leaf and petal to ensure they were growing properly.

Amongst the flowers Abel was charged to tend to, there was a smaller plot elsewhere that Primrose sometimes asked Abel to check in on, growing tea leaves. Abel didn't do too much tending to them, as Primrose made abundantly clear Abel's top priority was ensuring that the flowers for ambrosia grew properly, but he knew they were well taken care of, presumably by Primrose himself. Tilly and Shepherd would often prance over to the plot to sniff the leaves, with Abel having to stop them before they decide to take a big bite out of them.

Today, as Abel walked into the greenhouse, Primrose stood next to the tea leaf plot, beckoning Abel to come to him.

"This plot of tea leaves is now good to harvest, and I need you to set aside some of it to take over to Dove," he said, motioning to the plot. "Probably a few satchel's worth. I don't know why they *insist* on living with that Jackal. Makes it so much harder to actually deliver these to them..." Primrose handed Abel said satchels, then walked off.

"Just make sure that's delivered before sundown!" Primrose added as he opened the greenhouse door and left. Abel looked down at the satchels in his hand, to his two impups, then to the sizeable plot of tea leaves. He knew this would take a good while to make sure the stems weren't picked along with the leaves, but it would be worth it to ensure that they were good to be brewed without much further prepping by whoever was to receive the tea leaves.

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After a few hours of labor, along with the (questionable) help from Shepherd and Tilly, Abel dusted his knees and grabbed the basket full of tea leaves along with the satchels of tea leaves for Dove. He set aside the basket next to Primrose on the way out.

"Can I assume I am done here for the day?" Abel asked Primrose, who rolled his eyes dramatically at the question.

"Yes, you can," Primrose sighed, going back to his work brewing Ambrosia. "I suppose this favor is enough to let you go earlier. I'll take care of the flowers myself later."

Abel smiled in response, then took a big breath before stepping into the elevator taking him and his impups back down to ground level. He let out a big sigh as soon as he stepped out, his impups coyly following his lead, as if to tease him. *Finally, Burrowgatory*, he thought, despite the fact he was always able to come back by the end of the day. Only difference being, there was still some light in the day as he was making his way back.

Luckily, he knew where Dove and Jackal lived, given he had visited them when Dove had made their pretty brutal entrance to Burrowgatory, having fallen all the way from the heavenly meadows. With a pep in his step, Abel made his way to their shared home. Though it didn't seem like much, it was still homely, and he could smell tea brewing through the window. Abel walked up to the steps, and knocked three times in quick succession to let them know he was there.

Jackal thrust open the door, annoyance written plainly on her face, before she noticed the satchels and Abel, quickly turning softer after recognition.

"Hey Dove, looks like a familiar face is paying you a visit—with gifts," Jackal called out.

"Oh, please invite him in for tea!" Dove responded, their voice just barely audible over the bustle in the kitchen. Flustered, Abel shook his head, backing away from the door inch by inch.

"Oh no, I'm just here to drop these satchels off..." Abel's voice trailed. "And I have Tilly and Shepherd here, I wouldn't want to impose or anything..."

"He brought the impups too!" Jackal yelled, giving Abel a jump.

"Even better! I have some treats for them too!" Dove's tiny voice flittered above the bustling.

Before Abel could bounce, Jackal grabbed Abel by the collar of his jacket, dragging him in through the door. All Abel could do was let her do this, as he was dragged, arms and legs limp.

He found himself seated at a quite cutely decorated table, with fancy lace tablecloth and a stack of tea pastries next to Dove's delicately detailed teapot. Abel sheepishly pulled out the satchels of tea leaves, placing it on the table, desperately trying to avoid eye contact with either Jackal or Dove. Tilly and Shepherd were sitting next to Abel on the floor, poor pup tails wagging furiously waiting patiently for treats to be offered to them. Dove laughed at the sight of the impups and offered each of them a treat that they started voraciously devouring, to the amusement of Jackal. They then picked up the satchels, held it up to their face, and took a deep sniff.

"These smell so good!" Dove piped up, giddiness written across their face. "I know Burrowgatory tea leaves are okay, but there's just something about embassy-grown tea leaves..." They looked over at Jackal, as if they had said something naughty.

"Hah! There's no hurting *my* feelings, talking down about Burrowgatory tea leaves or whatever," Jackal cackled. "The important thing to *me* is that you're happy and that you're happy with the quality of the tea leaves. I reckon I'll give that Prim a knuckle sandwich if it wasn't as good as the stuff from your home."

"Jackal!!!" Dove exclaimed, covering their mouth with their hands. Jackal grinned and turned toward Abel.

"I know you're just the messenger, Abel," she said with a knowing look at Abel, who was positively shaking at the thought of being given a knuckle sandwich, even though he knew it was directed at Primrose.

"Ah... okay..." he sighed with a quiver in his breath. "I'll probably head out now. Thank you so much for the treats for my Tilly and Shepherd." Tilly and Shepherd let out a yip in thanks as well. With this, the three left for their home, happy with today's work and sent home with extra tea pastries. Of course, there was going to be tomorrow to go back and tend the flowers all over again, but at least there were some of Dove's homemade tea pastries to eat for a snack up at the Heavenly Embassy tomorrow.