

The Baker and Toki - Short Story

“And that about covers it. Again, I’m sorry about your loss Noah.”

“It’s fine. Thank you for all your time going over my father’s will for me.”

Noah says in a grateful yet solemn tone. He stood up from his chair and shook the lawyer’s hand, ending their appointment today. The man then grabbed his bag filled with mementos his father left him, including his father’s watch, a check with \$15,000 written on it, and the deed to his father’s bakery. With his bag in tow, Noah walked out the door with a neutral expression on his face.

He wasn’t really close with his father, only ever visiting him in town every other month. Noah had dreams of becoming a world class chef for a prestigious restaurant. However, the past 2 years didn’t pan out the way he envisioned it, resulting in part time at a grocery store. He barely made enough to live on his own. However, he was ashamed to ever let his father know of his failures. Guilt and embarrassment weighed heavily on the young man’s heart, quaking at his core and had him questioning his choices. News of his father passing hit the man even lower, making all the regret wrap around his being. He wishes he had spent more time with his old man. More time... to be honest with his feelings. And now he’ll never get that chance.

Noah is walking through familiar streets, passing by stores and houses he recognizes. Memories of his childhood flood into his mind, times of him playing soccer with his friends and times of him walking to school. Soon he approaches his father’s bakery. It is the last thing his father left him, and one thing Noah has to remember him by.

“Where is it... Oh, here it is!”

With the keys the lawyer provided him, Noah unlocks the door and enters the modest looking bakery. It has an old timey feeling to it, making for a cozy and welcoming atmosphere. Noah places his bag down, walking around the store and admiring all the details. Cases and displays of stale bread are scattered around the store, a screenshot of his father’s last day in this establishment. Saddened by this realization, Noah sits down by a chair trying to process his life right now.

“So... this is it huh... I guess I finally got my wish...”

The man says in a self deprecating manner. He got his wish of being a chef, or at the very least a food maker. With this realization, Noah checks in for the day and heads straight to bed. He couldn’t bother unpacking his clothes as he is still expecting the movers to bring the rest of his things the next day. For now, Noah needs some time to let his mind and heart take in his current situation right now. He settles into bed, closing his eyes hoping tomorrow would help him get into a better mindset.

The uncaring night sky passes by as Noah sleeps in the guest room above the bakery. Like an employee loving his work, his father was basically attached to the bakery. Morning then arrives, a new day awaits Noah. The young man reluctantly gets up from bed, sore from the

uncomfortable bed he was lying on for several hours. He walks to the bathroom, washing up and readies himself for what lies ahead of him today.

As he walks downstairs, he notices how unkempt the building and overall bakery is. After his father's passing, no one dared touch the bakery. However, one has to wonder how the old man managed to maintain this building. Noah pondered such thoughts as he combed through the rooms of the bakery downstairs, going through the main floor to the kitchen to even the storage holding the equipment. Since he now owns this place, Noah thinks to himself "might as well clean this place up."

A few minutes later, there was a knock on the door. Noah slowly walks towards the entrance of the building and sees an image of a moving truck peering through the window. It is the delivery people arriving at the appointed time. Noah opens the door and greets the movers.

"Oh, hey guys. Thanks for moving my stuff here. It would've taken me a couple of trips to get everything from my old apartment to here."

Noah says casually with a chuckle.

"No worries man. We're just doing our job. Just tell us where we need to put the stuff and my boys and I will move it inside."

The large well-built man says to Noah. They are merely acquaintances that are doing what they are hired to do, nothing more.

"Right. Let me show you."

Noah guides the large man through the building, his men moving boxes of Noah's belongings inside to Noah's designation. Boxes of his practice equipment went inside the kitchen, his clothes and personal trinkets went upstairs in the bedroom, and the rest laid in the hallways on the upper floor hallways.

As the men rotate in and out into the building, a mysterious figure stands across on the other side of the street. The girl watches in detail of the scene playing out, especially the young man directing the men.

With the last of the boxes dropped into the hallway, Noah and the large man stand outside the bakery.

"Thank you so much, for everything."

"No problem, you did pay us for the job. We're happy to deliver."

With a firm handshake, Noah and the movers part ways, the large men comically entering their trucks and driving off into the city. The sun hovers above the landscape, a reminder that the day is still young. Noah heads back inside to begin unpacking and settling in.

As he was about to enter deeper into the building, he heard a knock on the door. He wasn't anticipating anyone else today. Was it one of the delivery people? The only way to find out was to answer the knocking. He opens the door, mentally preparing for what he is about to witness. However, no amount of preparation would've readied him for who is standing before him.

It was a medium height girl wearing a maid uniform, her clothing covering all of her body. She had a lean and slender frame, with an air of mystery to her. Her blonde hair reflected subtle but noticeable under the sun, tied in a bun behind her head. She also has a blue halo with an interesting pattern hovering behind her head. The young lady stared at Noah with her blue eyes, a look of distance and neutrality. Her only belonging was the suitcase she was holding in front of her with both of her hands.

Noah, confused by the girl standing in front of him, asks her about her presence.
"Um... Hello, can I help you mam?"

The girl then responds with a bow and a skirt tug with maid etiquette. She responds to his inquiry.

"Hello master. I am Asuma Toki. And I will be your maid starting from today."

"Maid? I didn't order a maid service. I think you got the wrong place, mam."

The maid stood back up, still maintaining her cold glance and mellow expression.

"You are master Noah, no? And this is your father's bakery, Kivotos Breads, correct?"

Noah is taken aback by the details she said. She didn't say anything incorrect, but it still doesn't explain why there is a maid at his front door. This is all too much for the young man.

"Well... Yeah, I am Noah, and this is most definitely my family's bakery. But you still haven't explained why a maid like yourself is here."

"I am here under request to be in service to you, Master Noah."

Noah feels awkward having to talk to Toki outside in broad daylight with people noticing the situation.

"Ok, just come inside... please..."

He says hesitantly, gesturing for Toki to come inside. With a gentle bow, Toki enters the building with her suitcase in tow. Noah then leans by the counter, following up on his previous question.

"Look, Ms. Asuma-"

"You can call me Toki, master."

“Toki... Can you explain what it is you’re doing here?”

Toki stands a safe distance from Noah so as to not make him uncomfortable. She turns his direction and explains in full her purpose.

“I am a maid from C&C, also known as Cleaning&Clearing. Before your father passed, he used the rest of his wealth to hire me as a personal maid for you. A companion he shortly described.”

That explains why Noah didn’t get a lot of money from his father’s will. But he wonders why his dad would spend the rest of his savings on a service as ridiculous as this. He might be lonely, but he isn’t desperate enough to have a maid work for him.

“Look, Toki. I’m sure my father meant well, but I don’t need a maid. Especially not now. I could barely take care of myself, I don’t want to have to worry about another mouth to feed.”

“Do not worry, master. I am more than capable of sustaining myself and caring for you as well.”

“That’s not what I meant-”

“Is something troubling you master? Is my presence not welcomed here? I apologize for any inconvenience and will do everything to make sure you are happy.”

She speaks in a robotic and monotone manner. Her gaze is unchanging, neutral and indifferent, with an unsettling mystery behind it. She doesn’t seem malicious at first glance, nor does she seem to have any ulterior motives. She speaks as blunt and honest as possible

“Master, it seems the bakery is in need of cleaning. I can handle the storefront and kitchen while you unpack your belongings.”

Toki opens her suitcase and pulls a duster from it. She is following the beat of her own drum, going ahead and cleaning the countertops. Noah, however, isn’t having any more nonsense.

“Look lady, it’s fine. You don’t need to work here. Just go home already and you can keep whatever my dad paid you.”

“I cannot do that, Master Noah. It seems you have some undesirable guests at the front door.”

“What do you mean-”

Just as if it was on cue, there was a loud thumping on the door.

“Oi, bread boy. I know you’re in there! Open up!”

A loud and rough voice emanated from behind the door. Noah, startled by the sound, hesitates to go to the door.

"I advise opening the door, Master Noah."

Noah, having enough of the maid's tomfoolery today, went against her words and headed to the door. As he opens the door, he sees a huge burly man with tattoos covering his arms standing right outside. Behind him were a group of thugs and other delinquent figures. Noah, in cold sweat, anxious about his current situation, greets the man. As if he hasn't had enough on his mind today.

"U-um. Hello... Can I help you sir?"

He says to the large burly man in a cracking voice. The large man, knowing he has the strength advantage, walks up closer to Noah, getting up in his personal space.

"Yeah... You the bread boy's son?"

"Y-yeah?"

"Well... Is your old man around?"

"N-no, he passed a few days ago."

"Aw, that's too bad. I will almost feel bad for what I'm about to do to you."

"W-what?-"

Before Noah could finish his thoughts, the large man grabs Noah by the shirt and picks him up effortlessly. He lifts Noah up with ease as if he is nothing but a toy. Noah, now several feet up the air, flays his legs around as he holds onto the large man's grip.

"You see boy, your dad owes us a looooot of money."

"What do you mean? Why would my dad be in debt to you guys!?"

Noah struggles to respond, but manages to get his words across.

"You stupid little boy. You really don't know, do you?"

The large man enters the store while carrying Noah. He then slams him against the wall by the door. A loud thud ran through the walls, a blunt pain quakes Noah's body.

“How do you think your father maintained this building? He sure as hell wasn’t getting by with just bread alone.”

As the large man spoke, it was all coming together inside Noah’s mind. The reason why Noah didn’t get much from his father’s inheritance and how his father managed to hold onto this building. Noah feels a sense of betrayal, as if he was picking up the sins of his father.

“Look, dude. I don’t have any money on me right now. But once I get the bakery back up, I will pay you back as soon as I-”

Before Noah could finish his sentence, the large man slammed Noah against the counter, breaking the glass that would normally shelter the displays of pastries. Glass shattered and poked against Noah’s skin. It is a sharp pain Noah hasn’t felt before.

“I don’t think so ‘dude’. We’ve been patient and waited for your old man for a while. We need the money now or else.”

Noah, on the verge of tears, with a storm of emotions in his mind, tries to find a way out of this situation. He looks up at the large man. A devilish and sadistic grin meets his gaze, the large man not wanting more than to see Noah squirm at his current predicament.

Suddenly, Toki walks up to the large man holding Noah with her suitcase in hand.

“Excuse me sir. Please don’t harm my master any further.”

“Oh what’s this? You even have a girl here with you. Well if you can’t pay now, we don’t mind taking this cutie as collateral, haha!”

The large man says with a sadistic and pervy look in his eyes. Noah, realizing what they meant, tries to beg them to not go through with this.

“Please. She has nothing to do with this. Leave her alone-”

“Oh shut up you!”

The large man lifts Noah up even higher, his arms ready to slam him down in an arc. However, as Noah felt his body flying through the air, his momentum suddenly stopped. He looks down and sees Toki holding back the large man’s arms with nothing but her suitcase. The large man is just as surprised as Noah by this display before them.

“I do not apologize for what comes next.”

Toki says in a stoic and blunt manner. She then clicks open her suitcase, opening it halfway, just enough for her to squeeze her hand through. She reaches inside the box and out comes something no one expected. She has equipped a mechanical looking gauntlet on her right hand.

She then pulls back her arm, aiming her trajectory. And in a swift but powerful motion, Toki thrust the gauntlet into the large man, a burst of air and electricity slammed against the large man. He flew back into the streets and onto the group of thugs. The moment the large man flew back, he let go of his grip on Noah, making him fly in the air briefly.

“Whooooaaahhhh-”

He howled in a panic, preparing to embrace his fall. However, Toki catches him in her arms. She then looks back at him with her usual stoic expression.

“Do not worry, master. I will now deal with the threats outside.”

“Why you little...”

One of the thugs outside with a pipe in hand rushes towards the door. However, before he could enter, Toki layed Noah down and punched the thug flying back with her gauntlet. She then jumps out onto the sidewalk, ready to enter combat with the group of thugs. She scans her surroundings, formulating strategies and counting the number of men present. There are a total of 12 thugs.

“What are you clowns standing around for!? Get! That! Girl!”

The large man from earlier stood up with the help of his men. Soon, the men swarmed Toki. Noah, worried about Toki getting hurt, tried to get up, but he still felt the pain from being slammed earlier. However, his worries were subsided by her performance, mesmerized by her control of the situation.

She gracefully dodges the men’s attacks, ducking and sidestepping with ease. She punches one man with her gauntlet, sending him sliding across the asphalt, and then transitions into a spin kick to knock those behind her. Three men were hit at the same time, sent flying into the air from the force of her attacks.

She zig zags between the men, avoiding any damage and flawlessly executing her moves. However, some of the men pull out guns and aim towards Toki with a wicked grin, feeling like they have the sudden advantage. With a simple pull of a finger, bullets sprayed out of the lethal firearms. Toki swiftly runs toward a car parked on the street, finding cover behind it.

“Master Noah, please hand me my other weapon from my suitcase.”

She says in a loud but calm voice, her request manages to reach Noah’s ears. Noah, panicked by the situation, scurried to Toki’s suitcase and opened it. The contents within vary from her maid uniform, to hygienic products. But one item stood out from the rest. He immediately knew this is the weapon Toki was talking about. He grabbed it and then headed back outside.

“Toki! Here!”

He exclaimed out loud. With a wind up, he tossed the weapon with as much force as he could direct towards Toki’s position. However, his yell garnered the attention of some thugs, their guns now pointed at him. The weapon landed next to Toki’s position on the side of the car. With the pause in gunfire, Toki loaded her weapon.

It is a white gun with a boxy shape. Now armed and ready, Toki stood up from her cover and took aim at the thugs looking towards Noah. With extreme position, Toki fires her gun, a short burst beam emitted from the barrel and zipping through the air. The projectiles hit its target, knocking the thugs with enough force to knock them out.

Toki continues to fire her gun, making quick work of the thugs. One by one, the thugs fall to the ground as Toki approaches closer to them. Soon, a large shadow caster over her, its large frame familiar to her. She turns around quickly, aiming her gun at the leader of the thugs. However, he swipes his hand and knocks her weapon from her grip. Noah looks on with a panicked look, concerned about Toki’s fate.

But, like an adaptive and graceful swan, Toki dodges his grasps and maneuvers to his right side, much to his surprise seeing how nimble the young maiden is.

“Huh!?” says the thug leader, panning his head side to side in a confused state. Toki evaded his vision, positioning herself behind the thuggish leader. She lifts one of her legs, and then swiftly swipes it down across his legs. With gravity working against him, he falls on his back with a hefty thud.

As the man gets his bearings while lying on the floor, he looks up to see Toki with her gun reclaimed in her hand. With no hesitation, the young maiden pulls the trigger with a blank stare in her eyes. With a booming shot, the man closes his own eyes, embracing his impending demise.

“ ... ”

“Huh?” The thuggish leader opens his eyes, noticing he is still conscious. He then looks to the side to see a bullet mark with smoke trails emanating from it. Was his life spared at the whims of this unseemingly ferocious maid?

“Ending you here would make a mess in front of the Master’s residence. Please kindly leave and take your cohorts with you.” Toki says in her usual stoic demeanor. She puts the safety on her gun, holstering it to her side.

The thuggish leader, now traumatized by what transpired, his ego now deteriorated to beyond a simple welp, yells out to his men.

“Everyone! Let’s get the hell out of here! The loan isn’t worth fighting this crazy chick!”

The man gets up on his feet and cartoonishly runs down the street, waving to his men to exit the premises. The other men who still had some stamina in them took this opportunity to gather their unconscious brethren and high tail it out as if their lives depended on it.

The street, while damaged with some broken car windows and bullet marks on the street, is now empty with only Toki and Noah present. Noah emerges from behind the broken front door, looking around to take in the scene. He is in disbelief in what has transpired, the bakery he was supposed to take over is now damaged, not to mention the lingering fear of the thugs still looms over his head.

Toki approaches Noah in a cordial manner, undisturbed by what has happened, still maintaining her usual blank stare with her blue eyes.

“The men should no longer be a problem, Master Noah. And if they should reappear again, I will be prepared to handle them once more.” She says in a nonchalant manner.

“Those men... They were after me because of the debt my father owed. How can this be? It wasn’t supposed to be like this...”

Toki takes a moment to respond back to Noah, hoping to assuage her new master’s worries.

“Do not worry Master. While your father may have accumulated debt in order to maintain the building, he did everything in his power to secure a home for you for your eventual return.”

“Eventual return? Even he figured I was coming back...” Flashbacks of his chef training away from home, his dad, and other core memories resurface to his mind, overwhelming him with a mixture of emotions.

“He even hired me, his last request he gave his remaining money to, in order to protect you and allow you to pursue your dreams, Master Noah.”

“What do you mean, Toki?”

“Your father knew the debt he took from the loan sharks would eventually come back to hurt those close to him, even after his death. So he made a request to my organization, Cleaning & Clearing, also known as C&C, to protect you Master Noah.”

“He did that... Just for me?”

“Indeed Master. So as long as you live, I will be here to serve and protect you Master Noah.”

The newfound information is too much for Noah to take in. With the events that transpired recently, he began to break down and tears streamed down his face. He whimpers and kneels

down on the floor, unable to rationalize anything anymore. His father's death and last wish, the bakery, the fight with the thugs, it was all too much for him.

Whether it was out of pity or her receptiveness as a maid, Toki pulls out a handkerchief and kneels down to Noah's level, wiping his face in a gentle and caring manner. A heartfelt smile appears on her face, subtle yet meaningful. Noah and Toki remained in each other's presence without saying a word, letting the solace of their future linger around them.

A few days later.

With the last tray placed, Noah has decorated the bakery with an assortment of baked goods, ranging from cupcakes to a variety of bread. Toki meanwhile is sweeping the floor to ensure no crumbs and dust overstay their welcome.

With the help of Toki, Noah was able to repair the damages from the fight recently that transpired and with a newfound confidence decided to bake once more. With the support of Toki, Noah was able to open the bakery under the name "C&C Bakery".

The bell at the front door rang, alerting Noah to his first customer.

"Welcome to C&C Bakery, we hope you find something delicious" He greets them with a genuine air of respect and kindness, motivated to keep the bakery safe and running, pursuing his dreams of becoming a chef in a well-known establishment. Whether by chance or fate, Noah is determined to see his father's legacy through, with a bakery and maid in hand.

Toki continues to sweep, hiding her smile, knowing her days from an old request will lead to more interesting adventures.