

A slice of life at The Thieves 'n Thickets

Around the corner over the ditch and under the skies there's a forest of towering old pines. A heavy fog permanently blankets the ground, snaking around the trunks of the majestic trees. When the fog is disturbed it parts to reveal an overgrown dirt path that winds through the forest to a clearing taken up by an old worn-down tavern that's clearly not used as such anymore. The building has an old moss-covered sign hanging above the door that reads 'The Thieves 'n Thickets' in peeling red paint. Something, or someone, must live there. When you peek inside through the patchwork of wooden slats in the windows it looks cosy and welcoming. Around the back of the building there is a patch of wild berries protected by a sketchily constructed picket fence to keep animals from eating them.

The people who call this place home have been living there for about six years at the time our story starts. Maekri and Organo are both fourteen, and Oak is eighteen. Finding each other in a broken foster system they call each other family. Oak helps keep the 'Thicket' homely with the income from his job repairing machines. He, being the oldest, is the most responsible, so usually handles the finances. Organo is spiritually tuned in, making sure the other's souls are balanced. Maekri is the fun 'mum'. She makes sure that nobody overworks themselves. She usually takes everyone out on fun adventures.

Now there's one thing you need to know about these three. Like the rest of the fae/human realms they have superhuman abilities. Oak has increased intelligence, Organo has enhanced insight and senses, and Maekri has the ability to increase the serotonin levels of others nearby. Compared to the rest of their class and school mates these are fairly

unremarkable and boring abilities. The others have powers like fire manipulation and telekinesis.

Because the three of them, being teenagers, are extremely messy, Oak stays home most days to perform maintenance and complete housework. He does some chores like dishes and laundry, checking the berries, and making sure the fence is in a stable condition. Part of his chores are to check on the home and make sure that nothing's going to fall apart anytime soon. Which is lucky really being that he loves working with lots of tools and materials. He has a job at the machine house about 15 minutes walk away with shifts that start at 6pm and end at 2am. Oak has doe eyes, that are offset by his bright red hair that's usually kept up in a low ponytail. When he has a spare minute, which admittedly are few, he can be found tinkering in the old shed.

Organo and Maekri both go to school during the day leaving around 8am in order to get to school on time. Organo

is more quiet and bookish but will stand up for anyone getting bullied, other than himself. He is proficient in science and enjoys making things go boom. Organo has blue eyes with fluffy blonde hair that's mid-length and usually kept up in a small man-bun. Maekri on the other hand is loud and confident but is conflict averse. She loves hearing the way sounds work together to create a piece of music. Maekri has green eyes with black hair that's straight and short, usually kept up by a spiky black headband.

Every so often Organo and Maekri will stay home so Oak can have a day off and relax while they take care of housework and maintenance for the day. Usually on these days Oak will go to town and pick up some books to add to the shelves they have in the entrance way of the tavern. All three of them like to read. This world, the tavern, and these characters are where and when our story takes place.

The worn tavern door creaks and groans as the tall slim-figured teenager opens it and walks through wearily. He stops momentarily at the entrance in front of a bookshelf and pulls out a book labelled "Euphoria kids" by Alison Evans and starts reading. He walks past the other shelves and past the curved and carved bannister that frames the dark oak staircase, and down the hall to the first door on the right.

"Hey Oak. How was your day?" calls a shrill voice from the kitchen.

"Yeah, good thanks Maekri. Is dinner ready?" asks Oak, sighing as he sits down in the plush red armchair closest to the door. He opens his book.

"Yeah, it is. Can you call Organo down please? He's up in our room reading," replies Maekri from the kitchen.

"Yep, no problem." Oak says, groaning slightly as he stands up from the chair putting a bookmark in his book.

“Oi Organo get your ass down here. Foods ready!” Oak yells huskily from the bottom of the stairs. Once he hears the hurried plodding of feet descending the stairs he turns around satisfied, and starts walking down the hall.

“FOOODD!” Organo loudly exclaimed, swinging around the bannister at the bottom of the stairs pushing past Oak only to trip on a rug, causing him to stumble a bit, before continuing his sprint to the dining room. The dining room itself still has the slight smell of beer and isn't all that big but it comfortably fits the old farmhouse table and the mismatched wooden chairs with burgundy couch cushions for some padding against the cold, hard, wood.

“Someone’s hungry,” laughs Maekri from the dining room, placing the food on the table and settling down to wait for the others. “Food, food, food!” Organo chants as he sits down at the table eagerly waiting for Oak. After a few seconds

he stops chanting and frowns, "Oooooooooaaaakkkkk, you big oaf. Hurry up, you're so slow. I'm hungry!" he whines.

"I'm going to take my sweet time now you said that!" replies Oak, going at a snail's pace and giggling a bit.

"Oak don't be an ass. Come on, food's getting cold," laughs Maekri, starting to eat.

Oak saunters into the room but stubs his toe on one of the old chairs. His eyes well up slightly as he fluffs up the cushion on his chair then plonks himself down onto his seat. The three sit in silence with the only sound being forks and knives screeching against the porcelain plates. Organo finishes first and scrapes his leftovers into a pot for the next night, then puts the plate into the sink. Oak follows suit soon after, then Maekri shortly after him.

While Oak moves to do the dishes the younger two move to the living room grabbing a board game that Maekri starts to set up. She quickly tries to get the game ready to play

despite her black hair falling into her eyes hindering her progress.

The living room is long and thin, with some plush red armchairs in the corners, and a grey two-seater in the middle facing a modest sized smart TV that Oak found at the machine house where he works. The door in the corner of the room next to a bookshelf is dark and small with peeling white paint panels near the bottom.

While waiting for Maekri to set up, Organo lazily casts his piercing blue-eyed gaze over the room, noticing how dusty the book shelves are, and the cobweb above the door that moves slightly each time a breeze comes through the patchwork window slats.

“Yo Oak, come play with us!” shouts Maekri to Oak who’s in the dining room doing the dishes. “I can’t, and nor can you guys, you have homework to complete, and after I’ve cleaned these I gotta get ready for work,” he replies. After a few

minutes Oak sneaks into the lounge with bubbles piled high in his hands. Organo, seeing the bubbles, scrambles back in mock fear. Maekri, who's slowly packing away the game, doesn't notice and gets a face full of bubbles. "Ptah, pft, ah, ew what the hell was that for?!" exclaims Maekri wiping bubbles from her face, hair now wet and dripping down her neck. She shivers a bit before piling the remaining bubbles into her hand, she stands up, and whips around, and smacks the giant's chest with the remainder of bubbles. Oak wipes bubbles from his chest with one hand and with the other clutches his stomach with laughter. Once rid of bubbles he hands Maekri her spiky black headband. Maekri snatches it up and with a huff, puts it back in her hair and scowls at Oak while she does.

"Wow, so rude. Not even a thank you," Oak says with mock offence. He then winks at Maekri and runs into the kitchen, grabs some more bubbles, runs back into the living

room and dumps the pile on Organo's blonde head. Maekri starts to cackle at what had just happened. "I am NOT cleaning that up," she says, looking at the bubble-covered floor.

"Douche bag," Organo huffs, rolling his eyes at Oak. "Come on you two," he says. Organo turns to the other and says "Mae, we have stuff to do," before walking off in the direction of the dining room.

Oak chaotically runs around like a child on a sugar high to get ready to leave to get to the machine house. Organo walks to his bag that was hanging on a hook on the back of the dining room door, pulls out his homework and sits down on one of the cushioned chairs. Maekri pulls her bag off a hook and whacks Organo with it before sitting down across from him. Organo groans in pain and scowls in Maekri's general direction before continuing his work. After a few minutes Oak comes into the room to bid the two farewell.

“Right, I’m going to head off now. You two behave and be in bed by the time I get back,” Oak says, walking over to Organo and Maekri and kissing their heads. “In case you guys are asleep before I get back”

“Yes daaaad,” the two mock in unison, continuing their homework. Oak rushes out the door, down the path, and out the gate, into the horizon line of the setting sun that casts an orange glow over the landscape.

After a few hours and the sun has set, Organo and Maekri stand up from the table to stretch and get ready for bed. The sounds of heavy footfalls echo through-out the tavern as they do so. The room that the three sleep in has bunk beds, Organo on the top, Maekri on the bottom, and Oak’s single bed opposite the bunk. Each has posters of bands and gaming events hung up in their respective spaces. The beds creak as the two climb into them, the sounds of rustling covers fill the room temporarily, then stop.

Then from the top bunk.

“Night Mae”. And from the bottom bunk.

“G’night Gan”.

Then the tavern goes silent. The only noise to be heard is the wind occasionally rustling the branches of the trees outside.

With dawn still a few hours off, a light appeared at the edge of the forest which got bigger and bigger as the figure holding it got closer and closer to the door of his home. Oak turns off his torch, quietly opens the tavern door, moves inside then closes it again. He looks around at the outline of the familiar shelves and what used to be a grand rug, now worn and threadbare from time and use. Oak sluggishly yet quietly walks up the stairs to the bedroom. He smiles slightly at the serene looks on the faces of his sleeping friends, his family, and falls into his bed, exhausted, falling asleep as soon as his head hits the pillow.

Then 'The Thieves 'n Thickets' is silent once more.