

# BULL MARKET

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The boardroom of Gaochang Enterprises was filled with all the top heads of the various companies brought under the strong hand of Gyumao, the bull demon who had taken Tokyo by storm. The board members had been assembled, an elaborate display of sweets and confections was spread across the table, but the main star of the show wasn't on stage. Gyumao's throne-like chair at the head of the table was empty, and the board members were left glancing around nervously or drumming their fingers on the table. No one dared say anything about the head man being late; the simple fact was, Gyumao had been distracted as of late. His ruthless business instincts had somewhat dulled, he was taking vacation time for the first time in years, and he had become strangely... sentimental. Some board members knew, some only speculated, but the rumor was spreading—the boss was in love.

The doors flew open, and Gyumao strided in. His tailored suit hugged his thick, musclebound physique, the bull a powerhouse of strength and confidence. Thickly roped limbs carried a case of binders that were passed out, then he pressed his large hands on the table top, grinning softly as he saw all the board members sit up straight, not unlike soldiers standing at attention.

"Thank you for your patience, everyone. Let's begin—you're probably wondering why I've called you all here today." The bull paused to read everyone's expressions, the board staring with rapt attention. "Ladies and gentlemen, Gaochang Enterprises has grown dominant in many industries—summoning technology, electronics, real estate, and more. But there is one industry we've been sleeping on. Would anyone care to guess?"

The board exchanged looks, shrugging softly to one another. One, a bespectacled man in a suit slightly too large for him, hesitated. "Uh... Automobiles?"

"No." Gyumao growled.

Another, a sharply dressed woman, guessed. "The energy sector?"

"Wrong!" The bull snorted.

"The... financial market?"

"Wrong!" Gyumao slammed his fist on the table, nearly splintering the wood and making everyone jump. "No! Come now, all of you!" He gestured to the centerpiece of sweets on the table. "Food! Sweets, specifically. Look at your binders—the confectionery industry is notoriously recession proof, has regular spikes around the holiday season, Halloween, and Valentine's Day, and, as my boyf—" Gyumao caught himself, clearing his throat. "A close—ah, several close advisors have told me that it is currently being underrepresented. There isn't enough variety on the market, and that will be our entry."

Those in the know exchanged resigned looks with one another. It all made sense, now—Gyumao's lover was the cause of this. Ever since he had gotten involved in a not-so-secret

relationship with a Summoner of no small renown, the bull's priorities had become somewhat... skewed.

One executive coughed discreetly. Even if the board disapproved, Gyumao was still six foot five and nearly four hundred pounds of brawn and hellfire, that could go from laughing loudly around the watercooler to roundhouse kicking a man out of the boardroom window at the drop of a hat. The bull snorted, his head whipping in the direction of the executive.

"Ah... sir. We have no experience with food of any kind— and, unless we're marketing for something affordable or health conscious, I imagine flavor and taste are going to be major areas of focus for this new endeavor."

Gyumao grunted. "Obviously."

"Well..." the executive spread his hands. "Do you have someone in mind, sir? To taste test these potential products?"

Gyumao looked around. "Well, I was hoping someone here would be brave enough to volunteer."

The executives all exchanged looks again, muttering amongst themselves and shaking their heads noncommittally. Gyumao slowly scowled. "What?" he growled. "None of you are brave enough to take up this new task? What in hells am I paying you people for?"

"Uh— sir, forgive me," another board member spoke up. "But... none of us have any experience in dealing with confections or sweets. If you want, we can prepare some interviews..."

"Bah!" Gyumao thumped his fist against the table. "I see that, as always, if I want something done right, I'll have to do it myself!" He pointed to one of the graphs. "We still have about half a year before the holiday season! Between Halloween, Christmas, and Valentine's Day, we will have the potential to make a goldmine— but only if we start *now!* I will take responsibility for taste testing and quality control. You pencil pushers crunch the numbers to make it happen! Clear?"

"Yes, sir!"

#### First Month: Research and Development

Gyumao was in his office, his feet propped up on his desk as the bull chuckled. He cradled a phone on his broad shoulders, listening to his lover. "So... just so you know," he rumbled, using that deep, throaty tone the Summoner loved. "I'm going to have *quite* a surprise for you. No! I can't tell you, that would be spoiling! But I'll tell you this— your sweet tooth will be *very* happy when I'm done." The bull sat up, clearing his throat as his assistant came in, wheeling in a cart laden with trays. "Ah! Listen, I'll have to talk to you later, let's do lunch. Yes, right, I—" He glanced nervously over at his assistant, and cupped his hand over the phone, muttering low. "I love you too, bye."

"Sir." The assistant bowed his head. "The first samples are here for you to taste test," he said, gesturing to the cart. "Though... I feel I should tell you this isn't really how taste tests are done."

"It's not how *other* people do taste tests. I wouldn't be where I am today if I did things the way other people do them. Now leave me to my work!" Gyumao waved his assistant off, and began uncovering the cart's trays. There was an array of sesame cookies, chocolate chip cookies, and other traditional baked goods. The bull plucked a soft, still warm chocolate cookie and grinned. "I want to start as I mean to go on."

## Second Month: Product Roll-Out

Gyumao took to this new work assignment like it was a calling from the heavens. The bull wanted everything to be perfect for his Summoner— and that meant the perfect desserts and meals for the holiday season. He had fallen for a gourmand, an adorably plump thing that he wanted to pamper and spoil. That had become his new goal, and Gyumao never did anything by halves. The first testing ground were cookies— basic fare, tasty little treats, but they were too pedestrian. Oh, he approved his favorites, of course, but Gyumao was looking for something with a little more heft, a little more unique— his Summoner deserved nothing less.

He was mulling over what exactly that would be on his latest fitting. He was getting a new suit made for a special Halloween party, when he heard the tailor grunt softly.

"Problem?" the bull rumbled.

"Hm? Oh, no sir, I think I'll just need to make some adjustments on your suit," the tailor replied, marking something in his notepad.

"Oh, heh." Gyumao looked over at the mirror, grinning as he pumped his girthy, bulging arm, making his meaty bicep leap to life. "Yeah, I've been on a bulking cycle."

The tailor glanced discreetly from Gyumao's arm to his thickening middle. His cobbled abs were gone, and a thick, pliable mass had taken up its place. "Of course, sir."

There was a long track of silence as the tailor dutifully took down measurements, and Gyumao admired his reflection, oblivious to the subtle softening of his features and slight puffiness in his cheeks. "Say..." he looked over his shoulder at the tailor. "What's your opinion on cake pops? Better yet— fudge pops?"

## Seventh Month: Second Quarterly Reports

"...All in all, this quarter was solid, but I think there are some areas we should look at. For starters, the new bakery acquisition is still running up costs, and..." Gyumao's CFO trailed off, interrupted by a heavy grunt from his boss. He was left awkwardly glancing at his assistant, then back to the bull's desk.

Gyumao's desk was covered in half-emptied plates, all of them containing various cakes. His favorite, by far, was a decadent Death By Chocolate recipe, which had so enraptured the bull, he had grabbed a slice in his bare hand, shoving it into his mouth. He savored the flavor with a low moan, and then glanced up at the CFO, who was now openly staring at his boss.

"What? There a problem?" the burly bull growled. "This is research, Yamata. Go on! I'm listening, I can multitask."

"...Of course, sir." Yamata cleared his throat, turning back to his presentation. "Anyways, the new bakery acquisition is dragging down our profits. It will take months for it to get into the black, but we can lower costs if we were to drop some of the products that aren't selling as well..." He pursed his lips, bracing himself. "...Like the Chocolate Chocolate Chip Bundt Bombs."

Gyumao's head snapped up from his cake-fuelled reverie, and he snorted angrily. The Chocolate Chocolate Chip Bundt Bomb was the Summoner's favorite—and had become his, for that matter.

Yamata felt a shiver run down his spine— no matter how much weight the boss had put on, he could still flatten him. It was probably easier now than ever. "I-it's the decadence of the product, sir. Our customer base is increasingly health-conscious, and they're just not interested in a dessert that already has more than twice the daily recommended calorie dosage. There is of course the mark-up in price, as well. The recipe you insisted upon sir, we're having supply chain issues—"

"Bah!" Gyumao slammed his fist on the desk, leaving a dent. "We're clear of Halloween, Yamata, and barrelling towards Christmas. Trust me— no one watches their wallets or their waists at Christmas. We'll see those sales pick up, especially if you use that ad campaign I forwarded to you."

Yamata looked down his spectacles at Gyumao, weighing his options. "Yes... the 'Chocolate is for Lovers' ad..."

The bull smirked, dimpling his cheeks. "My own idea. It'll do the trick, I think."

"As you say, sir," Yamata sighed, and began packing up his presentation. He looked back at Gyumao, who could no longer resist snatching up the last slice of chocolate cake set before him. The bull shoved the slice into his increasingly greedy maw, gulping it down and licking his fingers as he propped his feet up on the desk, giving the executive a very clear view of what this new project had done to the boss. It was almost comical how ill-fitting Gyumao's suit was on him; the shirt buttons were so tight across his waist that bunches of fur and overfed flesh were sticking out in each row. His middle had rounded out into a dark boulder that spilled over his augmented thighs, his pants splitting at the seams. His suit jacket was faring little better; his sleeves looked ready to burst, but it wasn't rock-hard muscle alone, but a new layer of thick fat that vaguely held the shape of a muscular arm. His chiseled jaw had also softened and rounded, a double chin now prominent as he looked down at Yamata.

"There something else?" Gyumao rumbled.

The CFO stared blankly at his boss— it wasn't worth risking his job over this. "Nothing, sir. Have a nice day."

## Ninth Month: Holiday Product Rollout

Gyumao's personal tailor was starting to think he should really raise his rates. "Ah— sir— if... if you could maybe, uhm... put down the chocolate?"

"I'm holding up my arms, just work around it!" the bull snapped, popping a chunk of fudge as large as the tailor's fist into his greedy maw.

The tailor exhaled sharply. "Alright... if you wouldn't mind sucking in a bit, sir?" Gyumao did as he was asked— for what good it did. The enormous, gray orb that now constituted his middle was a daunting challenge for the tailor as he began wrapping his tape measure around the bull's waist, grunting from the effort as he realized, to his horror, that even with his tape measure cutting fairly deep into the soft blubber hanging off the bull's frame, there wasn't enough to properly measure him. The tailor stared, eyes wide as he grunted, trying to get the tape measure to meet.

Gyumao was finally distracted enough to put the thick, two pound slab of fudge down. "What're you doing there, Shino, trying to cut me in half?"

"I— I a-almost have it, sir!" the tailor grunted, placing a foot on Gyumao's thick, juicy rear to pull the tape measure tighter, and then, the tape measure snapped like a rubber band. Shinto the tailor tumbled over backwards, as the bull's globular gut refused to be constrained any longer. There was an audible sloshing sound, as if someone was swinging around a sack of flour, as Gyumao's belly jiggled, slowly settling back into place.

"Ah..." Shino winced, certain Gyumao was about to explode in rage for embarrassing him thusly. "A thousand apologies, sir, I-I'll just—"

"Hmph!" the bull cut him off, turning to face him. "You *should* be sorry. What sort of shoddy establishment are you running, Shinto, that you can't accommodate someone of my presence?"

Shino blinked. He was certain all this time Gyumao had buried himself in denial. "Sir?"

Gyumao slapped his girthy middle, sending ripples across the broad expanse of his gut, his hefty love handles trembling. "I need a new suit for the holiday office party— I'm taking a very special date, and I *will* look my best. Get a bigger tape measure, and make sure whatever you make accentuates my profile." Gyumao turned to the full length mirror— between his huge belly, chunky thunder thighs, and round, juicy rear, he couldn't fit all of his reflection in it anymore. "I want to look *good*."

"Accentuate? Mr. Gyumao, sir, I— I hate to correct, but do you mean to say... alleviate? Downplay? I can create a suit that has a slimming effect..."

"*Downplay*?" Gyumao scoffed. He turned to face Shinto, his belly pressing against the tailor. With one heavy, trundling stomp, Gyumao's gut pressed against the tailor like a wave,

pushing him back into a corner. "*Why* would I want to downplay this?" Gyumao hefted up his belly in his thick hands, letting it drop and wobble in Shino's face.

"I— I can't imagine..." Shino mumbled.

Gyumao shook his head. "I hired you because I believed you possessed a keen eye for fashion and trends, Shino. I have been reassured by *several* trusted friends that this look is *in*. At least, in certain circles... People want to see a prosperous businessman! It makes me approachable, grounded, cuddly..."

"Cuddly, sir?"

"Hush! I've even been told that I carry this weight quite well— and I'm inclined to agree. If you can't accommodate that, then perhaps I need to find a new tailor."

Shino held up his hands. "No, no Mr. Gyumao, that won't be necessary. Though, if I can offer some advice, I'd rethink the red and white color scheme for your suit. A fa—" he cut himself off as Gyumao was already glaring at him. "A... *prosperous* man in a red and white suit around Christmas might... send the wrong message."

Gyumao grunted, waving Shino's concern off as he returned to his block of fudge. "Hurry it up, I have a *very* important lunch date in less than an hour."

### Thirteenth Month: Annual Review

The boardroom of Gaochang Enterprises was full— more full than usual, or at least it certainly felt like that. An elaborate Valentine's Day display had been set up in the middle of the table, with chocolates, cookies, and cakes adorned in pink frosting and heart-shaped sprinkles, in what many assumed to be only a centerpiece, but they soon realized the mountain of cakes and chocolates were the boss's gift from his Summoner lover. Gyumao wasted no time gorging himself, shoveling his own product into his mouth with reckless abandon. The year had seen the bull go through a startling, and to some, alarming transformation— the imposing wall of grit and muscle was replaced by a wide, doughy blob squeezed into a too-small suit.

Gyumao's ear twitched, and he pulled himself out of his sugar and chocolate-fueled reverie as he glanced around his boardroom with narrowed eyes. The executives were talking to themselves, and very pointedly not looking at him. He knew what was going on— they doubted him. This... transformation he had gone through made them think he was weak. Well, he knew a little flourish of power was sometimes necessary.

"Ahem." He cleared his throat, but the executives weren't listening. Gyumao narrowed his eyes further, then leaned further, his belly spilling over the top of the table. He raised his fists and rammed them down, splintering the wood on impact. "*Ahem.*"

The talking ended abruptly, the executives turning to face Gyumao as the bull began to grow before their eyes. Tapping into his demonic fire, Gyumao's enormous gut began to churn and broil like a furnace, the threads of his suit snapping and falling apart like butter melting on a frying pan. Wider than he was tall at this point, the bull's flabby sides and blubbery love handles reaching the sides of the boardroom long before his horns scraped the roof. His gray ton-sized

heap of a belly spilled over more and more of the table until it flattened under the weight, his legs growing thicker than tractor tires. His pillowy chest trembled as his growth stopped, the rest of his jiggling mass settling. He grinned, dimpling his round cheeks as he looked down at the rest of the board like they were ants.

"Glad I have your attention. All of you were doubtful, but I hope this year has taught all of you to not doubt your leader— now, Yamata, go over the numbers. I believe we have a *lot* of expanding figures to cover."