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Nephis changed from her torn clothes, and was now wearing a white tunic with its hems embroidered in intricate red patterns. The tunic was somewhat similar to Sunny's Shroud of Dusk, but also different — it seemed like a single sheet of light fabric that had been elaborately tied at the shoulders, and thus had no sleeves. Loosely fastened at the waist and with high slits, it seemed like something that could afford one a high degree of freedom of movement.

Still, Sunny was slightly surprised to see what Neph had chosen to summon. She gave him a strange look.

"What?"

He shrugged.

"I just imagined that you would select a suit of steel armor, or at least something that offers more protection. There has to be a Memory like that among those that Summer Knight gave you, right?"

Nephis shook her head.

"There is. But what does it matter here? No matter how powerful of an armor Memory I use, it will still break after brushing against a great abomination once. So, I might as well go for something light and offering good utility. This tunic might not protect me well, but it enhances my senses. For now, that is more important. Best of all..."

She slightly pursed her lips and added with a hint of frustration in her voice:

"...It won't burn."

Sunny suppressed a chuckle.

"Alright. Suit yourself."

It was not like he had anything to complain about. That tunic of hers was rather beautiful... plus, he wasn't one to talk, considering what he himself was wearing.

Sunny pulled his gaze away from Neph's slender figure and stared at the Memories that were laying on the ground between them. These were all the ones in their possession that mentioned Ariel, his Tomb, the Great River, or an estuary of any kind.

There was no real need to summon them, since both Sunny and Nephis could see each other's runes. However, having something to look at was more convenient.

They were:

A beautifully engraved chalice of white stone full of black liquid, a hand mirror of dark silver that gave off an ominous feeling, a graceful jian with a long and slender blade of pristine white jade, a necklace of engraved black metal that resembled a collar, an elegant mallet with a hammerhead made of perfectly black stone, and a dagger made of cloudy steel with a handle that was wrapped in black leather.

The Bitter Cusp, the Mirror of Truth, the Sin of Solace, the Stifled Scream, the Dark Shaper, and the Falling Ash.

The last two came from Nephis, while all the other ones came from Sunny — he had spent more time in Antarctica, after all, and received more Memories from the abominations of the Chain of Nightmares.

There was also the Shroud of Graceless Dusk, but Sunny did not feel like undressing... although it might have been only fair for him to do so.

'Nevermind.'

He studied the Memories for a while, sometimes glancing at the shimmering runes in front of him. Eventually, Sunny said:

"Before we try to draw any conclusions, let's go over what we already know first."

Nephis nodded.

Sunny took a deep breath.

"First of all... there was a daemon called Ariel, the Demon of Dread. The Tomb of Ariel stands somewhere in the Nightmare Desert — however, it is not a tomb where Ariel is buried. Rather, it is a tomb that he built."

He remained silent for a moment, then continued:

"The seven of us entered a Seed of Nightmare that seemed to have originated from the Tomb of Ariel. However, instead of being transported into the past of the Nightmare Desert, we somehow ended up in the middle of a strange and boundless river."

It was not certain that the Great River was boundless — Sunny had not tried to reach its seemingly unattainable shores yet, after all. However, it was definitely incredibly vast.

He frowned.

"That river seems to be the Great River, which is said to exist outside of time and flow endlessly from the future into the past... whatever that means. The Great River is connected to the Tomb of Ariel, somehow. But we don't know how exactly."

After finishing, Sunny lingered a bit, and then asked:

"Anything you want to add?"

Nephis nodded.

"The Nightmare we entered is an abnormal one. The vision of the reversed time was interrupted. Additionally, there are supposed to be millions of challengers within it. Apart from that..."

She glanced at the strange sky of the Great River, where dawn coexisted with dusk and day, and at the seven suns bathing the world in light. Then, Nephis said:

"This place looks like a colossal Soul Sea."

Sunny's eyes glistened.

"Right? That was what I thought, as well!"

He sighed, and then picked up the dagger forged out of cloudy steel — the Falling Ash. Weighing it in his hand, Sunny glanced at its complicated weave, and then turned to the runes.

Memory: [Falling Ash].

Memory Rank...

At the same time, Nephis looked at his own Memories for a while, and then tentatively picked up the Mirror of Truth. She glanced at her reflection, shivered, then turned the mirror around and studied the beautiful engravings on its back.

Her eyes darted from side to side, most likely reading the runes that described the meeting between Weaver and Ariel.

After a few moments, a contemplative expression appeared on Neph's face.

"This one is interesting. I think it is important... it can help us understand the nature and purpose of the Tomb of Ariel. However, it doesn't tell us anything about the Great River."

She put the Mirror of Truth aside and reached out for the Bitter Cusp.

"This one is connected to the Sin of Solace and the Falling Ash, I think."

Sunny nodded as he read the description of the ashen dagger.

The runes read:

[Ariel built a beautiful palace of jade for the queen, and there, she held her court. A great bridge of stone led to the Jade Palace, covered in snow and ash. Soon, the news of the queen's beauty and wisdom spread across the realms, and many guests came to witness her grace. Not all of them survived the snow, and even fewer survived the ash. Still, more and more came.]

He frowned.

The description of the Sin of Solace told of a beautiful monster that Ariel had made a queen and gifted with the sinister knowledge of hideous truth. The description of the Bitter Cusp told the eerie story of a group of guests that came to the Jade Court with ill intentions. And this one told about how Ariel had built the Jade Court... the Jade Palace... for the Jade Queen.

None of that information was particularly useful for them now, except maybe for the fact that Ariel seemed fond of building things.

However...

Sunny glanced at Nephis and showed her the dagger.

"That Jade Palace... doesn't it sound like Ravenheart?"

Ravenheart, the Great Citadel of Clan Song, was situated among snowy peaks and raging volcanoes. Snow and ash were always falling there... and, more than that, one had to cross an enormous stone bridge to reach it.

The description of the Jade Palace was too similar.

Neph looked at the Falling Ash. Then, her eyes glinted a little.

"...It does."

Sunny was a bit stunned. He had learned some time ago that the Citadels of the great clans were left behind by the seven daemons, and were thus very important to the Sovereigns. So were the Ivory Tower, which had once belonged to Hope, and the Hollow Mountains, where Nether's Citadel still remained undiscovered. That was why Valor and Song had been racing to conquer the Tomb of Ariel.

But... if the Citadel left behind by Ariel was actually Ravenheart...

Then which daemon was tied to the black pyramid? Who could be more connected to the Tomb of Ariel than its builder?

Feeling confused, Sunny shook his head and tried to concentrate on the task at hand.

Right now, they had to learn about the Great River the most... because that was where they were stuck...

Putting the Falling Ash back, he picked up the Dark Shaper — which looked like an elegant mallet with its head made of perfectly black stone.

In fact... that black stone looked very familiar.

Sunny studied the weave of the black mallet, then glanced at its runes. A few moments later, his eyes widened.