1312 Ancient Mural

Sunny remained silent for a while, looking at the broken pillar. Eventually, he turned to Ananke and asked in a hesitant tone:

"What is this?"

The young priestess approached the mass of dark stone and bowed her head. After a few moments of reverent silence, she straightened and looked at him with a proud smile.

"It is one of the greatest relics of Weave, my Lord. This column was brought into the Tomb of Ariel by my elders, and then carried all the way here after their exile. It depicts the deeds of Weaver, from birth to the bestowal of the Nightmare Spell to my people."

Her smile dimmed.

"...However, as you can see, the column has been severely damaged over the ages. Now, only this one image remains."

Sunny frowned and stared at chains wrapped around the titanic gate. For whatever reason, just looking at them made him feel deeply uncomfortable.

"But what is its meaning?"

His voice was full of both curiosity and apprehension.

Ananke stepped closer to the broken pillar and studied the ancient engraving for a few moments in solemn silence. Then, she said in a melodious tone:

"This is a fragment of the mural that tells the story of one of Weaver's greatest deeds. The story of how the wandering daemon braved the eternal abyss."

The frown on Sunny's face deepened. He briefly glanced at Nephis and said: "The... eternal abyss? Do you mean the primordial void?"

The young priestess nodded.

"Yes. After the gods sealed the void, Weaver was the only one who managed to enter it. Or, rather, the only one of those who had entered it who managed to return alive. At least that is what the legends say."

Sunny raised an eyebrow.

He knew that the gods had sealed the eternal void, from which they were born. He also knew that the unknown were, most likely, the creatures of that void, while the Unknown was a specific being that had somehow given life to the seven daemons.

And that the reflection of either the former or the latter was forever frozen in the depths of Weaver's eyes.

Was that how the Demon of Fate had ended up carrying the reflection of the unknown within their pupils? By entering the void and witnessing its horror?

If so... Sunny wasn't sure if the depiction on the pillar had anything to do with how that event had happened. He doubted that there was an actual gate, no matter how impressive, that barred the way into the eternal void. What kind of gate could seal something that was much greater and more ancient than even the gods?

He also was uncertain that Weaver had actually physically entered the void. Of course, it was possible... but there was another probability, as well.

The strings of fate stretched from the past into the future. The Demon of Fate had obviously been much more capable of looking at them than Sunny was...

What if Weaver had simply traced the great tapestry of fate all the way back to its origin? To the point when the world had not existed yet, and all there was was a vast and ever-changing void?

If so, then using the [Where is My Eye?] enchantment was much more perilous than Sunny had thought... and he already considered it deadly. In fact, now that he knew that simply knowing certain things could corrupt living beings, he saw the ability to perceive the strings of fate in a new light.

'Dangerous...'

Of course, there was still the possibility that Weaver had indeed ventured into the eternal void physically. Maybe that was how they had ended up having to sever their arm in the Ebony Tower... although timing did not really made sense for that to happen.

He remained silent for a bit, then asked in a dry tone:

"And why, exactly, did Weaver do such a thing?"

Ananke smiled.

"Weaver believed that knowledge was the origin of power..."

'Yeah, I heard as much.'

"...and that was the reason they had ventured into the eternal abyss. To find the answer to the greatest of secrets."

Nephis was looking at the ancient mural. Hearing these words, she frowned slightly, and asked:

"What secret?"

The young priestess laughed.

"How would mortals like us know? Some legends say that the Demon of Fate wanted to gain knowledge of the origin of the gods. Others say that it was Weaver's own origin that they sought to uncover. Perhaps it was both."

Sunny stared at her for a moment.

'...Perhaps the two are one and the same.'

Ananke shook her head.

"Whatever it was that Weaver had learned in the abyss... is not that important, really.

What matters more is that witnessing the eternal void gave the Demon of Fate the first reason to create the Nightmare Spell — that is what we, its priests, believe. So while

this mural does not depict the inception of the Nightmare Spell, it does depict the inception of the idea of it. Which is why the remains of this column is the greatest relic of Weave."

Sunny tilted his head.

'What? What does the eternal void have to do with the Nightmare Spell? That's the first time I'm hearing about this.'

Wasn't Ananke contradicting herself? Before, she had said that the purpose of the Nightmare Spell was to give living beings a chance to save themselves from the annihilation of the Doom War.

But then again, she was a priestess, and religious beliefs were rarely bound by reason. Contradictions were par for the course, and for the same reason, Sunny had to take everything Ananke said with a grain of salt.

Still... there could be some truth to what she said.

The young priestess bowed to the broken pillar again, then walked away with light steps.

"My Lord, my Lady... come! I will show you the rest of the temple."

Sunny and Nephis exchanged a glance, both pondering the meaning of the ancient mural. Neither of them knew what to make of it, so they followed Ananke in silence. Soon, the three of them settled for sleep. Tired after the long journey and the forlorn

eeriness of Weave, Sunny fell into the embrace of dreams almost instantly. ...That night, he saw a nightmare.

In the nightmare, Sunny was a spider with one of his eight legs broken off. He was crawling across the stone floor, consumed by fear.

Behind him, broken chains were falling down with a deafening clangor, and a titanic door stood wide open, its dark maw hiding indescribable horror.

Sunny crawled and crawled, but no matter how he strained himself, the horrifying gate was only drew closer.