1318 Leaving Weave

Sunny, Nephis, and Ananke spend several days in the temple of the Nightmare Spell, resting and exploring the forlorn city as they prepared for the last leg of the journey. These days were strangely tranquil and peaceful, but also bittersweet.

It was because the three of them knew that their time together was coming to an end.

The young priestess, who had been their caretaker and guide for the last few weeks, was not going to be able to follow her wards to where they needed to go. Fallen Grace, the city of Dusk, lay far beyond the boundary of where she was allowed to exist.

Such was the fate of all Riverborn.

Sunny and Nephis were both painfully aware of what awaited Ananke in the future. That was why, even though they tried to hide their emotions, a dark shadow was cast over their hearts.

The young priestess herself, meanwhile, seemed at peace with her bitter fate. An easy smile often appeared on her lips, and she fully dedicated herself to making preparations to send the two of them on their way.

Sunny and Nephis were going to have to travel far downstream on their own. They needed supplies and knowledge to reach Fallen Grace without Ananke, so she was busy making sure they would have everything they needed.

They gathered various resources from all over the desolate ruins of Weave. The young priestess also taught them how to navigate the Great River and recognize various perils hiding in its depths. Nephis continued to learn how to steer the enchanted ketch, while Sunny spent his time weaving threads of shadow essence and studying the Estuary Key.

Eventually, there was nothing left for them in the orphaned city. As the beautiful light of the seven rising suns suffused the cool morning air, Ananke led them through the empty streets for the last time and jumped lightly onto the deck of the graceful ketch.

"Come! We will sail downstream today."

Sunny and Nephis glanced at each other, then silently followed her aboard the boat. The young priestess watched them with a smile, then nodded and gestured to the steering oar.

"My Lady, it is best if you practice steering while I am still with you. Remember our lessons. You can surely succeed!"

Nephis looked at her for a while, her face motionless. She hesitated a little before sitting down on the helmsman's bench and taking the oar.

Sunny, meanwhile, frowned.

"Wait... what about you? If we are going to sail away on the ketch, how are you going to get back to Weave?"

Ananke shook her head.

"Weave stretches far downstream, just like it does upstream. There are several island-ships we will visit before it is time for me to turn back. I will leave you at the Lower House of Parting, where there are other vessels for me to use."

He hesitated for a few moments, then nodded reluctantly. Sunny had not come to terms with how they would have to leave Ananke behind, still... but there was nothing he could do, and nothing he knew how to say.

They had no other choice.

... But the farewell was not upon them yet. Perhaps he would be able to find the correct words in the days to come.

With a sigh, Sunny lowered himself to the deck. Usually, Ananke would sit on the bench at the stern of the ketch, while Nephis would be opposite him at the middle point of the deck. Today, however, their familiar positions were reversed — Neph was holding the steering oar, while the priestess sat down near Sunny.

He had grown somewhat accustomed to how beautiful the young Ananke was, but looking at her directly still felt strange. Especially because of how bright her smile was, and how heavy his heart was.

"Thank you, my Lord."

Sunny looked at her somberly, surprised. "Me? For what?"

The young priestess sighed lightly, then looked at the desolate landscape of Weave with a wistful expression.

"For wanting to learn about my birthplace so much. I am glad to have shared its stories with someone. Very much."

He lowered his head and remained silent for a few moments. "...Sure. No problem."

At that moment, Nephis took a deep breath, and then said something in a resolute voice. The word that escaped her lips echoed from the walls of the canal, and a subtle ripple spread across the surface of the flowing water. It was as though the word itself contained an invisible power capable of reshaping the world.

Soon, a strong gale rose, filling the sails of the old ketch.

It was both similar and different from how Ananke summoned the wind. Neph's Shaping was more direct and crude, lacking stability... but, at the same time, it contained a wild and fearsome will. As a result, the gale summoned by the True Name of the wind was able to propel the boat forward despite not being as strong as what the young priestess had been able to call upon.

The Word they spoke was the same, but the result differed. It was because of the nature of the Sorcery of Names — unlike other types of sorcery, which acted through fixed conduits like essence threads and runes, it used the Shapers themselves as the conduit.

Nephis was of a lower Rank than Ananke, so she couldn't channel the power of the Word as potently. But, at the same time, her body and soul were aflame with the divine lineage of Sun God... and more importantly, she possessed a True Name of her own.

Those with True Names were connected to the mystical side of the world much closer, would be influenced by the hidden powers of the world much more... and be able to exert greater influence in turn.

Which was why Nephis was able to control the ketch with a sufficient level of power despite not being a Saint like Ananke.

"You are doing great, my Lady! Speak the Names of Concealment next!"

Neph lingered, her face a little pale. The Sorcery of Names did not come without a cost, just like the other types of sorcery. Channeling a Word put a strain on the Shaper's body, as while uttering it did not consume essence, controlling the outcome did.

Eventually, she gritted her teeth and said the rest of the Names the priestess had taught her, arranging them into a Phrase.

The ketch flew through the canals. Soon, it broke free of the city boundaries and sped into the open expanse of the Great River, leaving the forlorn city behind.

They were once again traveling downstream, deeper into the past.