1347 Trial of Skill

The hypnotizing tapestry of the spellweave stretched in the darkness in front of him. Countless threads of ethereal light intertwined in a beautiful, but seemingly chaotic pattern, centered around a radiant nexus.

There had been a time when these patterns were a complete mystery to Sunny. But although they still remained mystifying and nebulous, he could discern an elegant underlying structure to their dazzling, dizzying arrays now.

He could also feel the purpose of various elements of the weave more clearly.

The spellweave of the Dawn Shard was not the most complex he had ever seen... but it was more complex than most. Even after isolating the rudimentary enchantments that all Memories possessed and the special properties shared by Shard Memories, the remaining expanse of ethereal strings was byzantine and daunting.

Luckily, his goal was not to recreate the weave from scratch. He also did not intend to alter its function... only its capacity and resilience.

As well as transplanting a new, much more potent nexus than the existing one.

With a sigh, Sunny summoned the Covetous Coffer and produced a large, shining crystal from within it. When put together, the band of bright metal and the Supreme soul shard he had harvested from the guts of the Black Turtle looked comical — the soul shard was much larger than the Crown of Dawn, yet it was supposed to become encompassed by it.

But that was not an obstacle. Weaves did not exist in the physical sense, anyway. Just like souls, they inhabited an entirely different plane of existence.

Sunny pulled on the invisible thread of shadow essence. At the same time, a needle that shone with a faint golden glow appeared in one of his hands.

He took a deep breath. 'Steady...'

The process had to be steady. But it couldn't be slow — Sunny would have to remove the original nexus first before transplanting a new one. The moment it was removed, the weave was going to start falling apart. So, he had to tie as many of the most important threads back, fast, and then bring the rest back even faster.

He had spent years learning sorcery and two weeks restlessly preparing for this moment... but the outcome was going to be decided in less than ten minutes. If Sunny succeeded, the cohort would acquire a powerful tool to help them survive the Nightmare. If he failed...

The Dawn Shard would be destroyed, and he would have to explain himself to one hell of an angry Changing Star.

'She probably won't kill me... right? But just in case, I'd better not fail.' "Of course you will. When have you ever not failed?"

The Sin of Solace was observing the process with a disdainful expression. Sunny was concentrating on the task so much that he had lowered his guard... as a result, the hurtful remark actually cut, for once.

Well, to be honest, they always cut a little. But this time, he felt bitter anger swell in his chest.

'Calm down!'

Throwing a dark look at the grinning apparition, Sunny wrapped all five shadows around himself and summoned the Crown of Twilight.

...As the first ray of sunshine burst from the horizon, he took a deep breath, and thrust one of his shadow hands into the ethereal tapestry of the spellweave. His clawed fingers wrapped themselves around the shining nexus... and then crushed it, destroying the anchor of the countless threads.

'I wonder how anyone could have been a weaver before me...'

Sunny was more or less certain that the very ability to not only see, but also touch the ethereal strings was granted to him by Bone Weave. His eyes had been altered by consuming a drop of Weaver's blood, while his fingers had been altered by swallowing the alabaster phalanx of the

Demon of Fate. On the surface, the alteration simply made them more sensitive...

But he felt that it went much deeper than that.

Who knew? Maybe he would be able to caress the strings of fate itself one day...

Before the radiant weave could fully fall apart, his other hand placed the Supreme soul shard in its center. The one that had crushed the original nexus was already retreating, catching the most important thread as it did. Three more hands flashed forward, doing the same.

The last hand — his left human hand — was the most important, since it held Weaver's needle. All the rest were meant to stall the deterioration of the weave, but it was meant to actually mend the damage.

Threading the first ethereal string into the radiant needle, Sunny connected it to the nexus. Then, another... and another...

'Faster!'

Five of his hands danced, manipulating the dying weave into following their will. Holding it from crumbling and pulling it back from the verge of collapse. At the precise moment when the new nexus became connected to enough strings to hold it in place, the sixth joined them.

'...What madness made me think that having only five fingers is enough?! Damnation! I should have learned to have more!'

Time seemed to have slowed down. Sunny felt the same rush of adrenaline he did during furious battles — his perception subtly changed, turning the world stark and clear. Golden sparks glimmered in the depths of his dark eyes.

For a few moments, everything was in a fragile balance. One wrong move, one slightest mistake, and the weave would have reached the point of no return. But Sunny did not make any mistakes. He performed every movement flawlessly, focused to such a degree that all his senses except sight and the tactile feeling of intangible threads sliding through his fingers disappeared.

Finally, after something that felt both like a second and an eternity, that moment of fragility passed. The main structure of the weave had been connected to the new nexus, ensuring its stability.

'Good...'

As Sunny's hands continued to tie the few last threads to the shining ember, his mind already wandered to the next task.

The first step of the alteration had been completed, but the result was still uncertain. The next stage was going to decide whether he would succeed or not — and while it gave him more leeway, it was no less difficult.