1349 Crowning Achievement

Sunny remained motionless for a while, looking at the string of shimmering runes. A sense of profound relief and exhilaration washed over him. He suddenly felt refreshed and invigorated, as if his fatigue had receded a little, his mind clearing.

...No, not suddenly. Touching the smooth silk of the Shroud of Dusk, Sunny belatedly realized that it was already being augmented by the passive enchantment of the empowered Crown of Dawn.

'It's working.'

He closed his eyes for a moment, then took a look at the rest of the runes describing the band of bright metal. They were the same as before —only the Rank of the Memory had changed.

Sunny had expected that. In fact, anything else would have been a cause for concern. The goal of the alteration was to strengthen the existing enchantment, after all, not change it.

The Crown of Dawn would still be able to enhance all Memories in a large area around it, with no limit to their number. It was just that the augmentation it provided had become much more potent.

Most miraculous of all, that enchantment somehow remained a passive one.

His eyes gleamed darkly. 'I think...'

Armed with that power, the cohort would be able to challenge enemies far beyond their own level of prowess. Which meant that they would have a much higher chance of conquering the Nightmare and returning to the waking world alive.

Just like they had conquered the Forgotten Shore and returned from its unforgiving expanse alive.

He smiled, then dismissed the Crown of Dawn and rose.

Heading to the stern of the ship, Sunny tried to contain his emotions. His face remained neutral, with only a faint smile playing on his lips.

Soon, he saw Nephis. She threw a glance at him with the same calm expression she usually wore, then asked evenly:

"What was the shouting about?"

Sunny stumbled.

'Right... I did curse the Spell out, didn't I?'

In hindsight, that was probably not wise. He wouldn't put it past the damn thing to know how to hold a grudge... the descriptions it made of him were already vaguely snide, so Sunny shuddered at the thought of what the next one was going to say.

'Whatever. That will happen later... right now, though...' Walking over to Nephis, he shrugged.

"Oh, it's nothing really. I just got a bit emotional and let the Spell have it. Why, have you never yelled at the Spell?

She stared at him dubiously.

"...Can't say that I have."

Sunny coughed.

"Well, anyway. Give me your hand."

Without waiting for permission, he grabbed it, lingered for a moment, and sent the Crown of Dawn from his soul into hers.

Nephis turned her head slightly and stared into the distance — or rather, it seemed like she did. In truth, she must have been reading the runes.

"Oh. It's name has changed..."

Then, she suddenly froze. Sunny studied her face with rapt attention, registering every minute change. Sadly, Changing Star was not the kind of person to openly show emotions... nevertheless, he noticed her pupils widening slightly, white sparks igniting in their depths.

"...huh?"

He laughed.

"You finally noticed its Rank, didn't you? Well, well, well... no need to praise me too much! I just took the soul shard we scavenged from inside the Black Turtle and transplanted it into the Dawn Shard, strengthening the weave of its enchantment to withstand the burden of channeling supreme power in the process. That's all."

Sunny looked down modestly.

"I am totally not a peerless genius among peerless geniuses. You absolutely don't need to worship the ground I walk on... there's no ground in the Tomb of Ariel, anyway..."

Nephis suddenly gripped his hand tightly and pierced him with a burning gaze.

"Sunny... you... you can elevate Memories to higher Ranks now?" He smiled, enjoying the intensity of her reaction.

However, his smile dimmed a little bit the next moment. "Well... yes. But also no."

Sunny sighed.

"The case of the Crown of Dawn is unique, because it possesses an enchantment that enhances itself. That is why I was able to outfit it with a Supreme soul shard and elevate its power by two whole Ranks. For other Memories... I doubt that they'll endure such a significant alteration. Elevating them by one Rank, though? That should be possible for some, I think, if time-consuming."

Nephis stared at him in silence. He hesitated for a few moments, then said in a somewhat stifled tone:

"But, Neph... uh..."

She raised an eyebrow slightly.

"Yes?"

Sunny coughed.

"Can you let go of my hand? You're sort of crushing it..."

Nephis looked down, blinked a couple of times, then hurriedly released her grip.

"Oh!"

Sunny shook his hand in the air. It didn't really hurt, but he had suddenly become painfully aware of how close they were standing. His face felt hot.

Letting out an awkward chuckle, he shook his head and pointed to her head.

"Now, summon that thing. I came here right away, so I don't even know how powerful exactly it had become."

Nephis nodded, and a whirlwind of radiant sparks appeared around her. Soon, a band of bright metal manifested itself from thin air, its single gem glistening in the light of the rising suns.

'Let's do this...'

For the next half an hour, Sunny and Nephis were engrossed in testing the effects of the Crown of Dawn on their Memories. The results went beyond his wildest imagination.

Sunny had thought that his makeshift alteration would cause a loss of potential, resulting in a Memory that was a Supreme one in name, but not in power. And there was some loss, inevitably... but so little that it could almost be disregarded.

Before, the Dawn Shard had been capable of elevating the power of Awakened Memories to resemble that of Ascended ones. It had also been capable of providing a significant boost to Ascended Memories, and a slight one to Transcendent ones.

The meaning of "power" in this context was an elusive one. The augmentation did not only empower the enchantments of the enhanced Memories, but also the quality of the Memories themselves. Swords would become sharper, armor would become more durable...

There was also something else at play — the intangible, mystical quality that made magical materials different from the mundane ones was enhanced, as well, which was why the Dreamers of the Dark City had been able to harm and slay enemies of higher Ranks with their Awakened weapons.

The Crown of Dawn functioned in a similar fashion to its predecessor. However, it's augmentation was much more powerful.

An average Awakened weapon was elevated to the level of a peak Ascended one, while the most powerful Awakened weapons could almost reach the realm of Transcendence. Ascended Memories were elevated to the level of Transcendent ones.

While Transcendent Memories...

Sunny grew still, peering into the depths of the Sin of Solace. Under his gaze, the weave of the jade jian shone with blinding brilliance.

'It's not that different from the Crown of Twilight. It is like a Supreme weapon...'

He threw a glance at the silent apparition that stood a few steps away, wearing a somber expression... and suddenly felt a pang of apprehension.

Dismissing the Sin of Solace, Sunny hesitated for a few moments, then finally took the Crown of Twilight off his head and studied it.

It was benefiting from being in the presence of the Crown of Dawn, as well. The boost was not as striking as it was for the Memories of lesser Ranks, but still tangible.

Nephis, meanwhile, was holding her longsword with a hard-to-read expression.

Suddenly, though, her beautiful face was illuminated by a radiant smile. "Sunny... this is amazing! With this, we can..."

She stumbled over her words, not knowing what to say.

...Enjoying the rare sight of her smiling brightly, he nodded and looked in the direction where the current was pulling them.

His own smile grew a little cold.

"Yes."

Sunny gritted his teeth.

"We can slaughter them all."

The winds filled the sails of the Chain Breaker, pushing it forward. The past awaited.