1388 Wheels of History

Sunny continued to think about the history of the Dream Realm.

Age of Chaos was the first, ending with the imprisonment of the void and the creation of the world. It was followed by an age that could be called the Age of Gods — a prehistoric time when the gods and those living things they created, as well as the daemons who came out of nowhere, battled the remnant abyssal creatures across the newborn world.

Then came the Age of Heroes. It started when the nascent humanity started to spread and fight against the Corrupted creatures inhabiting the world for dominion over it. It ended when the abominations were pushed back and largely exterminated, turning from an everpresent danger into dire, but rare foes.

What followed was a different age... an age when humanity ruled the world unopposed. Noctis had not known its name — perhaps because people living in that time needed none. For them, it was simply now. A golden age of peace and prosperity...

'Relatively speaking, of course. I am sure there was plenty of bloodshed and conflict even after most of the Corrupted had already been slain or driven into the wilderness. Humans are humans, after all... there were other tribes of creatures inhabiting the world, as well. I doubt that everyone lived together in absolute harmony.'

Due to their immortality, Noctis and the other Chain Lords — powerful Transcendent born in the Age of Heroes — lived long enough to witness the new age, as well.

In fact, they might have had more to do with the change of epochs than anyone knew. Noctis considered the destruction of the Kingdom of Hope to be the turning point in history, one that signified the end of the Age of Heroes.

Which meant that the Golden Age was poisoned from the very start. It began with the imprisonment of Hope, and ended when she broke free from her chains. During that time, the gods grew distant and indifferent. Their followers even started to fight among themselves. Slowly, prosperity waned, turning into stagnation and decay.

Both the First and Second of Sunny's Nightmares took place at the dusk of the Golden Age, not long before the daemons rose in rebellion against the gods.

That war, the last war, destroyed the civilization of the Dream Realm. Although it was like a flash in the scope of history, perhaps its brief terror was worthy of being considered to be an age of its own.

The Age of Daemons... a terrible age of dread and destruction.

Although that age was the latest, it was also the most mysterious. Everything the humans of the waking world had found in the Dream Realm were marks left by the great war between the daemons and the gods, and yet, almost nothing was known about it.

Why did it start? How did it end? How did the gods die? What happened to their enemies, the daemons?

All that Sunny knew was that at some point between the start of the Doom War and the present day, the Seeds of Nightmares appeared, and the Corruption reclaimed the world it had been almost banished from once. It was the end of the Dream Realm.

'Come to think of it... I'm wrong.'

The history of the Dream Realm had never really ended. There were human settlements on its perilous reaches today, after all... great Citadels like Bastion and Ravenheart, and many smaller ones. Where hundreds of thousands of Awakened lived, fought, and survived, slowly claiming more and more land from the Nightmare Creatures.

'Almost... like a new Age of Heroes...'

Or rather, the Age of the Nightmare Spell.

Sunny dodged a drop of water that fell from the ceiling of the narrow corridor and tilted his head a little.

'Huh.'

Viewed from this perspective, it almost seemed as if the purpose of the Nightmare Spell was to repopulate the Dream Realm, which had been turned to lifeless hell by the Doom War, and breathe new life into it. To push the wheels of history that had stopped spinning a long time ago and make them revolve again, carrying the once desolate world into the future.

'It's almost like Weaver is some kind of a noble hero...'

Of course, that change had come at the expense of countless deaths and immeasurable misery among the inhabitants of the waking world. And Sunny did not really buy that the Demon of Fate had been any kind of hero, let alone a noble one...

Still. The implication seemed too sensible to be discarded completely.

The Age of Chaos, the Age of Gods, the Age of Heroes, the Golden Age, the Age of Daemons... and the Age of the Nightmare Spell.

If seen in such a framework, the history...

Could make Sunny a huge amount of contribution points. Just imagining it made his eyes gleam.

'If I manage to write up this theory well and publish it, accurate or not... my, oh my! I'll be swimming in academic achievements. Let alone a guest lecturer, I'll be made an honorary professor! A dean, even!'

As he grinned greedily, Cassie slowed her steps a little and raised her hand.

"We're close. Be cautious... if there are really records left, we should be careful not to damage them any further."

Although the corridors they had walked through were largely flooded, this section of the lost temple seemed strangely dry. Perhaps the structure here was much more durable, and had thus resisted the passage of time better... perhaps there were still some enchantments protecting the inner sanctum. In any case, the floor they walked on gradually became drier.

Soon, the three Masters passed a chamber filled to the brim with shelves. There had been countless books on them once, but now the shelves lay broken, the ancient scrolls long destroyed by water. Sunny checked a few, only to shake his head in disappointment. Even those that seemed relatively better preserved were utterly illegible.

They moved further, passing several similar chambers. The library of the temple had indeed been vast once... but now, all the knowledge accumulated by the sybils and their faithful priests was lost. Some of it was destroyed by moisture, some seemed to have been burned, while some had been obliterated by the Defiled sybil in her rage.

'Such a shame...'

Finally, they reached a tall door. Just like all the other doors in the inner sanctum, it had long been turned to rotten splinters... however, the chamber behind it — the largest one they've seen in the last few minutes — looked strangely untouched.

Much more importantly, there were no broken shelves and rotten scrolls within it.

Instead, there were stone slates.