1543 Pride of a Craftsman

Just as it was in the black void beyond the Great River, the space itself acted strangely in the empty space contained at the center ofendless loop of flowing water. The Chain Breaker had been traversing the vast emptiness for a while now — at least a day or two, from how it felt — but Sunny was not at all sure how far they had traveled.

All he knew was that the point of the Great River from which they had left seemed far away now, while the point which they hoped to reach was not as distant. It shimmered in the darkness, both alluring and terrifying.

Navigating the flying ship toward Verge was not very hard, because it was situated near the Source. So, all they had to do was aim for the last stretch of clear water before the area of the Great River shrouded in hazy mist.

A long time ago, close to the start of the Nightmare, Sunny had an epiphany that the strength of his allies was his own power, as well. Therefore, he had become determined to increase the strength of the cohort as much as he could, in any way he could.

He had been faithful to that determination up until now. Apart from the very action of gathering every member of the cohort from across the Tomb of Ariel, that had mostly taken the form of arming them with powerful Memories. Sunny had spent much of his time developing and improving his skill as a sorcerer for that purpose.

Now, his ability to weave had improved tremendously compared to the start of the Nightmare. Studying Ananke's Mantle had allowed him to make a qualitative leap in understanding of the fundamental principles of weaving,and by studying many Memories in order to alter them, Sunny had improved his overall ability, as well.

As a result, Neph's Crown of Dawn had become a Supreme Memory. That was still his most valuable achievement, because that single Memory was able to empower all the rest of the Memories at their disposal. Of course, Sunny had not stopped there..

He had also provided his allies with four additional altered Memories — Kai, Effie, and Cassie now wielded them, preparing to use his gifts in the battle against Torment, the First Seeker, and the remnant forces of the Defilement.

His help was not limited to Memories, either. Whether on purpose or not, Sunny had also helped his friends grow stronger as individual warriors. Jet had received her Aspect Legacy and was now wielding the chilling mist blade. Kai had acquired the [Dragonslayer] Attribute, which enhanced his body and elemental resistance.

Nephis seemed to have regained her lost confidence. Her understanding of her Divine Aspect had deepened, and with it came the Knowledge of Fire — one of the boons of her mysterious Aspect Legacy.

She was also a Titan now.

…Sunny had grown vastly stronger than he used to be, as well. Not even mentioning his sorcery, here in the Tomb of Ariel, he had mastered the fourth step of Shadow Dance and perfected the Shadow Shell technique. He had become a Terror. Two of his Shadows had evolved, growing much more powerful.

A version of him from before Antarctica would have been like a child in front of him at the end of the harrowing Southern Campaign. But that version of him, in turn, would stand no chance against his current self.

And somewhere between the two, there was a version of himself that Sunny never wanted to meet, let alone fight. The Mad Prince, which had come and gone, changing everything.

'Are we ready?'

Still, despite all that growth and power, Sunny could not allow himself to stop until the Nightmare was conquered, and the Spell called for him to wake up. So, he threw himself into weaving, trying to finish the last alteration while the Chain Breaker was still traversing the black void.

The process… was not going splendidly.

The silver blade he was trying to alter was a Transcendent Memory of the Seventh Tier, and possessed many enchantments. Its weave was inconceivably vast and intricate, and although he was not trying to change it entirely, he still needed to study every part of it in great detail.

If anything, trying to isolate and transplant a single nexus was proving to be much harder than simply altering the entirety of a spellweave. The elaborate tapestry of essence strings was deeply interconnected — no single thread existed in isolation, instead crossing and touching numerous other threads.'

Much like fate. The string of a person's fate did not exist in isolation, either — it touched the fates of countless other people, stretching from the past into the future, and thus influenced, and was influenced by, the greater flow of fate.

But Sunny was nothing if not resourceful. Weaving strings of fate was beyond what mortals like him could achieve, but he could manipulate strings of soul essence with great finesse. Therefore, he could alter the weave of the silver blade to make sure that the nexus he was transplanting only burdened the pattern of a single enchantment, without breaking the balance of all the rest.

He had to add new patterns in some places, and cut the others down to match. Those that were cut had to be restored, of course, albeit taking a different shape. Slowly but surely, countless lightless threads of shadow essence became intertwined with the radiant strings of ethereal light.

He had forgotten about all else, pulling on everything he had learned about weaving to accomplish his task. From his first tentative attempts at creating sorcery, back in the bloody menagerie of monsters under the arena of the Red Colosseum, to creating Memories for the Brilliant Emporium, to improving the soul arsenals of his soldiers in Antarctica and creating the Siege Souvenir to slay Goliath, to learning from Ananke's Mantle and altering the Crown of Dawn…

All the lessons he had learned were put to use, allowing him to create a lethal sword for Nephis. He knew that she would achieve incredible things by wielding this weapon…

And if he managed to accomplish his ambitious alteration, every achievement she made with the silver sword would, in small part, also be his.

Sunny, who had always been a fighter, was feeling a strange exhilaration as he worked on the complicated Memory. It was the unfamiliar, but rewarding pride of a craftsman who was confident in the usefulness of his work.

And then, finally, everything was ready.

Summoning two pairs of shadow hands, Sunny took a deep breath, picked up Weaver's Needle, and got to work.

Time seemed to slow down as his six hands moved through the vast tapestry of glowing strings, snapping some and weaving new ones into the intricate pattern. Drops of sweat fell from his brow, but he did not pay it any attention. His expression remained calm and composed, utter focus permeating his gaze.

Golden sparks ignited in the depths of his altered eyes, and his fingertips felt the slightest vibration spreading through the essence strings. From time to time, his skin was cut, but no blood seeped out of the cuts. He did not allow the pain to distract him, either.

'Wondrous…'

Sunny felt exhilarated as he weaved sorcery.

And then, he felt overjoyed.

Lowering his hands, Sunny let out a long sigh and listened to the Spell announcing the destruction of a Memory, and the creation of a new one.

He had succeeded.

And now that he did, there were no more preparations to be made.

All that remained was to reach Verge and use everything little bit of strength he had accumulated to destroy the First Seeker, and escape this dreadful Nightmare.