1606 Belated Apology

Inside the lacquered box, an intricately engraved vambrace was laying on black silk. It was forged from a light silvery metal and decorated with a pattern resembling interlaid feathers. The vambrace emanated a feeling of restrained power, and just from a passing glance, one could tell that it was an extraordinary item.

Awakened Telle, however, seemed unimpressed.

Well... from what Sunny could remember, she always seemed that way. The young woman raised an eyebrow.

"Master Sunless. From what I remember, I commissioned you to procure a suit of armor."

He smiled.

"Your memory is stellar, my lady. But don't be concerned... this vambrace possesses a rare enchantment that allows it to unfold into a full plate of impregnable armor, just like what you wished to purchase. The process only takes a second, and consumes very little essence. While such a trait might bring a slight inconvenience in case of a sudden attack, it also makes this Memory uniquely adaptable."

Telle's eyes gleamed.

"...I assume that it can be used by a Saint?"

Sunny nodded.

"Indeed. It can accommodate any type of Transformed creature up to about fifty times the size of an average human. The speed with which the vambrace unfolds remains the same. Of course, the essence expenditure grows in proportion."

He continued to smile, but really, Sunny wanted to cry on the inside.

That was because it took him an incredible quantity of magical alloy to create the damned vambrace. The thing looked small, but he would have had to bankrupt the Brilliant Emporium in order to purchase the materials needed to forge it... if anyone would even sell them to him. In the end, he had been forced to track down and kill a dozen Corrupted Beasts with metallic carapaces to complete the commission.

Which meant that Sunny had not suffered a loss... but he could have sold all that Transcendent steel, instead!

His heart was bleeding.

In fact, he was even lamenting the cost of the expensive lacquered box with silk furbishing that Aiko had made him buy for the vambrace.

'But it is for a good cause.'

Sunny had to remind himself why he had put in extra effort to make sure that this Memory was particularly potent and durable.

Awakened Telle finally showed a hint of satisfaction. She studied the Memory for a few moments, then asked in a slightly warmer tone:

"You have conducted a thorough study of its other enchantments, of course. What are they? Oh, and what is its name?"

Sunny carefully picked up the vambrace and began the description:

"My lady, this Transcendent Memory of the Fourth Tier is called the Belated Apology. Apart from the unfolding enchantment, it also possesses three others. One vastly enhances its physical durability. The other grants the person wearing it greatly increased protection from elemental attacks. Finally, the third enchantment might interest you the most. It allows the master of the Memory to make it as light as a feather."

Unbelievably... a smile appeared on the young woman's stern face.

Well, of course it did. That set of enchantments was almost perfect for an armor-type Memory.

"That's perfect! That is exactly what my father needs!" Sunny hid a smile and put the vambrace back in the box. Then, he asked, pretending to do it only out of politeness: "Oh? And how is Saint Roan doing?"

...Indeed, the young woman in front of him was Lady Telle of the White Feather clan. She was the daughter of Saint Tyris and Master Roan... although the latter was also a Transcendent now.

Sunny had bumped into her a few times in the Sanctuary of Noctis, and later in Falcon Scott. To his shame, though, he had never known that the standoffish girl was actually the daughter of his benefactors, mostly because of how young her parents looked. Determining the age of Awakened was a messy affair.

It was only after coming to Bastion that Sunny realized his mistake. Telle smiled a little.

"He's doing well, apart from lacking a good Transcendent armor... and still being in the doghouse because of having challenged the Third Nightmare against mother's wishes..."

She fell silent abruptly.

"W—wait, why am I telling you this?"

The young woman looked at Sunny with wide eyes.

Then, strangely enough, she blushed a little and looked away.

"...Well, in any case, both of my parents are fine. They are awfully busy, of course."

Sunny was a bit perplexed by her reactions, but just shrugged mentally.

'Unsurprising.'

There were very few Legacy Clans being led by two Saints. The White Feather's prominence had risen greatly since their exile to Antarctica —and therefore, so had their duties. No one could discard them anymore.

Sunny smiled and lowered his head with respect.

"That is good to hear. I wish them all the best."

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Young Lady Telle of White Feather ended up purchasing the Belated Apology and leaving the Brilliant Emporium in good spirits. Aiko was happily counting the money, as well.

And since Sunny knew that the Memory he had painstakingly created would serve Saint Roan well, he was in a good mood, too.

Not long after that, evening came. More customers visited the Brilliant Emporium to enjoy tea and snacks after a long day of work. The evening crowd receded, and the sun disappeared beyond the horizon. Moonlight and darkness enveloped the streets of Bastion, and the city slowly grew quieter.

Aiko left, leaving Sunny in the empty cottage.

He cleaned up the dining hall, and then went to the porch to breathe some fresh air.

Looking at the thriving city surrounding him, full of countless people... Sunny felt painfully alone.

Especially today, he couldn't help but feel it sharply.

Sunny remained on the porch for a while, watching the pale moon slowly move across the starlit sky.

Then, he sighed and went inside.

'I'll clean up the kitchen, then go to bed. Everything else can wait until tomorrow.'

This day had been strangely eventful.

He was busy washing the kitchen utensils when the Silver Bell suddenly rang again. Surprised at the appearance of a late customer, Sunny raised an eyebrow and walked into the dining hall.

"I'm sorry, but we are about to close..."

The words died on his lips.

Out there, in front of him, stood a delicate young woman in a seawave cloak. Her hair was like a cascade of pale gold, and her eyes... were hidden behind a strip of blue cloth.

Despite the blindfold hiding her eyes, the young woman's ethereal, otherworldly beauty was simply breathtaking.

She lingered for a moment, then turned her head in the direction of Sunny's voice.

"Oh... I am sorry. I'm afraid I'm a bit late, then."

Sunny remained silent, trying to overcome his shock. 'What... what is she doing here?'

He suppressed his emotions and put on the polite smile of a humble shopkeeper.

"No, no. It's no trouble. What did you want? I'll prepare it quickly."

The young woman tilted her head a little, then said hesitantly:

"My name is…"

He interrupted her, trying to put an appropriate amount of respect and reverence into his voice:

"I know who you are, Lady Song of the Fallen. Who in Bastion doesn't? I am Master Sunless, the owner of the Brilliant Emporium. It's an honor to meet you."

Cassie sighed, then nodded curtly. Eventually, she said:

"...I heard that you can procure rare Memories. Or make them."

Sunny froze for a moment.

'Ah.'

One of the Fire Keepers must have recommended him to her. And knowing Cassie, it must not have taken her long to discover that the owner of the Brilliant Emporium did not just sell Memories, but also crafted them.

But why would she come to him? All the enchanters of Clan Valor were at her disposal.

Sunny took a deep breath.

"Are you interested in commissioning a Memory, my lady?"

She nodded again.

"In a way."

He smiled. Now, he was in familiar territory.

"Great! I am sure that you won't be disappointed in my services. Just today, a member of the renowned White Feather clan purchased a Memory from our stock. They were extremely satisfied with its quality."

Cassie smiled, then shifted slightly as if looking around.

"That is good to hear. The Memory I want you to make must be of the highest quality."

She lingered for a few moments, then turned to him and added in a neutral tone:

"Oh, and by the way..."

Her smile wavered a little.

"...Happy Birthday."