1644 Royal Forge

The ringing of steel was still echoing across the desolate ruin when Sunny shifted slightly and looked in the direction where the sound had come from.

There was a tall tower rising into the broken sky some distance away. Its walls were covered by a net of deep cracks, but the crumbling tower still stood straight and proud, much higher than any other structure in the vast ruin. Outlined against the pale radiance of the shattered moon, its dark shape was like a battered sword thrust into the ground by the hand of a celestial giant.

The tower was dark, but at the very top of it, a fiery glow escaped from the arching windows. It was as if a sea or vermilion flame was burning inside.

That was where the ringing sound had come from.

A moment later, another strike resounded, and then another. They rolled across the restless lake, forceful and methodical, filling the night with the sound of clashing metal. Suddenly, Sunny felt as if he was on a battlefield, and his heart started to beat faster.

He froze for a moment, looking at the dark tower with a somber expression.

"What is that?"

Cassie turned to face the tower, as well. She remained silent for a few moments, then said evenly:

"It's the King. He is forging."

Sunny couldn't help but frown.

He had just asked about Anvil's whereabouts, and a moment later, the King of Sword announced his presence. Sunny did not really fear him... but that was not because the steel Sovereign was not worthy of being feared. It was simply because Sunny had developed an unwise tolerance for fear after a decade of being constantly exposed to all kinds of unimaginable horror.

Still, it would be a lie to say that he wasn't apprehensive.

'Spooky bastard.’

He hesitated for a moment, then asked quietly:

"What is he forging?"

Cassie smiled.

"What else? He is forging a sword. The King must have created a million of them already, but he never stops for long. The swords that the Knights of Valor wield are merely some that he discarded... the ones Paladins wield are, as well."

Then the storm of swords Anvil had commanded in Antarctica were all forged by him, then... probably. Sunny could not really imagine how a human being could have created so many of them.

He sighed.

"And here I was thinking myself an accomplished weaponsmith.”

Cassie tilted her head a little.

"Oh! Right. You create Memories."

A faint smile appeared on her lips.

"Sorry. With everything else, I almost forgot.”

Sunny studied the pebble she had given him. The weave of runes was elegant and intricate. He could not quite decipher it, because the runes did not inscribe a functional enchantment. Instead, they made the pebble a part of a much larger one without comprehending the entire array, he wouldn't be able to comprehend the runes carved into the small stone.

It was interesting, though. The pebble must have let the defensive array know that Sunny was allowed into the castle. It was warm to the touch. But where did the essence that nourished the pebble come from? He didn't feel it consuming his own, and there was no nexus inside to store some.

"You are a skilled sorceress yourself, it seems."

Cassie nodded lightly.

"My skill is... sufficient, I guess. I've been taught a little by a man named Noctis, in my Second Nightmare. After that, I learned from the enchanters of Valor and on my own. What about you?"

Sunny lingered for a while, then answered simply:

"I am self-taught."

His only teachers were the Nightmare Spell and necessity, Neither could take credit for his accomplishments.

She made a turn, heading for a more damaged section of the wall, and said:

"I am curious, though. Creating a Memory is not a question of skill. No matter how good i am at runie sorcery, it's not something I can do. The same goes for enchanters of Valor - they are only capable of forging Memories because of the kind of Aspects the members of the main family and its branches tend to awaken, not because of sorcery. So, Sunny... are you, perchance, a bastard son of King Anvil?"

Sunny stared at her silently for a while, making sure that she was serious.

She was.

"Well, I guess it might look that way. A mysterious man who can create Memories, lives in Bastion, and is somehow a Saint on top of it all…”

Sunny barely prevented himself from exploding with laughter. If he hadn't covered his mouth with both hands, sentries all across the wall would have been alerted to their presence.

"Me? Anvil's son? Gods, no... although I must admit, it would have been very funny if there was yet another estranged son of his wandering around the Dream Realm."

He shook his head,

"No... and before you ask, I'm not a son of Madee, or any other member of their family, either, Do I look like a Legacy to you?”

Cassie was silent for a moment.

"You do not look like anything to me. I'm blind."

Sunny coughed awkwardly, prompting her to smile:

"...And the last time we met, we were alone. So, I could only borrow your sight, which meant staring at myself for the entire conversation. Well, I won't lie. I did steal a peek through the eyes of the knights we've met today. I was curious to see what the famous owner of the Eye C... of the Brilliant Emporium Cafe looks like."

She shrugged.

"Actually, you do look like a Legacy. But maybe it's just because of the confidence that comes with being a Saint."

Sunny shook his head with a crooked smile, not letting her off.

"I'm sure that you observed me carefully, and for a while, before paying a visit to the Brilliant Emporium. And by "observed", I mean "spied on". Thank you for the compliment, in any case."

This time, it was Cassie's turn to cough.

I'm right on the money.

He enjoyed her slight embarrassment for a few moments, then said neutrally:

"I don't know much about how enchanters of Valor create Memories, but it is probably due to the War God's lineage. After all, she is also the goddess of progress, technology, and craft. Plus, family members are known to awaken Aspects of a similar nature... perhaps due to sharing a similar upbringing and fate. I assure you, my upbringing was quite different from that of a member of Clan Valor."

Sunny hesitated before adding:

"The way I create Memories is different from theirs."

Cassie tilted her head a little and asked curiously:

"I've been told that the Memories you make are not very potent, but have the benefit of being perfectly suited for their wielder. You must be hiding the true extent of your abilities to avoid attention, though. How good are you, exactly?"

Sunny briefly glanced at Cassie's delicate neck, noticing a thin string hanging around it. Would she be able to remember if he said that the charm she wore had been made Supreme by him? Probably not.

He smiled.

"I doubt that any person in the world can create a better Memory than me."

It wasn't an empty boast. Forgemasters of Valor could create potent Memories, but their craft was the result of unique Aspect Abilities and runic sorcery, which was allen to the concept of Memories, Sunny, meanwhile, was a true weaven. The only master of Weaver's sorcery in existence. Therefore, his abilities were broader and infinitely more flexible.

So, really, there was just one entity better than him at creating Memories. The Nightmare Spell. But he wasn't going to compete with that...

He glanced at Cassie and asked:

"Why? Are you going to order a Memory, after all? Let me tell you, Saint Cassia... I'll give you an exclusive discount. Our service is top-notch, and we can handle all kinds of orders. Combat Memories, Utility Memories... even cosmetic Memories are not out of the question! Also... I don't usually do this... but just for you, I'll disclose a big secret. We can even make a custom name and description for your Memory. There's no better memento or one-of-a-kind gift for a loved one..."

Cassie touched her hair nervously, then added in a dubious tone:

"Really? Well... I might indeed commission a custom Memory from you, then…”