1689 Satisfactory Answer

Nephis was surprised to see a plece of cake in front of her. The cake was placed on a beautiful porcelain plate, and even had a fresh cherry on top... it was not like she had never seen one before, but desserts weren't exactly a mainstay of her diet.

'Right. It's a café, as well.’

She picked up a small silver spoon and tasted the cake, simply to not seem impolite.

'I wonder if he is really capable of forging a Memory that would not lose to those created by Valor... huh... wait... why is it so tasty?'

Placing the spoon down, she looked at the handsome shopkeeper and remained silent for a moment. Eventually, Nephis said:

"It seems that you have already recognized me, Master Sunless. I'll be straight, then... I need a Memory forged, and a potent one at that. Saint Cassia informed me that you are a talented enchanter who is only unknown because you prefer to keep your talents hidden. I can understand why, and it even makes things easier. But are you really good enough to satisfy the needs of someone as powerful as me?"

The young enchanter looked at her, a strange expression appearing on his charming face for a moment.

Was he, perhaps, stumped by her question and felt insecure about his talent? Creating a Memory for one of the most renowned Saints in the world was not an easy task, after all.

Master Sunless coughed and briefly looked away. Seeing that subtly bashful expression of his... made Nephis understand why this cafe was so famous. Needless to say, it was probably not because of desserts.

[Cassie... what the hell?]

Cassie's pleasant voice resounded in her head a moment later:

[What?]

Nephis kept her expression neutral.

[Why is this enchanter you found so... so...]

Cassie answered innocently:

[So what?]

Nephis sighed.

[...Never mind.]

It was a silly question, anyway. She had just been startled a little.

Master Sunless, meanwhile, seemed to find his confidence again and answered with a faint smile:

"I can promise that you'll be satisfied, Lady Nephis."

His eye suddenly twitched, for some reason. The poor man must have been nervous... Nephis knew that meeting her had that effect on many people.

The enchanter continued in the same pleasant tone:

"...Let me rephrase that. What I mean to say is that the Memories I create are top-notch. That said, can I ask you a question?"

Nephis wanted to answer that he could, but suddenly found herself unable to.

That was because, at some point in time, another bite of the delicious cake found its way into her mouth. She didn't even notice how.

It was very strange.

'Is my blood sugar low? Yeah. That must be it.'

Pulling the spoon out of her mouth slowly, she nodded with a deadpan expression.

Master Sunless hesitated for a moment.

"You are a princess of the Great Clan Valor. Surely, the renowned forgemasters of your clan have no shortage of powerful Memories they've created. Why come to me?"

Nephis shrugged, not seeing a reason to hide the truth.

"It is precisely because you are not a forgemaster of Clan Valor."

The young man seemed to have a keen mind. He understood what she meant instantly, and leaned back with a hint of amusement gleaming in the depths of his onyx eyes

"I see."

Master Sunless remained silent for a few moments, thinking about something. Finally, he asked:

"What kind of Memory do you wish to commission?"

Nephis answered in an even tone:

"A sword."

She needed a sword.

The one she wielded, Kinslayer... was a beautiful weapon. It was an immensely powerful weapon, as well, and one that suited her well. Nephis had slain numerous Nightmare Creatures with its sharp edge, and had won countless battles while wielding it.

But Anvil of Valor had branded the Kinslayer, and so, it did not really belong to her anymore.

She wasn't foolish enough to try cutting the King of Swords down with one of his own blades.

This time, the charming enchanter remained silent for a while, studying her face with a strange intensity.

Nephis could feel his desires faintly... they were subdued, as if something was obscuring them, but she discerned a volatile mixture of hopes smoldering beautifully somewhere deep in his soul.

It reminded her of the King of Swords, a little, maybe because both of them were spellsmiths.

It vaguely reminded her of someone else, as well...

In any case, Master Sunless seemed to be sincere enough, and held no malice toward her. On the contrary, he appeared to have been inspired by her... a little bit too much.

Inwardly, Nephis was surprised.

'Is he... smitten by me?'

She couldn't be sure, but something like that would not be an unfamiliar situation. Being a Saint meant having a strong effect on people, and it was especially true for her.

That said, at least Master Sunless had enough decorum and composure to hide his feelings. They didn't seem to be of the distasteful kind, either, although there was such an element, as well. Of course, there was.

'He's a healthy man, after all.'

Accustomed to such things, Nephis did not hold it against him.

In fact... she might have felt a tiny bit... pleased with that reaction.

'It seems my soul is recovering faster, this time?'

Feeling anything was already a good sign.

Eventually, Master Sunless spoke:

"If that is the case, then there are three ways for me to make a sword for you, Lady Nephis."

She tilted her head slightly.

"Oh?"

He nodded.

"The first way is the most straightforward. I can take an already existing Memory and alter it to fit your needs. That method is the easiest, but also the most limited."

Nephis raised an eyebrow.

Cassie had not told her that Master Sunless was proficient enough to alter Memories granted to Awakened by the Spell, not just create his own. Even among the enchanters of Valor, that was a rare skill... in fact, he didn't know anyone except for Anvil himself who was capable of that feat.

And the young enchanter called it the easiest.

The charming young man, meanwhile, continued:

"The second way is to create a Memory from scratch. That would take longer, and would require me to use both suitably potent materials and soul shards of a high Rank. Of course, the result would be much more lethal. Your current weapon, the Kinslayer... I am confident that I can forge something just as deadly, given enough time."

Nephis was impressed. Her sword was a Transcendent Memory of the Seventh Tier, and an exceptionally powerful one at that. Strangely enough, it was as powerful as many Supreme weapons were... but, of course, Master Sunless would not know that. While the name of her sword and its Rank were well known, very few people had detailed information about it.

It was more or less a military secret.

Still, it was quite remarkable for an Ascended to be confident in creating a top-tier Transcendent weapon.

It seemed that he was supremely competent in his craft.

Being one herself, Nephis liked competent people.

"What is the third way?"

He smiled softly.

"The third way is the longest, and the hardest as well. It would require a lot of effort... from both of us, actually, not just from me. We will also have to spend a lot of time together. But if I succeed, the resulting Memory will be truly powerful."

Nephis took a sip of cold water, suddenly feeling invigorated.

She lingered for a moment, then asked evenly.

"How powerful, exactly?"

Master Sunless looked at her seriously, his smile dimming.

After a short pause, he said with a hint of sober ambition in his pleasantly melodious voice:

"...Powerful enough to kill a god, I'd say.”