1691 Skill Issue

Nephis remained for a while, considering what the charming enchanter had said.

A weapon that was as powerful as its wielder was... Slowly, white sparks ignited in the depths of her eyes.

'A growing Memory.’

They did exist, but were exceedingly rare. Most of the ones she heard of had not even been received from slaying Nightmare Creatures, but were instead Aspect Legacy Relics.

Having a sword that would allow her to fully express the power of her Aspect was already exciting enough. But if that sword could also reflect her power as a Transcendent Titan, and one who had inherited the lineage of Sun God as well...

Such a blade would indeed be worthy of slaying gods.

As long as Nephis was worthy.

She glanced at Master Sunless, who remained calm and composed. Was he really capable of forging such a Memory?

Suddenly, the young man seemed to possess a different kind of allure in her eyes.

'He's precious... a precious resource, I mean. Cassie has really outdone herself this time.'

If what he had said was true.

Nephis hesitated for a moment.

"Can you really do it?"

Master Sunless gave her an electric smile.

"I haven't done it before, but I am confident that it can be achieved. It might be that nobody else is capable, but I am."

She raised an eyebrow, finding it hard to distrust his confidence. Not just because it was hard to imagine someone who looked like him being dishonest, but also because she could vaguely sense his passion.

Nephis had no doubt that Master Sunless was an inspired artisan. She was familiar with artistic ambition, and his was of the kind that could produce miracles.

Of course, he could simply be delusional. But Cassie would not have sent her here if there was any doubt about his ability.

How had Valor failed to scout this talent?

She looked away, studying the abominable remains surrounding them. It was quite a collection... since the charming young man did not seem like much of a fighter, he must have procured these material with soul shards and coin. That alone spoke volumes of his dedication.

Nephis sighed.

"How are you so different from all the other enchanters?"

He smiled.

"It is simple, really. Have you read the Exploration Report of the Tomb of Ariel?"

Master Sunless suddenly fell silent, and then paled a little.

In quite an endearing way.

"Oh... I am deeply sorry, Lady Nephis. I said something stupid. You were there yourself."

He shifted from one foot to another, trying to hide his embarrassment.

"...In any case, you must be familiar with the cult of the Nightmare Spell mentioned in the report. There used to be sorcerers of a very special kind among those cultists, called weavers."

Nephis nodded.

"Indeed. So?"

The young enchanter hesitated for a moment.

"Every person creating Memories today is capable of doing so because of their Aspect. In truth, they aren't the ones who are making the Memories... it's the Nightmare Spell who does it for them."

He pointed to one of his onyx eyes.

"But I am different. Due to one of my Attributes, 1 possess the ability to see the sorcerous weave of Memories. And since I can see it, I can strive to understand it. So, my Memories are not the product of a symbiotic fusion between my Aspect and the Nightmare Spell. They are a product of skill. My skill, which I have bitterly honed and improved upon for many years.”

Nephis listened to his words intently, What she heard... was rather wondrous,

It was a good reminder to never underestimate people. This humble young man did not seem outstanding when compared to thousands of other Masters and the exalted Saints. He lived his life quietly, away from the spotlight, and lacking fame.

And yet, he too was a singular existence. In his unique craft, there was no one more accomplished.

There were an infinite number of Attributes, Aspects, and Memories out there. Anyone could be a wonder in their own way, and be capable of things that everyone else would think impossible.

Nephis made a decision.

'I'll trust in his skill.'

There was no downside to trusting the charming enchanter, anyway. Even if he failed, Nephis would simply be back to where she had started - lacking a weapon to face the Sovereigns, but having no other choice.

She suddenly found herself responding to his slight smile with one of her own.

"In that case, I commend your ingenuity and persistence, Master Sunless."

Nephis lingered for a moment, then asked:

"You mentioned that creating such a sword would require a lot of effort from both of us, and that we would have to spend a long time together. What did you mean?"

He sighed, then gestured for her to leave the ominous storage room. As they passed the elegant shopfront of the Memory boutique and returned to the dining hall of the café, the charming young man explained in a pleasant tone:

"The first part is easier to answer. In short, I will need your assistance at certain stages of forging. It is no secret that your flames are born from the soul, Lady Nephis... so, I'm inclined to believe that they are most suitable for forging a soulbound weapon."

He remained silent for a moment, then continued hesitantly:

"The second part is more... sensitive. Usually, I don't have much problem selecting suitable enchantments for the Memories I create. But this one will be rather special, and so, it must fit you and your powers perfectly. Such a fit won't be possible unless I have a deep understanding of your powers and how you conduct yourself in battle. It would be very helpful for me to observe your swordsmanship, and your Aspect, closely... and not just in a sparring ring."

Nephis gave him a curious look.

"Are you very knowledgeable about swordsmanship, Master Sunless?"

The charming young man smiled.

"Well... I might not look it, but I do indeed know a thing or two about swordsmanship. As well as how to wield other weapons. After all, if one wants to forge a weapon, they have to know how to wield one, don't they?"

He paused for a moment, looked around, and then said with a hint of badly hidden pride in his voice:

"Actually... I don't want to brag, but... I once placed very high in the Dreamscape tournament."

Nephis blinked.

"The... Dreamscape tournament?"

That illusory game?

Suddenly, she felt a very unfamiliar emotion rise in her cold and scorched heart.

The contrast between the shy pride written all over the charming enchanter's beautiful face and the sheer silliness of the thing he was so proud of... was... was so...

'Cute!

Nephis had to look away.

"Ah. I see... how remarkable. Well, in that case, we can arrange something."

With that, she took a deep breath and headed for the door,

"It's getting late, and I need to return to the castle. We will be in touch. Oh... and thank you for the cake, Master Sunless. It was delicious."

He seemed a little startled.

"It was? Alright. I'll be waiting, then. Goodnight, Lady Nephis!”

The silver bell rang melodiously as she left.

Walking outside, Nephis felt the cool wind caress her cheeks, She kept her expression nestral as sthe headed toward the ferry to the castle.

[Well, what do you think?]

Cassie's voice resounded in her head a moment later.

Nephis contemplated for a few moments.

[I like what I saw. Even if he fails to forge a worthy sword for me, we should work on recruiting him as a Memory master for the Fire Keepers.]

Cassie remained silent for a bit.

[...You liked what you saw, huh?]

Nephis did not deign to reply. Why was Cassie acting so mischievously these days?

Well... actually, she was glad to see her friend coming back to a semblance of normalcy. Although very few people noticed, Cassie had not been doing well for the last few years. It was a good sign if she was in the mood to joke around.

Nephis felt relived.

Just as she thought that, though, her friend suddenly spoke again:

[But, Neph.,, I have a little piece of advice. You know, just something to think about. The next time you meet a young man and like what you see... maybe don't start the conversation by demanding to know if he can "satisfy your needs". You might give him the wrong idea…]

Nephis frowned.

"What is she talking about? Satisfy my...'

She thought back to her conversation with Master Sunless and froze.

Suddenly... the wind did not feel so cool anymore.

Blushing deeply, Nephis covered her face and walked away.

Her steps might have been a little hurried.