1706 Memory Purveyor

Following Nephis, Sunny ascended the tall tower and found himself on a spacious balcony that served as a pler for the Chain Breaker. Neither of them had spoken about the duel, and it suited him Just fine.

In any case, he had to admit that his actions had been a little naughty. He could have defused the situation by groveling a little, but chosen to antagonize the pompous Legacy instead for no good reason. Explaining the sequence of events to Nephis would have been a bit embarrassing, and SO...

Sunny went ahead and shamelessly pushed that responsibility onto Cassie.

Some would call such a move unbecoming, but he preferred to call it... delegation!

The Chain Breaker was floating in the air a few meters away, with a wide wooden plank affixed between its deck and the stone balcony. Several Fire Keepers seemed to have just finished loading a bunch of wooden crates into the cargo hold of the graceful vessel, and were now resting beneath the branches of the sacred tree.

Noticing Nephis, all of them stood up.

Then, their gazes fell on Sunny.

The Fire Keepers - especially the two women - had a bit of a strange reaction to his appearance.

‘What's wrong with these people…’

Considering how devoted the Fire Keepers were to Nephis, he would have expected a more intense version of the Jealous hostility the denizens of the Castle had met him with.

However, they seemed more stunned than unfriendly.

"M-master Sunless? Why are you here?"

He forced out a polite smile.

"Good day. Oh... I am here to sign a contract. I think we'll be working together often in the future., so please take care of me."

The Fire Keepers slowly turned to Nephis.

Then, the two women suddenly broke into wide smiles.

"Lady Nephis... thank you!"

"Nice!"

He stared at them in confusion.

'Why are they giving her thumbs up?"

The Fire Keepers frequented the Brilliant Emporium due to their friendship with Aiko. Perhaps they really liked his cooking and assumed that he would be employed as a chef?

Was the food situation on the Ivory Island that bad?

Nephis coughed,

"Ah... yes, I've invited Master Sunless to the Tower, Please get ready to ascend.”

They joined the Fire Keepers on the deck. The wooden plank was swiftly removed, the mooring cables untled, and no more than a minute later, the flying ship slowly moved.

The leaves of the sacred tree rustled as the Chain Breaker started to climb into the sky, Sunny looked up and studied it for a while, his gaze lingering on the golden fruits.

‘What would happen if I fed these fruits to Rain?’

Currently, Rain was preparing to hunt an Awakened Demon in order to absorb some of its essence and push her own toward Awakening. Such was the path most of the ancient people had followed, forging their fates in the crucible of combat. The fruits of the sacred tree contained essence, as well, so its existence was much more precious than the carriers of the Spell could ever imagine.

Granted, it was a rhetorical question. If Sunny simply wanted Rain to Awaken, he would have showered her with soul shards and been done with it. But what he wanted was to make her strong enough to survive on her own, if need be... and so, cutting corners would do her more harm than good.

It was the same reason why the Legacy Clans kept sending their children to face the winter solstice instead of safely bringing them to the Dream Realm in advance, by gaining access to a Sovereign's Gate, Sunny often clashed with Legacies, but he had to admit that they did a lot of things right.

'Ah. If only all the young Legacies were like Awakened Telle instead of Awakened Tristan…’

He hesitated for a moment, then looked at Nephis.

The two of them were alone at the bow of the Chain Breaker, gazing at the breathtaking view of the castle, the lake, and the city sprawling along its shore. The atmosphere was quite romantic, but sadly, there was no time to have a proper conversation.

The Ivory Island was drifting in the sky above the lake, just shy of casting its shadow on the ancient walls of Bastion. It would only take the flying ship a few minutes to reach it.

And, indeed, the Chain Breaker landed softly on the waters of the smaller lake glistening among the emerald grass of the island before Sunny could think of anything to say.

"Please, come this way."

Nephis led him toward the Ivory Tower, but she didn't seem to be in a hurry. On the way, they toured most of the island, with her showing him around and explaining how the Citadel was organized.

It was just as beautiful and tranquil as Sunny had remembered. There had been a few changes in the past four years, with the island looking much better cared for and settled, However, the essence of the place remained the same.

The emerald grass, the clear lake, the grove of ancient trees, the sun-bleached bones of the mighty dragon... and the great pagoda of pristine white stone towering above it all like a heavenly palace.

Sunny had last visited the Ivory Island almost Immediately after killing the Winter Beast. Back then, he had been skulking in the shadows and in a hurry to leave, unwilling for anyone to notice his presence.

It was much nicer to stroll across the verdant grass in the open, and in Neph's company on top of that.

A smile found its way onto his face - this one genuine, not forced.

Eventually, they found their way into the tower and ascended its steps, reaching Cassie's chambers on one of the higher floors. The blind seer occupied several rooms, one of them serving as her bedroom, one as her office, and one as a parlor to receive guests and hold meetings.

The two of them entered the office.

The chamber was bathed in sunlight, with tasteful wooden furniture placed sparsely on the stone floor. Cassie herself was sitting behind a desk, her hair a little disheveled. There was a serious expression on her face and solemn focus in her beautiful blue eyes.

However,,, there was a bit of a strange smell in the office,

Sunny frowned in confusion.

'Huh.,, why does it smell like popcorn?’

Not that it mattered.

Throwing the unnecessary thought out of his mind, Sunny bowed courteously and said in a polite tone:

"Saint Cassia."

Cassie nodded.

"Master Sunless. Please, have a seat"

Sunny and Nephis sat down in front of her desk, after which the blind seer handed him a stack of papers, with the clause of the contract written on them in neat and pretty cursive.

She must have asked one of the Fire Keepers to serve as her eyes while writing, because otherwise, that tidy handwriting would have been skewed and incomprehensible.

Cassie smiled.

"There is a lot to discuss... but, please. Read and sign the contract first."

Sunny gave her a long look.

'...It's your lucky day that I know cursive!’

Everyone who received a proper education did, but Sunny had only ever known how to type things before coming to the Academy. He had learned cursive later, after returning from the Forgotten Shore and getting himself a position as a research assistant,

But, of course, no one had any way of knowing that.

Signing deeply, he looked over the contract and signed it. Nephis watched him with intently as he did.

The moment his signature was put on paper, the corner of her mouth seemed to curl upward slightly.

Sunny smiled.

‘Well, as long as she's happy.’

"It's a pleasure doing business with you."

And that... was how Sunny became the Memory Purveyor of the Fire Keepers.

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Unbeknownst to him, though, something else was happening while he was signing the contract.

The news of Sunny's duel with Tristan of Aegis Rose was spreading across Bastion with the speed of a forest fire. Of course, with each retelling, it collected embellishments and turned more and more outrageous.

People were talking about it all over the city.

"Have you heard? Some unknown Master defeated Lord Tristan. In one strike!"

"They say that they were fighting for Changing Star's affection..."

"There were several Valor Knights and dozens of Awakened in the courtyard, but no one even tried to stop the duel..."

"There were dozens of Valor Knights in the courtyard trying to stop him, but he defeated them all before striking Lord Tristan in the face!"

"There were a hundred Valor Knights in the courtyard trying to stop him, but he easily defeated them all. And then beheaded Lord Tristan with one strike!"

"That unknown Master is too scary! Too tyrannical!"

"What a monster!"

If Sunny had heard these whispers, he would have paled.

He would have also probably said something like...

"Oh, no. Oh, no! Not again!"

But he didn't hear anything until the next morning.

...When Aiko stormed into the kitchen of the Brilliant Emporium and tossed a newspaper on the table.

"Boss... what the hell is this?!"

Frowning, Sunny picked up the newspaper and read the title on the first page.

The title read:

"A Duel For a Saint's Heart! Wretched Mongrel, Master S, defeats the Noblest of Knights, Lord T!”

His hand trembled.