1745 Missing Catalyst

After making the bold proclamation, Sunny paused for a moment, and then added in an emotionless tone:

"Or rather, two worlds. One more, one less... it doesn't really make a difference.

Jet chuckded at his words, while the others just nodded with varying degrees of seriousness. Only Nephis did not react, simply looking at him calmly.

Sunny sighed, leaned back a little, and said evenly:

"However, let us return to the initial conversation. Lady Nephis, you said that your source element is the people whom you inspire, and that they are the foundation of your Domain. However... what comes next? How do you plan on building upon that foundation to actually reach Supremacy?"

He was quite stumped. It seemed that Nephis was half of a step ahead of him - she had dived deeply into the nature of her source element, to the point of being able to enhance it. Sunny, however, had never even questioned whether his connection to the shadows could be deepened.

What was he supposed to do? Actively try to build rapport with the wild shadows? Turning them into his zealous followers? Would that bring him closer to Supremacy, as well?

'No, I am thinking about it wrong.’

Nephis had said it herself, and he knew it too - each Aspect was unique, and the process of realizing a Domain differed for each Awakened. What worked for her would not work for him, and vice versa.

She had to weave a vast tapestry of yearning souls, inspiring people one by one. But his source element was shadows - as their Lord, he already enjoyed the veneration of every shadow in

existence.

Sunny had no need to build a foundation for his domain...

Or did he?

If there was a process of accumulation involved in the initial stages of attaining Supremacy, then what was he supposed to accumulate?

The thought resonated with him so deeply that even the humble shopkeeper stopped what he was doing, far away in Bastion, frowning for a moment.

‘...Isn't it quite obvious?’

Unseen, Sunny's eyes gleamed under the mask. Had he not been accumulating something from the very start of it all?

The legion of silent shadows dwelling in his soul... were they the foundation of his future Domain?

Shadow God had been the God of Death as well, after all. Was Sunny limiting himself by ignoring the connection shadows had with death?

If so... what the hell was the nature of his Domain supposed to be?

He grimaced, feeling more lost than he had been a minute ago.

'Maybe Nephis will enlighten me.’

Sunny waited patiently for her answer.

...Sadly, he was doomed to be disappointed.

When Nephis finally spoke, a slight frown twisted her brow:

"That... I am not sure about. As I've said, I know the path to Supremacy, but am unable to walk it yet. There has to be some kind of catalyst that will ignite the foundation I've built, turning it into an actual Domain. The soul, the source element, the world once all three are fused together by will, a Sovereign is born. But how to fuse them? I do not know."

‘...Damn it.'

Sunny sighed secretly.

Well, it would have been too easy if the answer was handed to him on a platter.

He remained silent for a while, then asked somberly:

"So, what you are saying is that you must become a Supreme to defeat the Sovereigns without drowning the Dream Realm in the blood of mundane humans, However, you have no clue how to actually achieve it. Therefore, this whole uprising of ours... is a gamble?”

Nephis smiled faintly.

"When has anything been without risk in this life? If you know a way to become Supreme, Lord Shadow, I am all ears."

He tilted his head and stared at her emotionlessly.

"If I knew a way, would I still be a Saint? The last Sovereign I killed was not very talkative, so I didn't have a chance to ask."

In fact, Daeron of the Twilight Sea had been entirely incapable of speech by the time Sunny killed him.

Kai's chair suddenly wobbled.

Nephis spared him a glance, then chuckled.

"Indeed. However... it is not entirely up to fate. In fact, I have a reason to believe that there will be progress soon."

Sunny raised an eyebrow behind the mask.

"Oh? How so?"

She lingered for a moment.

"Once the war starts and we enter Godgrave, there will be plenty of Great Nightmare Creatures abound, as well as some Cursed ones. Watching how they impose their will upon the world might give us a clue, More than that, in the later stages of the war, Anvil and Ki Song will take to the battlefield personally. Observing them will be even more illuminating."

Nephis paused, then added evenly:

"Additionally, I am moving toward a breakthrough in mastering my Aspect Legacy. I suspect that receiving that boon will be of great help.

Sunny blinked a couple of times.

Her Aspect Legacy? The last time he had glimpsed her runes, only one of the seven fruits was unlocked the Knowledge of Fire. It deepened her already startling connection to that element and bestowed knowledge upon her, including the True Names having to do with flames.

What other branches were there? Knowledge of Souls? Knowledge of Authority? What knowledge was she hoping to receive?

He remained silent for a moment, then asked directly:

"What kind of breakthrough are you seeking?"

Nephis met his gaze and answered calmly:

"Knowledge of Passion. I've been studying passion as of late, and have already made great strides in mastering it."

Now, it was Sunny's time to wobble!

It took all his self-control not to fall out of his chair. He remained still through sheer will, not allowing even a hint of his emotions to show in his body language,

'P-passion?! How is she studying passion?! What great strides?! What exactly is she mastering, and with whom?!’

Outwardly, Sunny remained calm. But Internally, he was fuming! After a long silence, he asked evenly:

"What does... passion... have to do with anything?"

Nephis looked at him with a hint of confusion.

"It has to do with my source element, of course. What else?"

Sunny let out a mental sigh of relief.

'It's alright... it's all fine. She's not practicing... passion... with anyone!

Luckily, the conversation could be safely guided elsewhere.

...Or so he thought.

Because right at that moment, Effie suddenly said:

"Oh, right. I am sure that it's not the case, but if Master Sunless is having trouble making you achieve a... breakthrough... tell him to come see my husband. Let the man learn from the master! That guy is a real veteran..."

Something fell on the floor noisilly.

Kia silently covered his face with a palm. Jet's smile widened a little, Cassie turned her head, pretending to look away.

Sunny was appalled,

'Who says I need to learn anything, you vile woman?! I am myself a... wait... why am I even thinking about her nonsense?! Damnation!’

Nephis looked at Effie in confusion.

"Isn't your husband an Awakened? Plus, Master Sunless is a real veteran, too. And what does he have to do with my Aspect Legacy?"

Sunny felt vindicated.

‘Thank you! No, stop... what?’

Effie stared at Nephis with a strange mix of mischievousness and exasperation. After a few moments of silence, she said in a low tone:

"Princess... you mean that he served in Antarctica, too. Right?"

Neph's confused frown deepened.

"Of course. What else could I mean?"

Effie sighed and waved a hand in the air, giving up.

“Forget it. Gods, why do I even bother…”