1766 Busy Body

Sunny returned to the Brilliant Emporium as the sun was rising above the eastern horizon. If someone had seen him coming back home at the break of dawn, they would have probably assumed that he had spent the night elsewhere... and with someone else, engaging in revelry.

Of course, being mistaken for a philanderer would have been the least of his problems - many people already considered him a lecher, anyway. It was better to be seen as a profligate than as someone who had a habit of sneaking into the forbidden parts of the royal castle at night.

'Now, wait... what does it sound so wrong?'

In any case, his goodbyes with Cassie had felt a little hurried. She had seemed to be a little dazed and a little rattled, acting strangely around him... cwell, it was not surprising. Sunny doubted that she had expected him to dump two years worth of memories into her head in the span of a few hours.

But he had no other choice... initially, Sunny had wanted to share his memories with Cassie little by little. But the war was approaching faster than he had expected, and so, he needed her to trust him sooner.

Cassie was smart. With what she had shown her this time, she would be able to figure out many things. Most importantly, she would understand that he had been a companion to her and Nephis for a very, very long time.

Even if their relationship had been turbulent and rocky for most of that time...

Knowing that, she would lower her guard around him more. She would also advise Nephis to trust him better.

Well, and...

The things Sunny, as the humble shopkeeper, might do in the future would not look as outrageous. Which wasn't to say that he was planning on doing something outrageous, of course! But he had also not planned on participating in scandalous duels and being publicly embraced by Nephis because of a candy wrapper, so…

Things just sort of happened when Sunny was around her. He could put a leash on his emotions and control himself better, but... he didn't want to.

'Ah, so many things to do...'

Entering the Brilliant Emporium, Sunny yawned, stumbled sleepily to his bed - the very same bed he had taken from the hidden chamber of the ruined cathedral - fell on it, and closed his eyes blissfully.

At the same time, his avatar in the basement of the Marvelous Mimic looked up in disbelief.

"No way."

They had so many things to do, and the original body decided to just go to sleep?!

Sunny couldn't believe himself.

Shaking his head, he sighed and continued pouring over his notes.

There was indeed a lot to do.

He was preparing Memories for Rain, developing a design of the soul sword for Nephis... oh, and by the way, today was the day they were supposed to go on an outing to feed the rumors.

As if he was not suffering enough from the rumors already...

Despite that, Sunny was looking forward to their date. Even if it was a fake one.

Before that, however...

He still had to work on the design of the sword.

Creating a soulbound weapon was a vexing task.

There were three parts to it, each presenting its own set of problems.

The first problem was perhaps the simplest to solve, which was not to say the easiest. It was the forging of the sword.

To forge a good sword, Sunny needed good materials. Usually, he would have just gone with the most potent ones at his disposal - those harvested from Great abominations would be ideal. He also needed a set of powerful soul shards, but there were plenty of those.

Of course, the higher the Rank of the material, the harder it was to process it. That was why Sunny did not seriously consider using materials harvested from Cursed beings... even if he managed to get something like that, his own power was insufficient to forge it.

Regardless, the situation was entirely different this time around.

What he wanted to create was a soulbound weapon, so there was no point in making its Rank higher than Neph's own. Actually, it was impossible since she was a Saint, the sword would inevitably become a Transcendent one. Therefore, using stronger materials would only waste them.

Whatever material Sunny did use would be refined into a greater version of itself by the flames of Changing Star's soul as he walked the path of Ascension. Really, there was no one better suited to wield a soulbound weapon than her since its power would depend on the power of her soul, and her soul was bolstered by the radiant lineage of Sun God.

So, what Sunny needed was not the strongest material. What he needed was the material with the highest affinity to Nephis and her Aspect. Her weapons and armor had a tendency to melt when she went all out so, he needed something that would never melt. Something that would channel her immolating power to the fullest extent, as well.

Sunny was pretty sure that he already had the main ingredient at hand.

He looked at a certain spot in the material storage of the Brilliant Emporium. Just by looking there, Sunny felt cold.

What he was staring at... were the shards of the mystical ice that had once been the heart of the Winter Beast. It seemed a little odd, using ice to channel fire but Sunny believed that there was no better material for Neph's sword.

The only point he was still considering had to do with purity. Was it better to simply use the mystical ice, or create an alloy on its base? A lot of experimentation was needed to answer that question. He had been experimenting for a while now, and would continue to do so for some time.

The second problem he had to solve was the soul binding. That one... was truly vexing. Sunny remembered the weave of the Mantle of the Underworld well, and had come a long way in learning its secrets. He had reached a point where he could theoretically recreate most of its enchantments... except for the one he needed to master the most, the [Prince of the Underworld].

That one had been simply too odd. Back then, in order to fulfill its requirements, Sunny had had to defeat thousands of opponents. The strangest part was that he had not needed to kill them... just defeat them. How did that work? How could a weapon grow stronger from such an abstract thing? There were no soul fragments involved, no absorption of essence.

Was the counter of the [Prince of the Underworld] the means of soul binding, or simply a restriction placed on the onyx armor by its creator? Sunny wasn't sure. All he knew was that once he had filled it, a new enchantment of the Mantle was unlocked the [Soulbound Relic].

Activating that enchantment had turned the Mantle of the Underworld from a Memory to an Attribute.

Could he simply recreate the [Soulbound Relic] enchantment? Or was fulfilling the demands of the [Prince of the Underworld] enchantment an integral part of the process?

Recreating either of the enchantments was a titanic task, and Sunny wasn't even sure that what he wanted to achieve would happen on the first try. Once again, more experimentation was needed.

It was to the point that he was considering temporarily manifesting more avatars to keep working on all these tasks.

The third problem, meanwhile, was not as elaborate, but also the most expansive of the three.

It was deciding on what other enchantments he wanted to include, and constructing the map of the weave according to the selection.

Sunny had a lot to select from.

Firstly, he was determined to finally accomplish something that he had been trying to do for a long time recreate the [Unseen] enchantment of the Moonlight Shard, which allowed the ghostly stiletto to appear instantly in his hand, without any delay between the summoning and the manifestation.

There would need to be an enchantment that augmented the resilience and lethality of the soul blade, as well.

Beyond that, however...

There was too much to choose from.

The [Shapeshifter], [Light Eater], and [Ghost Blade] enchantments of the Cruel Sight. The [Death Dealer] enchantment of Morgan's Warbow. The [Burning Heart] and [Cold Steel] enchantments of the Patient Avenger... and so much more.

Worse still, Sunny felt that simply recreating past enchantments was not enough for the soulbound sword he was going to forge for Nephis. That sword would be a watershed moment in his development as a sorcerer, without a doubt, as well as the mold for the future Memories Sunny would craft for himself.

So, wouldn't it only be suitable for him to fully take a step forward and design unique enchantments of his own?

There was a lot to consider.

...It was a little premature to be considering these things, however, because Sunny had not been coy when he made the deal with Nephis. He really needed to learn how she fought these days to be able to tailor a perfect weapon for her. He had to observe her battle art her true battle art, not the facsimile she had designed to fool the members of the Great Clan Valor.

And there was so little time left before the war.

Suddenly somber, Sunny looked around the Brilliant Emporium.

The Sword Domain had barely had four years of peace after the disastrous Chain of Nightmares. People were just starting to settle into their new lives, working together to help their kingdom develop... but soon, everything would descend into chaos once again.

What would happen to his shop then?

Would he even be able to keep it open? The restaurant side of the business would suffer the most, no doubt. With a war going on, people would not be in the mood to enjoy delicacies, and neither would they have spare coins to spend. Getting supplies would become a problem, and small private establishments like his would certainly be at the end of the line.

The Memory Boutique would not fare well, either.

Sunny sighed.

'Well, the war has not started yet. There's still time.’

And speaking of time...

He opened his eyes and reluctantly rolled out of bed.

Sunny had not quite gotten his beauty sleep yet, but there was no time to waste. He had to get ready.

The morning was in full swing, which meant that Nephis would be arriving soon.

It was time for their date.

‘...Fake date.’

So what? He was excited.