1789 Peculiar Connection

After welcoming the Fire Keepers for a few short days, the Nameless Temple had grown silent once again.

However, the silence was not going to last long.

Soon enough, the dark realm that Sunny had built in the heart of Godgrave would become a hive of activity. Due to the deal he had made with Morgan, his Citadel was to be made into a secondary staging ground for the Sword Army during the war. A relatively small, but elite contingent would be stationed here, using the temple as their operation base.

But the peace and quiet would be gone long before that.

After all, the soldiers had to live somewhere. They needed beds, places to cook and consume food, storage space to keep a large amount of supplies, an infirmary... and so on. All of these things had to be built before the war started.

There were so many things that went into waging a war. A military conflict between Awakened was different in many ways, but still fundamentally similar to any other war in human history - it demanded an unfathomable amount of logistical preparations.

Sunny felt dejected.

It had taken him a lot of effort to restore the Nameless Temple to its present state. Now, however, it would be turned into an actual Citadel - a place that existed to serve as a safe haven for the people in the Dream Realm. There would be a small army of workers coming here to perform all the laborious tasks soon.

Which was not a bad thing.

However, he had grown used to the peaceful silence.

Todady, there were only two humans under the roof of the ancient temple. One of them was Sunny himself. The other was Cassie, who had arrived as the Seneschal of the Great Clan Valor to assess the state of the Citadel and collect all the necessary information to launch the construction.

At least that was the official reason.

Sunny had thought that Nephis would come personally. He was a little relieved that she was not here - his mind was burning in anticipation of their upcoming date, so seeing her before that would have been somewhat embarrassing.

It was nice to see Cassie outside the context of their deal, as well.

"...The temple itself must be off-limits to the soldiers, unless it is to use the Gateway. Of course, they can retreat inside if we are under attack, and the outer perimeter is breached. Even then, I will not allow them to venture into the inner sanctum and the underground level."

Cassie turned her head slightly.

"There is an underground level?"

Sunny smiled.

"Don't pretend you don't know. Nephis saw it, which means that you saw it, too."

The young woman coughed in embarrassment.

"Right... sorry. It's a habit of mind to act appropriately oblivious. Otherwise, people get uncomfortable around me."

He spared her a long look.

Since it was only the two of them in the temple, Sunny had dismissed Weaver's Mask. It felt strange, to walk around with a bare face as the Lord of Shadows... even if Cassie could not see his expression, only her own.

He shook his head.

"I doubt there is anyone in the world who knows the extent of your abilities and the depth of your foresight better than me, Cassie. So, you don't need to worry about making me feel uncomfortable."

"There is also no one who knows me better than you, now. There is really no other person either of us can trust more!

She smiled faintly.

"I'll keep that in mind."

Sunny hesitated for a few moments, then led her outside.

"The territory around the temple is mostly cleared of Nightmare Creatures. There will be no problem building barracks and all the necessary facilities around it. My Shadows will help protect the perimeter. You should know how powerful they are... the base will be very safe, all things considered."

She shook her head.

"We can't rely on your... Shadows... to maintain security, Sunny. After all, you are expected to participate in the battles against Song. Who knows if their presence would be required somewhere else?"

Sunny contemplated for a moment, then nodded.

"You are right."

It felt very strange, to be discussing the inevitable war... realm war... so casually. And yet, here they were.

Studying her delicate face, he asked:

"Who do you think stands the better chance of winning?"

Cassie tilted her head a little.

"It's hard to say. The Sword Domain has a stronger military. It also has better strategists. Most importantly, there are the Ivory Tower and the Nameless Temple. It is all but inevitable that the King of Swords will arrive to Godgrave before the Queen of Worms. With him here, the forces of Valor will venture into the Hollows sooner, and conquer local Citadels faster. It's hard to imagine how such an advantage won't snowball into a crushing avalanche."

She hesitated for a moment.

"However, the Song Domain is... unpredictable. There seems to be no reason for them to be eager to fight this war - if anything, they should be scrambling to avoid it due to how disadvantaged they are - and yet, they are as eager as the rulers of the Sword Domain. Which means that they are hiding something. Well... of course they are."

Her expression darkened a little.

"That encounter between you and the Skinwalker near Ravenheart. The emissaries of the House of Night were clearly in contact with Prince Mordret. Perhaps they have brokered some kind of deal behind the scenes. There are other possibilities, as well. But at the end of the day, none of it matters."

Sunny raised an eyebrow.

"It doesn't?"

Cassie remained silent for a moment, then said calmly:

"No. Because neither Song nor Valor will win the war. We will win the war."

He laughed.

"You say it with such conviction. However, isn't the whole thing predicated on Nephis achieving Supremacy without the help of the Spell? And there is no saying if she will, least of all if she'll do it on time, It's all a gamble.”

Cassie faced him and smiled faintly.

"...Sure. But so was every other step along the way. Yet, here we are. Still standing."

She hesitated a little, then added in a quieter voice:

"Plus, it's not entirely a gamble."

Sunny sighed, then led her back into the temple.

"It's not?"

The young woman lingered with the answer. Eventually, she said in a subdued tone:

"The six of us those who came back from the Tomb of Ariel - all have strange gaps in our memory. But my memory has been affected the most. Sorry... I haven't revealed that secret to anyone before you, Sunny, and it's not easy to admit. My memory is really... severely damaged, and I can't see the future anymore."

She took a deep breath.

"But there was a time when my memory was intact, and I could learn a lot about the future from my visions. That version of me must have known that there would be a war, and that Nephis would have to defeat the Sovereigns without challenging the Fourth Nightmare."

Sunny considered her words carefully,

"You mean..."

Cassie nodded.

"Yes. If that version of me did not attempt to create contingencies, it means that she saw a way to win the war. Therefore... perhaps it is not as big of a gamble as you think."

Sunny hesitated for a while.

He knew that Cassie had been in a fragile mental state for the past four years. Not only because of losing her ability to see glimpses of the future, but also because much of her past was shrouded by fog... after all, he had been the purpose and cornerstone of all her schemes, and her schemes were truly life-consuming.

When he turned Fateless, a huge chunk had been ripped out of her memory, replaced by oblivion.

So, he didn't really want to dispel her hopes. But it wasn't good to let her rely on them, either.

He sighed.

"Or you have never known about the future after the Tomb of Ariel at all. Because the future has always been meant to become unclear after that."

Suddenly, there was a strange intensity on Cassie's delicate face. She faced him and kept quiet for a few long moments, struggling to contain her emotions.

Sunny had an idea of what she was thinking about.

"Even if I ask you, I won't remember the answers, will I?"

He shook his head slowly.

"You won't."

Of course, it would be great if Sunny could fill the gaps in her memory and let Cassie feel like herself again. But he couldn't.

Between the two of them, there was a peculiar and bitter connection. Sunny had been forgotten by the world... but Cassie had forgotten herself. He struggled to judge which one of them was more pitiful.

Still, he wanted to console her, even if only a little.

Sunny looked away with a sigh.

"...Of course, that doesn't mean that you never will."

Cassie seemed frozen by his words. She raised a hand, then lowered it again.

"There is a way? For your existence to be restored?"

Sunny hesitated with a dark expression on his face.

Of course, he had been contemplating that issue for a long time.

In the end, he had determined that there was.