1811 Perfect Day

"You are here. That's the best gift."

Neph's smile grew a little wider.

'...Such a smooth talker.‘

Still, coming from Master Sunless, even the most trite compliment was too pleasant to hear.

She looked down at the luminous pearl he had given her. It was merely an Awakened soul shard, but... the lustrous pearl was so pretty, glowing softly with an opalescent shine in her hand. Its beauty and uniqueness made it seem quite valuable.

However, it was the intent behind the gift and the words that accompanied it that made Nephis like it a lot.

She looked at him with a light smile.

"I'll cherish it."

Master Sunless usually wore his hair tied back neatly, but now it was loose and wet, falling to his shoulders like a waterfall of black silk. His skin was like white porcelain, with the onyx scales of the coiling serpent contrasted starkly against its smooth surface. His dark eyes were glistening in the sunlight.

He looked lovely.

Nephis stole a furtive glance at his chiseled body, then hid her agitation by biting into a flavourful sandwich. Her eyes closed slightly.

'Ah...‘

The sandwich was absolutely delicious. It was simply unfair... her sight was already being assaulted by his figure, and now, her taste was besieged by his incredible cooking.

Which of her five senses would Master Sunless tackle next?

Thinking that, Nephis tried not to blush.

She had been a little flustered when he took off his clothes to jump into the water. He was much... sharper than she had imagined. Nephis was used to being in the company of warriors. so she had seen her fair share of athletic bodies. But the contrast between his gentle demeanor and his lean, sculpted physique was too striking.

Not to mention the detailed tattoo of the coiling serpent. It was so out of place on the body of the refined enchanter that Nephis had been given a pause. That tantalizing tattoo... seemed like it had a history.

Had Master Sunless been a delinquent once?

For some reason, the thought was strangely exciting.

Of course, she had a different suspicion about the origin of the serpent tattoo.

Then, there was the unexpected potency of his presence. She had known for a while that Master Sunless was in a habit of wearing a Memory that dampened the impression people had of him. But she had not expected that he would be that impressive.

His presence was subtle, but undeniable... very fitting for a man whose affinity lay with 0 shadows.

However, although she had paid attention to his appealing body and the unanticipated power of his dark presence, Nephis had been distracted by something else.

When Master Sunless dismissed his mantle, there was another thing that was revealed. She had always felt that his longing was strangely muffled — it was there, but somewhat obscured from her senses. But when the black mantle came off, the burning heat of his desire was finally revealed to her in all its startling depth.

It seemed that behind the humble, slightly melancholic exterior.... Master Sunless was a man of great passion.

That was why Nephis had been clustered.

She had known that he felt a strong attraction to her, both on an emotional and physical level. However, it was quite a surprise to feel how deep that attraction went.

...It was not an unpleasant surprise, though.

Because Nephis felt a strong attraction, too — otherwise, she wouldn't have agreed to see him in earnest. So, instead of being uncomfortable, she secretly felt pleased and flattered by his attention.

Nephis had been grateful for the cold water at that time.

it was all strange, and not entirely like herself. She had never felt that way... at least not that she could remember. But being with Master Sunless spoke to something deep within her. He made her feel at ease, as if the two of them belonged together like two pieces of the same puzzle.

He was just so... pleasant to be around. She couldn't help herself.

But that was fine.

Nephis let go of these thoughts as she enjoyed the picnic prepared by Master Sunless. Everything was delicious. The tea was fragrant. The company was the best part.

The glistening water, the rustling leaves, the embroidered blanket, the man sitting near her... it was all perfect, like the picture out of a book.

She had not felt that relaxed in a long, long time.

A disastrous war that would decide not only her own fate, but the fates of countless humans as well, was almost upon them. And yet, here she was, enjoying an idle day at a beach with a beautiful man.

Nephis would have felt guilty about neglecting her responsibilities, but she knew that coming here today was also important.

She was proficient with a sword and had spent countless hours practicing how to wield it. Therefore. she knew that pushing her body without reprieve only seemed appealing, but would never produce a good result. The body needed sufficient rest in order to grow stronger and absorb what it had learned — otherwise, it would simply collapse, destroying all the progress.

It was the same with the mind. Nephis had a thousand issues to think about and a thousand strategies to plan. But it would not be good to drive herself into delirium by never allowing herself to relax — the mind needed rest, too. Persistent mental fatigue and sleep deprivation would only make it dull.

She knew all these things well.

But she had realized only recently that the heart was just like the body and the mind. lIer spirit needed reprieve from time to time, as well. She couldn't just strain it endlessly and expect that nothing would break — instead, she needed to maintain it carefully, just like she maintained her body and mind.

So, this idle time with Master Sunless was not irresponsible at all. There was no need to feel guilty about satisfying her desires. That was just her doing some much—needed maintenance on her weary heart.

Today was perfect.

Finishing the sandwich, Nephis leaned forward to pour herself some light wine. However, at that moment, Master Sunless reached forward, as well, aiming for the tea kettle.

Suddenly, their faces were terribly close.

Nephis looked at his lips thinking...

'I wonder. How soft would they feel to the touch?’