1877 Secrets of the Past

Sunny glanced at the valiant man, Sir Gilead, from behind his mask.

Honestly, Summer Knight was not that bad. Back in the Nightmare Desert, he took Morgan away and left the rest of them behind — but before that, he had given away his most precious Memories to Nephis, hoping to help her conquer the Third Nightmare.

He had been reluctant to abandon her and her companions, but his duty had demanded for Morgan to be saved at all costs.

Sunny didn't know what to think of the man.

On one hand, Summer Knight was quite likable — even admirable, in many ways. He was a benevolent warrior who valued loyalty above all else.

On the other hand, that devotion of his made Sunny feel uneasy. He had a personal issue with the concept, and more than that… loyalty was usually seen as a noble virtue, but considering that the subject of Gilead's loyalty was the King of Swords, was it really?

What did it say about Summer Knight that he had chosen to serve a lord like that faithfully?

Sunny often found himself wanting to think about Sir Gilead in the same manner he thought about Harus, the zealous servant of the ruler of the Bright Castle. However, he never quite managed to draw a parallel between the two — no matter how many times he tried, they just felt too different from each other.

So, he was conflicted.

As Sunny was considering the matter, Sir Gilead looked at him once more.

"Can you ask you a question, Lord Shadow?"

Sunny shrugged indifferently.

"You certainly can."

Summer Knight turned his gaze back to the battlefield.

"I heard that you had refused the invitation of Clan Song. However, you did not refuse Lady Nephis, and came to fight under the banner of the Sword Domain with her. I must admit that I am curious as to why."

Sunny traced his gaze and saw a white flash illuminate the world far in the distance. Nephis was unleashing her flames somewhere out there, on the battlefield.

He grinned behind the mask.

His voice was emotionless when he spoke:

"I thought that if it's Changing Star, she would win."

Sir Gilead smiled and drank more water.

"She does have a habit of making impossible things possible. Just like her father."

Sunny raised an eyebrow.

"Broken Sword? You knew him?"

Summer Knight chuckled.

"No… I wish I did, though. He died shortly after I became a Sleeper — but, before that, he was somewhat of an idol of mine."

A sad smile appeared on his face.

"I only grew to admire him more after hearing stories told by those who had met him.Many of the older retainers of Clan Valor had a good relationship with Broken Sword and Smile of Heaven — after all, they were comrades of the patriarch's son. Smile of Heaven in particular, since she and Lord Anvil practically grew up together."

He sighed.

"It's a shame, what happened to them in the end… but they would be happy, I think, to see how beautifully their daughter has grown up."

Sunny looked at him with doubt.

Did Gilead not know how Broken Sword died, and that Anvil was one of his killers? Well… to be fair, even Sunny himself did not know that. He was only sure that the Sovereigns had engineered Broken Sword's death because they tried to eliminate Nephis later — without that first clue, finding the rest was close to impossible.

It wasn't strange that Summer Knight would not know anything about it. After all, he would have indeed been a teenager when the betrayal happened, just like Saint Tyris.

There was something else about what he had said, though…

Sunny felt a little curious.

"Practically grew up together?"

Sir Gilear seemed confused by the question for a moment, then nodded.

"Yes. There weren't really great clans back then, but a few families were certainly more renowned and powerful than the rest. Lord Valor and Immortal Flame were patriarchs of two such families, so their children were quite close — since His Majesty and Smile of Heaven were more or less the same age, they were childhood friends."

He smiled.

"Sir Jest has many stories about the mischief the two of them got up to. Of course… listening to his stories is not for the faint of heart. Be warned, Lord Shadow!"

Sunny remained silent for a while.

"I see. Thanks for the warning."

It made sense that Anvil and Smile of Heaven had known each other since childhood. Their families were two of the most prominent families of that time, after all. Their parents had been the most distinguished champions of the First Generation, and would have fought side by side many times. The future great clans had been a small and tight-knit circle.

Still, Sunny had not considered that fact before. In truth, he rarely thought about the Sovereigns as real people, if at all. It was strange to imagine that they had been children once, no matter how reasonable such a conclusion was.

In light of the strange revelation, what Nephis had suffered as a child seemed even more vile. Not only had the Sovereigns killed their comrade and tried to hunt down his descendant, but in the case of Anvil,he had even conspired to kill his childhood friend's husband and eliminate her daughter.

Of course, Smile of Heaven had been… gone, by then. Still, it seemed like an extreme shift in attitude.

Just what the hell had happened to them?

It also made sense that Saint Jest would have known the future King of Swords since childhood — he had been a member of the cohort led by the founder of Clan Valor, after all.

Therefore, he would have known Broken Sword and Smile of Heaven, as well.

Maybe he even knew something about how Broken Sword had died, and how Anvil attained Supremacy.

Sunny's expression turned a little grim behind the mask.

He and Cassie were determined to investigate the Sovereigns to learn their Flaws. Getting to the bottom of the Immortal Flame clan's fall was not directly tied to that investigation, but then again, it very well could be.

There were very few people who knew enough to be a useful source of information for them, and even fewer of those people were within their reach. Saint Jest was one such person.

However, Sunny doubted that the amicable older gentleman would be inclined to share what he knew with them.

'How troublesome.'

He suppressed a sigh and looked at Summer Knight.

'Should I try to pull more information out of him?'

No… it was probably not a good idea, at least not now. Even if he did not really show it, Sir Gilead was already doubting the Lord of Shadows — which was reasonable. A man who put so much value in loyalty had to have reservations about a person who seemingly only cared about self-interest.

So, Sunny could not appear too eager to learn the secrets of the King of Swords. Gilead's convictions might have been naive, but the man himself was no fool. He was carefully scrutinizing his every word, no doubt, evaluating how dependable the Lord of Shadows really was.

For now, Sunny's motives for joining the Sword Army were indeed seen as unclear, and therefore questionable. Not only that, but he had not even pledged his allegiance to Clan Valor itself — instead, he made a pact with Changing Star as an individual.

Should Sunny make his motives seem a little more transparent, and a bit less suspicious?

'Why not?'

He smiled.

"You said that Lady Nephis has grown up beautifully, yes?"

Summer Knight raised an eyebrow, seemingly confused by the sudden question.

"I did."

Sunny stared at him for a few moments.

"Do you think about Changing Star's beauty often?"

His already cold tone grew even chillier at the end.Gilead blinked a couple of times.

"...Do you?"

Sunny responded evenly:

"Quite a bit."

Summer Knight stared at him in bewilderment for a few moments, then looked away and coughed.

"That… huh… I see. I am sorry to disappoint you, Lord Shadow, but Lady Nephis already has a young gentleman in her heart…"

Sunny grinned behind the mask.

"So what? I hear that he's a pampered fool of a Master. Pleasant to look at, but nothing much beyond that. A useless person."

Sir Gilead coughed again.

"I'm not… I don't think... ah, look at the time. My war party will have to enter battle soon. Actually, I was supposed to perform a few inspections … if you'll excuse me, Lord Shadow."

With that, the valiant Saint rose, gave Sunny a polite bow, and jumped down from the platform. His movements weren't hurried at all.

Sunny watched him leave with a satisfied smile.

'Well, then… that went well.'

After that, the motives of the Lord of Shadows should seem quite clear.

Albeit perhaps just as questionable as before…