1895 Body of Steel

Sunny broke his fusion with Saint and glided onto the blade of the Soul Serpent, wrapping himself around the blade of the serpentine greatsword. Robbed of his support, the taciturn knight swayed slightly — however, considering how severely injured she was, that sudden sign of weakness did not look out of place. Reven did not notice anything, assuming that the inhumanly beautiful creature was simply wounded too terribly.

Sunny fused with Serpent, and was dazed for a split second. Being one with Saint had already been a strange enough feeling — however, becoming a sword was an entirely alien experience.

Sunny had no blood, no eyes, no limbs. His body was rigid and uncompromising, forged for a single purpose — to cut, cleave and carve, severing living beings from the concept of life. Held in the firm hand of his wielder, he was where he was meant to belong.

His edge was sharp. His purpose was clear.

His resolve was absolute.

...The difference between everything Sunny was familiar with and this adamant existence was so immense that his mind simply failed to fathom it. He wasn't even sure what part of him came from Serpent, and what part of him came from the sword. There were countless nuances he was failing to comprehend, countless layers of himself he could feel, but not understand.

However, even these few short moments were a revelation.

While augmenting Saint, Sunny had already guessed that fusing with his Shadows could guide him to the next step of Shadow Dance. But now that he had become one with Serpent in its Soul Weapon form, he made another guess.

His shadows could augment Memories, too. So... wouldn't his weaving undergo a tremendous improvement if he studied the Memories by fusing with them, as well? Was that the catalyst he had been missing in his quest to forge a soulbound sword?

These prospects were both fascinating and tantalizing. Sadly, there was no time to consider them fully...

Because he was still in the middle of a dire battle, and that battle was about to reach its climax.

The short moment of inaction was coming to an end. Revel and the Reflection were preparing to move despite their wounds... from what Sunny could tell, Lightslayer had made up her mind and chosen a solution to the problem posed by Saint.

She was going to sacrifice the Reflection to destroy the servant of the Lord of Shadows, and then deal with the master herself.

At least that was what Sunny would have done.

So, he had to prevent that from happening.

He regretted not having teeth... because right now would have been a perfect time to grit them.

'What would a sword with a set of teeth even look like?‘

The sudden thought brushed against his mind, uninvited.

It was better not to imagine.

'Saint, now!‘

He gave her a mental command.

Before Revel and the Reflection moved, Saint shifted slightly. Her shattered armor groaned, and ruby dust spilled into the flowing darkness. She raised both hands above her head, as if preparing to deliver a powerful downward slash. However, instead of it, the graceful Shadow leaned forward...

And hurled the dark greatsword at Revel with all her Transcendent strength. It was truly a foolish move, really. Not only could Lightslayer easily dodge or deflect the makeshift projectile, but Saint was also leaving herself unarmed and defenseless. A dire mistake in a fight that she was already losing.

It was just that...

As Revel moved her ssangsudo to swat the dark greatsword to the side, Sunny gave another command.

Instantly, the sword rippled and changed shape, expanding into a vaguely human silhouette. That silhouette then swelled, turning into a monstrous figure as it landed heavily on the wooden floor and lunged at the princess of Song.

He had ordered Serpent to assume a new form.

Sunny had considered carefully which of the silent shadows dwelling in his soul he would choose. Initially, his mind turned to the most obvious one — the Black Knight of the ruined cathedral of the Dark City, his old nemesis.

The Black Knight had been a fearsome and dreadful foe. Best of all, he had commanded true darkness, possessing several potent abilities tied to it — it was by slaying the ruthless guardian of the cathedral that Saint evolved for the first time. Now that they were surrounded by the same element, Serpent could borrow the affinity to it from the Black Knight's shadow by assuming the form of the mass of darkness wearing a set of cursed armor.

However, once Sunny contemplated the choice more, he realized that it was a poor one. The Black Knight had seemed formidable once, true — but he was merely a Fallen Devil. What had been a deadly foe once was now a trivial threat to someone like Sunny... and to Revel as well.

Truthfully, none of the forms Serpent could assume could pose a threat to the princess of Song — at least not anymore.

If they had been the ones to ambush the forces of Song, the shape of the Terror of L049, Sybil of the Fallen Grace, could have helped Sunny decimate the enemy. If they had been fighting in a vast open space, the shape of the Remnant of the Jade Queen could have rained destruction on the enemies from above.

But now, none of these shapes could contend against Revel. She would destroy them easily, not wasting any time.

And Sunny desperately needed her to waste it.

So, the shape that Serpent had assumed...

Was that a creature that resembled a towering, monstrous mix between a human and a wolf. It was tall and covered in thick, wild fur. Its maw was bared in a bestial snarl, revealing terrifying fangs, and each of its claws was like a curved sword.

...It was the form of Saint Dire Fang, a fallen retainer of the Great Clan Song, whom Sunny had killed during the Battle of the Black Skull, and whose Echo he later lost in the Nightmare Desert.