1944 Footsteps of War

Sunny did not miss the fact that neither Ravenheart nor her daughter had seemed to possess the lineage in the early years of the Nightmare Spell era. At the Academy, Orum had noted that Smile of Heaven and Anvil were exhibiting unexplainable physical prowess and strength... but Ki Song was not.

That was because by then, Immortal Flame had already claimed the Lineage Memory of Sun God, while Warden of Valor had already found the Lineage Memory of War God. Nighwalker, meanwhile, had most likely already gained the Lineage Memory of Storm God.

Sunny did not know how Ki Song earned the Lineage Memory of her own or where, but she definitely had not inherited a divine bloodline, like Smile of Heaven and Anvil did. Instead, she found it at some point after Awakening, just like their parents had.

Then, she followed Broken Sword into the Third Nightmare and attained Sainthood. By then, Clan Song would have already been considered one of the Great Clans.

And then, finally... after both Smile of Heaven and Broken Sword were gone... the Raven Queen would be born in the crucible of the Fourth Nightmare, cementing her power over the world.

It was admirable, really. Sunny could not help but feel awe at what that woman had achieved. He would have applauded Ki Song... if he wasn't planning to kill her, and was therefore at great risk of being killed by her first.

If anything, Sunny would have dearly preferred if his adversary was less outstanding.

He rubbed his face and sighed.

Sunny felt a little conflicted now that the enemy he had been thinking about so much had a face in his mind. Both Ki Song and Anvil — despite how valuable it was to have seen where they had come from, it was harder to hate them after witnessing them as children and inexperienced youths.

But, at the same time, it only made him resent them more. Because he had seen the world of their youth, with all its countless possibilities... and knew what they had turned it into, in the end.

Regardless...

Knowing what he now knew about Ki Song now , he felt that he could understand her actions in the war a little better, and maybe even predict what she would do next, to some degree.

Sunny looked at Cassie.

"Her Flaw..."

Although Little Ki had never confessed it to Orum, there were a few hints. Witnessing the old man's memories and knowing how her life would turn out in the future, he could make a cautious guess.

Cassie leaned back in her chair.

"It has to be connected to family, right?"

Sunny nodded.

"Right."

Back then, Ki Song had just lost her mother and faced her First Nightmare almost immediately after. There, she earned her Aspect, and her Flaw.

Her expression had changed subtly when she told Orum that she did not have a family anymore... as if she wanted to say that she would never have one again, either.

Had Ki Song adopted Seishan and other orphan girls because she was unable to have children of her own?

That would be a bitter Flaw to bear for someone that lonely, indeed.

Of course, Sunny could not be sure.

He frowned.

"That is... not exactly what I was hoping for. If that is indeed her Flaw, it won't be easy to exploit."

Cassie sighed.

"But not impossible."

Her expression turned somber.

"You did not miss it, did you?"

Sunny slowly shook his head, knowing what she was talking about.

Perhaps the most important detail of Orum's memories did not have anything to do with Ki Song, actually.

Instead, it had to do with Anvil.

Due to the fact that Ki Song had been a lonesome child and slaughtered everyone who could have known her well, there weren't any people Sunny and Cassie could seek out to learn more about her most important secrets. Even her daughters might not know much about their regal mother.

But it was different for Anvil. Orum remembered that the youngest son of the founder of Clan Valor had been entrusted to his father's comrades soon after Awakening, to be trained by them and gain experience in the Dream Realm.

Those people would know more about him than anyone else. So, if Sunny and Cassie wanted to learn the weakness of the King of Sword, they were the ones that had to be found.

Sunny stared at Cassie with a heavy expression.

"...How many members of the Warden's cohort are still alive?"

She let out a heavy sigh.

"Many prominent Awakened of the First Generation perished while trying to conquer the Third Nightmare, as you know... including Warden of Valor himself. That is why there are so few of them around. As for his cohort — as far as I know, there's only one person left. We must get to him."

Sunny lingered for a moment.

"You're not suggesting that we should kidnap Saint Jest, are you?"

Cassie raised an eyebrow.

"Why? Has the old man's amiable act fooled you?"

Sunny slowly shook his head.

"Not really."

She leaned forward a little.

"Good. Because he is more sinister than you can imagine, and probably the most prolific killer of this era. Worst of all, there are people loyal to Valor, and then there's Jest of Dagonet. His devotion to the King is absolute. So... whether we like it or not, he'll turn his malice toward us sooner or later."

Sunny looked at her with a grim expression.

"That might be true, but he is a Saint and one of Anvil's most trusted people. I doubt that he'll share what he knows voluntarily, so how do you expect us to take him without Anvil noticing?"

Cassie grimaced, then shrugged.

"The war is chaotic. There will be an opportunity, I'm sure."

Her voice sounded determined, but tired. She had been exhausted even before showing Sunny Orum's memories, and her fatigue must have only grown worse as a result.

He closed his eyes for a moment.

There was a lot to think about. He would have to go over everything he had learned, examining each event and every detail for hints he had missed. He would have to contemplate all of it deeply, as well.

Of course... Nephis would have to be brought up to speed, too.

Sunny suddenly looked at Cassie.

"These memories... will you show them to Nephis?"

She nodded silently.

A sigh escaped from Sunny's lips.

"...Good."

These scenes were merely a source of information for them.

But for Nephis, they would be something more.

She had lost her father as a young child, after all. As for her mother, Nephis had never met her at all — the only image of Smile of Heaven she had was that of a hollow shell.

Seeing them like Sunny and Cassie had seen them in Orum's memories, young and happy, would mean a lot for Changing Star... the last daughter of the Immortal Flame Clan.

Sunny sighed, feeling a little happy for Nephis.

But also a little envious of her.

After all, there was no one in the world who remembered his own parents. The only image of them that remained was hidden in his own memory, growing more blurry with each year.

Raising from his chair, Sunny threw one last look at Cassie and turned away.

"Rest well, Cas. And... good job. We indeed learned a lot today."

Leaving her chambers, he descended the stairs and exited the Ivory Tower.

Outside, the warcamp of the Sword Army was boiling with activity.

The war raged on.

In fact...

Now that both Domains had descended into Godgrave, it was about to grow much fiercer.