1950 High Sorcerer

Some time later, Sunny let out a shaky breath and sprawled on the floor. His mind felt like it was on fire, and there were a myriad of thoughts swarming in his head.

He had been right!

Using an incarnation to augment a Memory was, indeed, a game changer. The act of fusing with a Memory gave him an entirely new level of understanding of how its enchantments functioned, and how its spellweave caused those enchantments to exist.

It was one thing to see the tapestry of ethereal strings, but experiencing it as a part of himself was completely different.

Before, Sunny could study a weave and make logical conclusions about how its elements functioned, as well as what role each string played in the tapestry. By observing the structure and guiding principles of countless weaves and comparing them to each other, he could deduce the purpose of some of the patterns and weave Memories by recreating them. That was how his career as a sorcerer had started... and he had made great strides since then.

Sunny had steadily increased the repertoire of patterns he could weave. Eventually, he was even able to understand the principles behind these structure of these patterns, which gave him the ability to change and modify them. Finally, he reached a point where he could weave new patterns, and thus create somewhat original enchantments, all by himself.

However, Sunny had always remained blind to the true essence of weaving. He had discerned how many weaves worked, but he never understood why. In other words, he had only observed the guiding principles of weaving without ever knowing the underlying reasons for why they were that way.

His experience as a sorcerer had been purely empirical, lacking the theoretical understanding of the inner workings and causality of the sorcery he practiced. He was an alchemist at best, not a chemist.

Now... all of it could change.

Of course, Sunny had not fathomed the elaborate underlying laws of weaving yet. But he had obtained a tool to observe them now — to personify them now — which meant that, given time, he would be able to comprehend and learn them.

When he did...

A soft chuckle escaped Sunny's lips.

If he did manage to grasp the "why" of weaving instead of only just "how", then he would not need to rely on imitation to create enchantments. He would not need a repertoire of weaves and patterns anymore — because he would be able to solve any problem by simply knowing the rules of solving it.

Of course, that would not make Sunny an omnipotent sorcerer in an instant. After all, having the tools necessary to solve a problem was not the same as mastering them. Otherwise, people would have been able to resolve... well... something terribly complicated in mathematics immediately after formulating the rules of arithmetic.

To his shame, Sunny did not know enough about mathematics to come up with an example.

'Why am I even thinking about that?'

Right... he was thinking about it because he had decided to rest a little after his brain almost melted as a result of experiencing the fusion with Silver Bell.

Still.

He had rested enough, already. Hadn't he?

Sitting up, Sunny shook his head energetically... and summoned the Extraordinary Rock.

"Let's see what mysteries you're hiding!"

Sunny did not say that. The Extraordinary Rock said that.

But in the next moment, Sunny had become the Extraordinary Rock.

Immediately, he shuddered.

Somewhere far away, the Lord of Shadows slammed into a pillar while walking out of the Nameless Temple. Elsewhere, a hidden shadow let out a frustrated sigh, making Rain stir a little in her sleep.

'Let's continue!'

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Sometime later, Aiko returned to the basement, carrying a tray of food. Her boss was sprawled on the floor in a disheveled state, staring at the ceiling with glassy eyes.

She cautiously nudged him with the edge of her shoe.

"Hey, boss. Uh... you're alive?"

Sunny turned his head and looked at her with a frown.

"Which me are you asking? Also, define the meaning of alive. Also... define the meaning of you."

He blinked a couple of times, then shook his head.

"Never mind. Yes, I'm alive. But what are you doing here?"

Aiko let out a sigh and put the tray on the floor near him.

"Here, have some food. I thought you'd be hungry."

Sunny tilted his head a little.

"Huh? Why would I be hungry?"

The petite girl shrugged.

"I mean... you've been locked in the basement for three days without ever stepping out..."

He stared at her for a few moments, then looked down at the food.

It did smell very appetizing...

"It's been three days already? Wow. That's crazy."

Pulling the tray closer, Sunny grabbed the nearest plate and shoved a spoonful of fragrant soup into his mouth.

"Has Nephis returned to the camp, by any chance?"

Aiko watched him eat with a dubious expression, then shook her head.

"Not yet. She's still en route... inspecting the extermination outposts or some such, from what I hear. She'll probably be here in a couple more days."

Sunny nodded.

"Alright. Let me know when that happens... I'll just stay here in the basement until then."

Then, thinking about it, he suddenly pierced her with an intense gaze.

"Wait. How's our war profiteering business coming along?"

The petite girl flinched.

"What?! What war profiteering? There's no war profiteering whatsoever happening here! Just a... a completely benign, officially sanctioned Memory redistribution program, for the glory and benefit of the great Sword Army..."

Sunny waved a hand.

"Yes, yes. Whatever. You should already have at least a small stockpile of Memories in inventory, right? Waiting to be... redistributed. Lend them to me for a few days. Oh, also! Tell the Fire Keepers that since I have free time, I can modify some Memories for them, free of charge. There should be at least a few of them still in the camp, right?"

Aiko blinked.

"I refuse."

Sunny froze for a moment.

"What? Why?"

She crossed her arms and scowled sternly.

"Free of charge? What's that? Our services are both exclusive and top-notch, so why should we provide them for free? Dream on!"

Sunny stared at the petite girl for a few moments, then waved a hand.

"Fine, whatever. Just get me some Memories — the more, the better!"

Grinning in satisfaction, Aiko told Sunny to enjoy his meal and flew out of the basement... literally.

He smiled.

"Good..."

Being banished from the Spell, he couldn't directly transfer or receive Memories. Each had to be modified slightly before he could give them away or claim ownership — if the other party was willing, of course.

So, it would actually take some effort on Sunny's part to get the Memories from Aiko.

It was worth it, however, because if he did...

He would be able to augment and study them freely, instantly gaining more fuel for his current research. Aiko's uncompromising avarice aside, Sunny should have been paying the Fire Keepers for free access to their soul arsenals, instead...

But, no matter.

He hungrily attacked the tray of food, grinning from ear to ear.

'I've made good progress, already.'

In a day or two more, he would probably be ready to put his new knowledge into practice and test the first results of his recent breakthrough.

Therefore, it would be time to weave some Memories...