1958 Practice Run

Sunny had a lot to consider.

He wanted to give Rain the best chance of, if not thriving, then at least standing on her own in the war between Song and Valor. The problem was that there were only a handful of individuals in the world who could stand their ground in the sweltering hell of Godgrave.

The rest of them — the Awakened soldiers, the Ascended officers, even the Transcendent generals — were really out of their depth. They were not meant to be here, in the middle of a harrowing Death Zone, and they were definitely not meant to spill each other's blood for the benefit of two callous Sovereigns.

If even Saints could not guarantee their survival in the war, then mere Awakened like Rain could only rely on luck and good fortune to survive. Of course, Rain had her faithful shadow companion to keep her safe... but she did not quite know how far her teacher was willing to go to protect her.

It was so by design. Sunny had intentionally made himself look eccentric and unreliable in front of her, so that she wasn't stifled in his vast shadow.

Still, he could think of a few things that would help Rain in the days and months to come.

'Let's see...'

He thought back to his experiences on the Forgotten Shore, and the Memories he had relied on to survive there.

In a sense, Godgrave and the Forgotten Shore were somewhat alike. The latter was a dire crucible in which the Dreamers of the Dark City had been forged into unparalleled warriors... those of them who survived, of course. Even Aiko was someone far more dangerous and capable than an average Awakened was, despite her outwardly whimsical and cowardly appearance.

The former was much the same for the soldiers of the two great armies. Those of them who were destined to survive would come out much more fearsome and stalwart on the other side.

So, Sunny could very well look to his own experience to determine what Rain needed the most at the moment.

The nature of the war was also changing. Before, during its early stage, the dangers his sister had faced were predominantly those posed by the Dream Realm itself. The scarlet jungle, the incandescent white abyss above, the hordes of powerful Nightmare Creatures that her weapons could barely harm...

But things would be different now. The two Domains had already established themselves on the bones of the dead deity, which meant that one day very soon, the clashes between their soldiers would become far more frequent. There would be bloody skirmishes, devious ambushes, and large-scale battle fought under the grey veil of clouds.

Fighting against humans was very different from fighting against Nightmare Creatures, especially if Rain was unfortunate enough to face a Master or a Saint on the battlefield.

...Killing humans was also very different from killing Nightmare Creatures.

Sunny himself was not even sure how he would handle the next stage of the Domain war due to that.

No, he could not even call it the Domain War anymore. Now that the House of Night had been wiped out, and the government had been forced to break its neutrality, there was no party uninvolved in the war — the whole world was dragged into the conflict between the King of Swords and the Queen of Worms. Both of the worlds, really... so, it was a World War.

Or a Realm War, to be precise.

He sighed.

Rain's soul arsenal certainly had quality — he had forged her bow himself, after all, and gifted her the Puppeteer's Shroud. There was also the quiver of arrows and the little shadow snake, which could serve her as a melee weapon. However, the collection of her tools and Memories was lacking in quantity...

Mostly because Sunny had been a little negligent in his role as a surrogate replacement of the Nightmare Spell.

'So, what does Rain need the most?'

There were several areas that needed improvement.

The first and the most obvious one was her lacking ability to slay enemies of higher Ranks. Most Nightmare Creatures of Godgrave were Transcendent, so many Awakened were physically incapable of harming them.

Of course, local abominations were also strange, since they were born weaker than most creatures of their Rank, then matured and gained true strength in a matter of days — at least on the surface. That was how the two great armies had been able to push the scarlet jungle back, slaying these Nightmare Creatures before the enemy could come into their natural power.

Nevertheless, Rain could use a weapon that was capable of piercing the hides of even mature abominations with at least some degree of ease.

Considering that her weapon of choice was a bow, that meant arrows.

Sunny glanced at the two black arrows, then shook his head.

If even Aiko wasn't safe handling them, Rain wouldn't be, either.

The second area that needed improvement was Rain's defense.

The Puppeteer's Shroud was a good armor, but it wasn't the most durable of them. Its main benefits were that it was light, sufficiently resilient, and protected one's mind. Better yet, it had an invigorating effect on someone's mind as well, helping its master deal better with mental fatigue — which was perhaps the most valuable gift Sunny could have given Rain in a dreadful war.

That said, he had not anticipated that she would keep ending up in the midst of a melee so often when transferring the Puppeteer's Shroud. Wasn't she supposed to be an archer?! Why was his sister constantly fighting side by side with that girl, Tamar of Sorrow?

Sunny grimaced and shook his head.

Then again, he had been supposed to be a stealthy assassin, too. Life never went the way one wanted it to go...

The Puppeteer's Shroud had seemed sufficient at the start of the war. But now that the two great armies were about to clash, Rain would be going into battle against humans... against Awakened. She would be exposed to countless Aspects, and those were varied and unpredictable.

So, she needed to both bolster her overall defenses and gain resistances against a varied array of attacks, from relatively simple elemental one to more strange and sophisticated forms of harm.

Lastly, there was the third area... perhaps the most important one.

It was utility and tools.

Sunny had used the Midnight Shard and the Puppeteer's Shroud well on the Forgotten Shore, but if anyone asked which Memories had saved his life the most there... he would have to say that they were the Endless Spring and other utility Memories, like the Dark Wing, Neph's Evertwine, or even the Prowling Thorn.

In fact, if Rain had the Dark Wing during her days as a laborer on a road crew, she would not have ended up almost dying in one of the canyons of the Moonriver Plain. Of course, she had not Awakened yet back then, so it was a moot point.

Sunny hesitated for a while, looking around the crowded warehouse.

Then, he nodded.

'Arrows, defensive equipment, utility Memories.'

He had his work cut out for him.