1964 Nice Experience

Nephis was walking at the head of the column of tired soldiers, just as pure and radiant as always. Her silver hair seemed to shine in the rays of diffused light that fell through the veil of clouds above, and her slender figure was outlined beautifully by the soft fabric of her white tunic.

Sunny blinked.

'She was not kidding...'

It seemed that Nephis had indeed given up on wearing armor. She would usually be clad in a suit of lustrous steel, looking valiant and knightly, but today, the armor was replaced by a light tunic and leather sandals. It was a much softer look, but also much more eye-catching.

Sunny was not going to complain, though.

The Fire Keepers, who were walking behind her, all looked beaten down by heat, but Nephis seemed fresh and clean, as if she had not spent many days traveling across the perilous surface of Godgrave.

He tilted his head in confusion after noticing beads of water in her hair.

'Why is she so clean, though?'

It was a mystery.

The soldiers around Sunny exploded with boisterous cheers, but he just watched her silently.

Nephis seemed to have sensed his gaze, though, turning her head to look back.

Her lips twisted into a beautiful smile.

The cheers grew louder.

Suddenly, someone grabbed Sunny by the shoulder and shouted into his ear with indescribable excitement:

"H—hey! Did you see that?! She smiled at me!"

Immediately, another voice assaulted his other ear:

"What are you talking about, fool?! Why would Lady Changing Star smile at you? Obviously, she smiled at me!"

Then, there was a third voice:

"No, no, it was definitely me!"

The soldiers were bursting with excitement.

Sunny glanced at them with a grin.

"Yeah. I did see that."

But of course, he knew that they were all wrong.

Sunny looked back to where Nephis was entering the camp.

'She smiled at me.'

It was only for him.

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After seeing Nephis arrive, Sunny quietly returned to the Ivory Island. Now that Anvil had gone to oversee the defense of the Vanishing Lake and Morgan was away to defend Bastion, she was the only member of the royal family in the main camp of the Sword Army — therefore, it was going to take a bit of time before she was free to return to her Citadel and rest.

In the meantime, Sunny could prepare to welcome her home.

As if by magic, his fatigue seemed to be gone. Instead, Sunny felt full of energy — if not for the occasional yawn, no one would have suspected that he was running on fumes.

'Now, what should I do...'

Sunny longed to spend some romantic time with Nephis, but unfortunately for him, Godgrave wasn't brimming with romantic opportunities. Added to that was the fact that he only vaguely knew what people were supposed to do while courting each other.

The basics were pretty simple... taking walks together, watching movies or theater plays, dining in fine establishments. Visiting museums, going to amusement parks — whatever that was — and attending concerts. Any kind of activity that could allow the couple to spend time together in a pleasant environment and enjoy nice experiences together.

But there was nowhere pleasant to stroll in Godgrave, no theaters, and no dining establishments. No museums, no amusement parks, and no concerts. Most of the time Sunny and Nephis spent together was dedicated to battling hideous Nightmare Creatures, and the experiences they shared, while... sort of nice... were not exactly romantic.

He let out a sigh.

'Damnation.'

Sunny was really limited in what he could do to show his affection. He could make her delicious food, give her thorough massages, and listen to what she had to say.

Which was fine, but he also felt like he was missing something.

Sunny's eyes suddenly widened, and he slapped himself on the forehead.

'Gifts! I missed gifts... damn it, I'm an idiot!'

He should have made her a Memory, as well. Why didn't he think about it before?

It was too late now...

Shaking his head in dejection, Sunny raided the Brilliant Emporium's pantry, then used Shadow Step to teleport to the Ivory Tower and got busy doing one of the few things he could do — preparing a sumptuous meal for Nephis.

She would have grown tired of field rations in the past two weeks, and they had not been eating well during the march to the Vanishing Lake either. So, she would definitely be happy to taste something delicious.

He chuckled while cooking.

'Come to think of it... I've been known to taste wonderful myself.'

That was not an empty boast. Sunny was quite sure that he was truly delicious — otherwise, countless Nightmare Creatures would not have tried to feast on his flesh despite his modest stature and slender build.

If it wasn't because of his refined taste, then why else?

Sunny was so focused on cooking that he did not hear the light steps behind him. It was only when a familiar voice resounded from behind that he flinched.

"What are you laughing about?"

Sunny froze for a moment, then slowly turned around.

Nephis was standing behind him, smiling faintly. Up close, she looked even more enthralling than at the gates of the warcamp, making his heart race.

His heart was racing for another reason, too —because that question could not have come at the worse time!

Sunny gulped, then answered honestly... the only way he could:

"That, uh... I was just thinking to myself. That I should be pretty delicious... taste-wise, I mean."

Neph's smile widened a little, and her striking grey eyes glistened in the sunlight.

She remaining silent for a few moments, and then said in her usual even tone:

"…I'll be the judge of that."

With that, Nephis placed her hands on Sunny's shoulders, and pulled him into a deep kiss.

He wrapped his hands around her slender waist, feeling quite pleased with his answer.

'What can I say? I guess it's true...'

It seemed that they were going to pick up right where they had left off when Anvil so unceremoniously interrupted them on the shore of the Vanishing Lake.

Which suited Sunny quite fine.