2034 : What Are Friends For

Sunny stared at Cassie silently.

What the hell did she mean, anything strange?

Suddenly, manytroubling possibilities surfaced in his mind. There were all kinds of Attributes out there in the world, after all… the mind hex of the Soul Devourer had also been akin to an Attribute, for example.

Rain had not been supposed to possess three entire Attributes, anyway. The [Mark of Shadows] had come from him… was the third Attribute foreign to her, as well?

Finally, he shrugged.

"Strange? I mean, she is known as That Crazy Girl back in Ravenheart for a reason. But no, not really. Rain is… surprisingly normal. Shockingly normal, even — she is more or less the only normal person I know."

He frowned.

"What exactly do you mean by strange?"

Cassie contemplated her answer for some time before speaking.

"I'm not sure myself… have you seen some inexplicable things happening around her, or patterns of strange events? Like sudden changes in weather, plants wilting or blooming unexpectedly, or maybe Nightmare Creatures reacting more strongly than expected to her presence?"

Sunny scratched the back of his head.

No, really, what was she going on about?

Eventually, he said hesitantly:

"Well… come to think of it… a huge storm did appear out of nowhere when she was Awakening. Why?"

Cassie remained silent for a moment.

"That third Attribute I spoke about, it is quite unusual. I'll need more time to truly fathom it, but what I do know is that her soul is connected to the world much more deeply than that of a mere Awakened should be… or maybe it is the other way around? So, that storm might not have gathered by coincidence or as a response to her unusual Awakening. It could have been a way the world was responding to the intensity of her emotions."

Sunny blinked a couple of times.

"That kind of sounds like… presence?"

The world had a way of responding to Saints.

However, Rain was definitely not a Saint.

Cassie nodded.

"Indeed. In fact, I suspect that Rain already has a presence, much like a Transcendent would — it is just that her soul is so much weaker than that of a Saint that we have not felt her presence yet. Similarly… I also suspect that she already has a source element."

She remained silent for a few moments, as if doubting herself, and then added in a hesitant tone:

"To be honest, it felt like… all elements are her source element? Or maybe it's the other way around. Can a human soul itself be a source element? Gods… sorry, but I am really confused. All I can say right now is that her soul is very unique, deeply connected to the world, and inexplicably exhibiting traits similar to those of a Transcendent despite being properly weak and fully contained within her body, like any Awakened soul should."

Sunny stared at her silently.

Then, he stared some more.

"...No matter how much you are confused, I am confused more."

Cassie chuckled, then sighed.

"Don't worry. I'll figure it out soon… sure, it sounds strange, but consider some other innate Attributes. I am sure those would have seemed bizarre to us if we glimpsed them for the first time without the Spell providing a comprehensive, convenient, and concise explanation."

Sunny thought about it.

Well, yes… if he looked at it like that, the innate Attributes of people with Aspects of higher Ranks would seem quite bizarre from the outside. Like his own [Fated] or Neph's [Dreamspawn].

Compared to those, the strangeness happening to Rain's soul seemed almost mild.

In any case, for now, the only thing he could do was wait for Cassie to decipher the full meaning... and worry.

Once the interpretation was complete, he would finally be able to finish the Memory bracelet he had been weaving for Rain.

She would be ready to decide what to do about her Flaw by then, as well…

Suddenly, Sunny felt a cold chill run down his spine.

'Her emotions might be able to affect the weather, huh?'

That was... a truly terrible trait to possess, here in Godgrave...

\*\*\*

Rain did not quite remember how she found her way to her tent after being returned to the camp of the Song Army.

Only her tent wasn't there anymore.

The funeral rite had been long finished, and the army was preparing to march. Someone from the cohort — Tamar, most likely — had already taken down Rain's tent. Usually they handled their own equipment, but since one member of the cohort was strangely absent, she would have done it to save time.

Speaking of Tamar, the Legacy girl was standing near the smoldering campfire, giving last instructions to the leaders of the cohorts comprising the centuria.

Noticing Rain, she frowned and sent them away.

"Where have you been?"

Rain stared at her friend numbly, then waved a hand dismissively.

"Just running errands around the camp. Nothing… important."

Her lies were usually more thoughtful and better acted out, but this time, Tamar saw through the clumsy attempt at deception easily.

Her frown deepened.

"Rani, what's the matter? Are you alright?"

Rain simply looked at her, wondering…

Could she just tell Tamar the truth?

Surely, not. A Flaw was something that most Awakened kept a secret from everyone — especially a Flaw like her own, which could be fatal if it fell into the hands of an enemy.

But, on the other hand, how could she not tell Tamar?

Tamar was her friend, companion, and captain. They were both soldiers fighting in a deadly war… Rain relied on Tamar to have her back, and Tamar did the same.

But Rain couldn't protect Tamar's back anymore. How could she keep it a secret?

She forced out a smile.

"Listen, Tamar…"

How was she going to explain it?

Rain shifted from one foot to another awkwardly.

"I thought about it for a while. And I decided… to become a pacifist…"

That was both as good and as terrible of an explanation as any.

The Legacy girl stared her down with a dark expression.

Then, she raised an eyebrow slightly.

"Have you lost your mind?"

'Damn it, damn it, damn it…'

Rain took a deep breath.

What else was she supposed to say?

"Ah, screw it. Actually, I attained my Flaw. My Flaw is that I can't kill anyone, or anything… not even Nightmare Creatures. There! I said it!"

Tamar scowled.

No, but why was she frowning and scowling so much? She was going to get wrinkles! Spoiling that face would be a travesty!

Failing to distract herself with these childish thoughts, Rain mustered her courage and prepared for the inevitable rebuke.

But Tamar just said evenly:

"So what?"

Rain blinked.

"Huh? I said…"

But the Legacy girl interrupted her.

"Yeah, I heard what you said. So what? If you can't kill things, don't kill them. Aim for their eyes, knee joints, sword arms, and any other appendage that doesn't seem vital. With your miraculous archery skills, that should not be a problem, right?"

Rain stared at her silently for a moment, then said slowly:

"...Right."

Tamar nodded curtly.

"Then do that. I'll kill them for you."

With that, she turned around and walked away to prepare the centuria for the departure.

Rain was left standing near the campfire alone, utterly stumbled.

…And utterly touched.

Was it that simple?

Eventually, a pale smile illuminated her face.

'...I'll kill them for you.'

That was possibly the most heartwarming thing that anyone had ever told her…