2045 : Professional Exchange

Even on the last day before attempting to forge the soulbound sword, Sunny did not feel completely confident. Therefore, he decided to try a far-fetched gamble — if things went well, he could gain an unexpected spark of inspiration. But even if there was no result, it was still something that he had been curious about for a long time.

He wanted to observe the forgemasters of Clan Valor while they created Memories.

After all, depending on how things went in the near future, Clan Valor could very well cease to exist. It would be a real shame if he had never even glimpsed the secrets of their craft, considering that they were the closest thing he had to colleagues.

He knew a few things about the spellsmiths of Valor, of course.

For example, he knew that they were not weavers, but rather a group of individuals whose Aspects allowed them to create Memories — some coming from the Valor bloodline, some adopted into the Great Clan as valued retainers.

It made sense, really. It was known that family members often — although not always — shared Aspects of similar nature. That was especially true for the Great Clans, whose scions inherited the same lineage Attribute… in the case of Valor, it was the divine lineage of War God, who was also the deity of craft and progress.

Granted, not all members of the branch families of Valor had it. Nevertheless, there were enough people with Aspects that had to do with crafting among them that Valor had been the dominant force in that field ever since the Nightmare Spell descended.

Therefore, it was not surprising that they had put a lot of effort into systematically recruiting similar talents, both through patronage and marriage, aiming to achieve a functional monopoly on all things having to do with forging Memories.

Sunny also knew that while the enchanters of Valor were inferior to him in many regards, there were also areas where they were superior. For example, they knew far more about runic sorcery than he did. They were also able to create Echoes, which he had not quite mastered yet.

So, his hopes were high.

The problem, however, was that the royal clan — quite understandably — guarded its secrets close. Not just anyone could meet the forgemasters, let alone observe them as they worked.

So, Sunny needed Nephis to pull strings and get him an appointment.

Fortunately enough, the forgemasters had followed their King to Godgrave… which also made sense, considering that this was where their skills were needed the most. And since they were too precious to send to the frontline, most of them were right here, in the main camp of the Sword Army.

The useless title of the Knight of Valor Sunny had received was also of some help… after all, it meant that he was technically not an outsider. More than that, he was the Memory Purveyor of the Fire Keepers, and Fire Keepers were technically a part of the Valor forces.

It was just that his knightly title was a sham, while Nephis and her warriors were pariahs in the royal clan. The enmity the elders of Clan Valor felt for her was only subtle enough to not be blatant.

However, the Sword Domain was currently at war. Here in Godgrave, Neph's authority was at its peak, while the influence of the elders was severely diminished. So, it did not take her a lot of effort to arrange a visit to the forge.

In the morning, as they walked toward the Valor Keep, Sunny couldn't contain his curiosity and asked:

"Was it very hard to get me in?"

Nephis remained silent for a moment, then shook her head lightly.

"Not really."

Sunny was a little surprised. He would have imagined that there would be at least some resistance, which was why he had not attempted to approach the forgemasters before.

"Huh. How come?"

She lingered with the answer.

"Well… I guess we have a kind of ally among the enchanters. In a way."

That sounded a little mysterious, but Sunny decided to let it go.

Countless gazes were following them as they walked across the camp. Nephis received fervent and admiring glances, while Sunny… not so much. Still, it wasn't as bad as it had been before — after all, he was a known entity now. Plus, the name of the Brilliant Emporium had already spread among the members of the Sword Army thanks to Aiko.

And, even if Sunny wanted to stay modest — which he did not — he and Nephis were simply too striking of a pair. It was difficult to dislike beautiful people.

"Wait…"

There was a reverberating sound of a horn, and everyone froze in place. Sunny and Nephis froze, too. A few moments later, the world suddenly turned unbearably bright, with every reflective surface in sight shining like a miniature sun.

The veil of clouds was broken.

Sunny sighed inwardly.

'Another Cloudbreak…'

Luckily, this time, he had managed to turn his head and look at Nephis in time. So, now, he could at least enjoy the view. The last time, he had been stuck staring at a wall for several hours.

Mercifully, this Cloudbreak had turned out to be a short one. Less than an hour later, the blinding radiance dimmed, and the frozen camp came alive again. By now, people were so used to these events that no one seemed too disturbed... there were very few casualties, if any, too.

Sunny stretched, massaged his shoulders, and followed Nephis to the gates of the Valor Keep.

The last time he had visited it… was in Cassie's memories, to interrogate Master Orum. Luckily, today, they were heading for the different part of the stone castle.

Passing a wide courtyard, the approached a large building with smoke coming from its many chimneys. Sunny had expected to hear the ringing of hammers falling on steel, but it was strangely quiet. A moment later, he noticed runes carved into the stones near the doors and windows of the forge, recognizing them as a part of a sound-suppressing enchantment.

'...Understandable.'

To be fair, he himself had been considering creating a silencing Memory after forging the small knife yesterday. Even his Transcendent ears could not withstand the thunderous clamor of his hammering.

Well, and... a Memory like that had some other uses, as well.

Chasing the unnecessary thoughts out of his head, Sunny threw one last curious glance at the exterior of the forge and went inside.