2047 : Infusers and Forgers

Alice gave him a curious glance, then continued to carve arrowheads with a small smile. The enchanted knife she was holding moved nimbly, slicing the bones of Corrupted abominations like butter.

"There is no single method we use to enchant items — all Aspects are unique, after all. However, over the decades, a sort of unified classification was developed to make sense of it all. Well… or so I've been told. I have only joined Valor a few years ago."

She glanced at Master Snow, as if expecting him to pitch in, but then sighed and continued herself:

"Warriors of Valor are not the only ones who get to have fancy titles, you know? Sir Sunless. Just like you guys are called Squires, Knights, and Paladins, we enchanters have a hierarchy consisting of three ranks, as well. Granted, ours have nothing to do with the actual Soul Rank of a person, but are instead based on the nature of one's Aspect."

Sunny scratched the back of his head.

"I am already a Knight of Valor, though. If I were to receive an enchanter title from the royal clan, what would people call me?"

Master Alice suddenly let out a laugh, then covered her mouth with a hand and glanced at Sunny with wide eyes.

A few moments later, she forced out an apologetic smile.

"Ah yes… of course! You are a brave and valiant Knight, Sir Sunless. No doubt about it. Still — enchanters are much rarer than warriors. So, we are held in high regard. There are many of us who feel at home on a battlefield, actually, but our duty in the forge is more important. Therefore, the titles we receive in the forge technically take precedence. We don't use them much, though."

Sunny smiled and turned his head to look at Nephis.

"Did you hear? Enchanters seem to be more valuable than warriors."

She glanced at him evenly, then asked in a neutral tone:

"What about healers, Master Alice?"

The petite woman raised an eyebrow.

"Oh… well, healers are the most precious, of course! A talented enchanter might be worth their own weight in gold, but a powerful healer is simply priceless."

Nephis continued to stare at Sunny with an aloof expression.

The corner of her lips, however, curled upward ever-so-slightly, betraying a hint of smugness.

'...Cute.'

Master Alice, meanwhile, continued:

"In any case, our version of the Squire, the Knight, and the Paladin is the Infuser, the Forger, and the Spellsmith. I mentioned these titles from the least prestigious to the most venerated — however, they are not mutually exclusive. A person can be both an Infuser and a Forger, for example. Oh, there are also Scribes — those who have mastered the Runes. That guy over there…"

She pointed her carving knife at Master Snow:

"...is technically a Scribe Knight, as well as a Spellsmith. I, on the other hand, am both an Infuser and a Forger — but since all these titles are a bit convoluted, we are simply called Forgemaster Snow and Forgemaster Alice. Now, you might have already guessed the meaning of these titles, but let me explain."

Sunny was listening to the petite woman intently. This was not exactly vital information, but he was still quite interested to learn about the inner workings of the storied Clan Valor. There was no other group quite like it anywhere out there, after all, and no force as fearsome among the human factions.

It was fascinating that the true strength of Valor lay not in their martial prowess, but in their technology and craft.

Master Alice continued to carve an arrowhead out of Transcendent bone as she explained:

"Infusers make up the bulk of the enchanters of Valor. Most of them are retainers like me, too… our power comes in many forms, but at its core lies the ability to permanently enhance and augment inanimate objects. Make weapons sharper, armor more durable, walls less likely to crumble. Or, alternatively, infuse inanimate objects with special qualities — for example, infuse an arrowhead with the quality of exploding on impact."

She waved the half-carved arrowhead in the air and smiled.

Sunny nodded.

He understood the concept… Samara of his Evacuation Army cohort had been somewhat of an Infuser, in a sense — that was why her bullets could slay powerful Nightmare Creatures. Only, in her case, the infusion of charged essence had not been permanent, lasting only a few days.

He sighed.

Maybe that would have changed if Samara had been given a chance to become a Master.

"That does not make these enhanced items into Memories, though."

Master Alice nodded.

"I'm getting to it! Right… the work we Infusers do might not seem as impressive as that of Forgers and Spellsmiths, but it is still very important. Not the least of all because infused items often endure the Runes better, and can therefore be augmented even further by the Scribes."

That also made complete sense to Sunny. He already knew that different materials possessed different arcane capacity — some could withstand immense spellweaves crafted from powerful soul shards and potent essence, some were so mundane that they would disintegrate under the strain of the simplest enchantment.

"So what do the Forgers do?"

The petite woman looked at him with a smile.

"Just what the name suggests, of course! We are masters of forgery."

Finishing carving the arrowhead, she raised it in one palm, and took an uncut fragment of bone with another hand. Sunny sensed a subtle flow of soul essence, and then both of the woman's hands ignited with a soft emerald glow.

Bathed in that glow, the rough fragment of bone slowly melted and changed shape, turning into a perfect copy of the carved arrowhead.

Master Alice compared the two with a discerning eye, nodded in satisfaction, and picked up another arrowhead — this one forged from lustrous metal and engraved with a beautiful filigree of runes.

"Forgers possess Abilities that allow them to copy or replicate items — either in their entirety or only certain traits. Some can duplicate weapons, for example, some can copy a quality of one weapon to another. There are far fewer Forgers than there are Infusers, and many of them come from the minor branches of the Valor family."

She lingered for a moment, and then added:

"That said, Forgers are not at all as powerful and precious as Spellsmiths… and yet, they are perhaps the most important cog in this miraculous machine. Do you understand why?"

Nephis tilted her head in confusion, but Sunny's eyes suddenly glistened.

"Members of the Valor family can transfer a quality of one item to another?"

The petite woman nodded and let out a chuckle.

"Indeed. So, if a suitable Forger takes a Memory weapon and transfers the quality of [being a Memory] to an ordinary weapon that had been prepared by an Infuser and a Scribe… guess what happens?"