2051 Guiding Hand

As far as Sunny could tell, the Spellsmiths of Valor believed that things were similar to humans — already containing an infinite amount of potentials that simply waited to be realized.

In the case of modern humans, the catalyst of this change was the Nightmare Spell.

In the case of inanimate objects… it was the Spellsmith.

Such an explanation was somewhat logical. However, Sunny was not buying one detail — the fact that becoming a Memory was closer to a flawless form for an object than its original nature.

That sounded too far-fetched. Sure, a Memory was a very convenient form for a weapon to take, but it was not exactly better or more true to what a weapon was supposed to be. Just different.

That also pointed to a broader problem with Master Snow's explanation. There were countless paths for any given thing to improve, so the potential change initiated by the Spellsmith would almost have to be random. And randomness was the enemy of design… a smith who could not control the result of their work to at least some degree was not worth being called one.

It went against what Sunny had observed the forgemasters could accomplish, as well. Morgan's Warbow had not seemed like a product of random growth, but rather like a masterpiece of human genius.

So, there had to be some kind of guidance involved.

Humans did not unseal Aspects randomly, either. There was cause and effect to what powers they received — their talent, their will, their circumstances, their accomplishments in conquering the First Nightmare. A person and their Aspect fit together like two pieces of the same puzzle, and the puzzle was complete with the third piece… their Flaw.

AS if fated for each other.

So, if Sunny had to say who or what guided Awakened through the sea of endless possibilities, he would have to say that there were two forces involved. One was their fate, and the other one was the Nightmare Spell.

Was the Spell manipulating fate, or simply going with its flow? He did not know.

Sunny lingered for a few moments.

"You said that Spellsmiths serve as guides of that improvement, as well?"

Master Snow nodded.

"Yes. It is hard to explain with words, actually… well, anyone would have trouble explaining how their Aspect functions, exactly, wouldn't they? Plus, while our Aspects often share similar traits, they are all different, in the end. Imagine it as… sensing imperfections within a weapon, as well as the countless paths it has to grow. Once you give power to the weapon's desire to improve, it undertakes to change itself blindly — however, it can't get far by trying to rush in all directions at the same time. The Spellsmith has to guide it to a certain path and keep it from wandering off the path, so that the change becomes profound."

So, countless existing possibilities were discarded in favor of a narrow, but far-reaching avenue of growth — with a Spellsmith like Master Snow deciding which direction was the most promising.

He grimaced.

"It sounds like a simple thing to do, but I assure you, it's anything but. Even though the source of change is the weapon itself, the Spellsmith has to possess a strong will and a clear focus to achieve a good result. More importantly, the Spellsmith has to possess a wealth of knowledge and understanding on all things, starting from the material composition of metals, both mundane and mystical, to far more obscure disciplines. After all, how well you understand the possible paths to improvement and how many of the endless number of them you can discern depends on your ability to recognize their existence."

Master Snow smiled.

"It's both an art and a science… but more art than science, in the end. So, one's work has to be inspired."

Sunny considered his words for a bit.

Now, things made more sense.

It was not that the weapon itself chose to become a Memory because a Memory was the more flawless form for it. It was the Spellsmith who chose the form of a Memory,because they believed it to be superior — an unsurprising view, considering how dependent all Awakened were on their Memories, and all humanity was on the Nightmare Spell.

Sunny smiled.

"I'm looking forward to seeing your demonstration."

Master Snow shrugged absentmindedly.

"Sure. Just… you can watch, but don't ask questions. As I said, the process demands absolute focus."

Sunny nodded politely.

After a while, Master Alice finished infusing the scale armor, and everything was ready for the final part of the forging.

The cuirass, as well as all other elements that had been crafted in Infused earlier, were placed in the middle of a large runic circle. Seven shimmering soul shards were positioned around it, each in its own node, while Master Snow knelt and placed his hand on the boundary of the circle.

As he closed his eyes, the runic circle started to emanate a pale glow.

'Curious.'

Sunny was not a great master of runic sorcery, but he did know a few things. From the looks of it, the circle was a rather simple one, meant to channel the Spellsmith's Aspect and add the power of the seven soul shards to his own. It had been created for convenience, not out of necessity.

After all, Master Snow would not have been able to juggle seven soul shards with one hand while keeping the other on the armor.

The fact that the runic circle was shining meant that soul essence was flowing through the conduits, which in turn meant that the Spellsmith was channeling his Aspect.

As the process of enchanting continued, Master Snow raised a hand and directed it at the Infused armor. Strings of golden light seemed to coil around his fingers, and then shot forward, each finding its way to between the tightly interlaid scales.

A moment later, Sunny sensed that the armor was starting to change.

There was an outward change, with the scales slowly beginning to assume a metallic sheen. But there was an invisible change, as well — or rather, visible to all but Sunny.

He shifted his gaze to the Infused cuirass.

His eyes narrowed a little when he saw what was happening inside it.