2055 : Soul Forge

Sunny had considered many ways to bind a Memory to Neph's soul. Eventually, he had come to believe that the most convenient way to establish a bond between the sword and her soul — at least among those available to him — would be to forge it simultaneously in the real world in her Soul Sea.

Sadly, he could not enter it — a fact that had made him envy Mordret for the first time in his life.

So, after contemplating for a long time, Sunny had decided on the next big thing…

He was going to reforge the Dream Blade simultaneously in the real world and in Neph's dream.

Master Sunless was in the forge, but the Lord of Shadows had called upon Nightmare and used the tenebrous steed to enter her dreams. The runic circle Cassie had taught him how to draw was meant to make the dream more malleable, give Nephis more control over it, and keep her asleep for a long as was needed to finish the forging.

And Nephis… currently, Nephis was dreaming of her Soul Sea.

Sunny enjoyed the breathtaking beauty of it for a while. His own dark and lightless soul had its own charm, yes… but this world of golden radiance and pure sunlight was simply wondrous to behold.

Like heaven.

Something told Sunny that it could be quite inhospitable when invited uninvited, though. Otherwise, the Soul Stealer would not have perished within it so miserably after Nephis annihilated Twilight.

Seven brilliant suns, a vast expanse of radiant water below. And the beautiful island drifting in the air between the two.

It seemed that the replica of the Tower of Hope had appeared in Neph's Soul Sea, just like a replica of the Nameless Temple had appeared in his. Of course, there was no legion of silent shadows to surround it.

Sunny suspected that there was something similar here, however. Perhaps if the seven suns rolled over the horizon, thrusting the calm ocean into the embrace of night, he would see countless stars burning on the velvet background of the black sky — each representing one of the souls inspired by Neph's longing.

They were currently standing at the edge of the island, looking over the golden ocean of light. Nightmare was also here, on the other side of the island… grazing on the emerald grass peacefully. The sight made Sunny feel quite bewildered, since he had never seen his steed eat anything except the bleeding flesh of his enemies before.

Perhaps dream grass was just as tasty.

Sadly, Sunny could not keep him here for long. It was already risky enough to bring Nightmare away from his mark, which had barely been lulled into slumber and could awaken at any moment if left unattended.

Nephis looked at him silently for a few moments, then smiled.

"So… it seems that you are the man of my dreams, then, Lord Shadow."

Sunny gave her an elegant bow.

"As long as you'll have me, Lady Changing Star. It's an honor."

She chuckled melodiously, then looked at him seriously.

"So, what do I need to do, then?"

He walked closer to her, took one of her hands gently, and placed it on his chest.

Then, looking Nephis in the eyes, Sunny said:

"Please give me some of your fire."

Nephis expression changed subtly, but then, she activated her Dormant Ability. Her hand ignited with a soft white radiance, and a wonderful warmth spread through Sunny's body.

And with it, a powerful torrent of her essence.

Behind him, his three shadows rose from the ground, turning into identical copies of him. Each manifested four additional hands, ready to start weaving strings of radiant essence.

The seven suns bathed them in radiant light.

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In the real world, the shattered sword shimmered on the bone anvil. It suddenly became less substantial, collapsing into a whirlwind of sparks… that was what happened when a Memory was destroyed.

However, this time, Sunny did not let the sparks of light dissipate into nothingness.

Instead, he grasped them, directing their flow according to his will.

At the same time, he thrust his shadow hands into the disappearing image of the sword, preventing its weave from collapsing.

One had to destroy first in order to rebuild.

But Sunny did not want the Dream Blade gone. He wanted to retain its essence while being reborn under his hammer.

While his original body was keeping the Dream Blade in a state between existence and destruction, his avatar fanned the furious white flames burning in the furnace and placed the crucible on them.

The materials needed to create alloy were already inside — the ice of the Winter Beast, the blessed metals, and a few overs.

There was one more step to be made.

Standing above the crucible, Sunny hesitated for a moment, then summoned the simple silver knife he had forged earlier. Raising his hands, he grimaced and sliced his palm open with the knife, then willed himself to bleed.

A stream of crimson blood poured into the crucible, soon turning into ice.

As the crucible heated, it would melt, fusing with the incandescent alloy.

And thus, it would serve as the binding between the various elements of the sword.

Was there a more fitting ingredient to create a Memory than the blood of Weaver?

Sunny was not sure.

He was concentrating on too many tasks at the same time.

Forging the physical vessel of the sword.

Keeping the original blade in the state of being disassembled to its most basic elements, but not quite destroyed.

Weaving strings of essence in Neph's dream…

Each task demanded utmost concentration.

How long would he be able to endure this pressure?

Hopefully, long enough to finish forging the slaying blade.

Suddenly, a soft white radiance poured out of the cut on his palm, and the shallow wound disappeared without a trace.

Sunny allowed himself to be surprised for a fraction of the moment, then concentrated on his task.

Summoning Weaver's Needle, he reached into the collapsing spellweave of the Dream Blade and carefully wove a new string into its intricate pattern…