2089 Fragments of War (26)

A quiet hiss escaped Sunny's mouth as he staggered back, barely escaping the blade of a diamond battleaxe. The Asura's movements were almost too fast to perceive, and its mind was so alien that he was struggling to fathom it with Shadow Dance.

After all, the abominable golems were not living beings in the full sense, let alone sentient. They were suits of runic armor that had been corrupted by… whatever it was that inhabited the ancient stone now, malevolent and full of sinister will.

Still, he could predict the movements of the Asuras to a certain degree by sensing the movements of their shadows. That was how Sunny was able to stay alive and destroy one Great Nightmare Creature after another.

He had slain more Asuras than the rest of the Saints combined… but the battle wasn't over.

Just like the harrowing battle between the King of Swords and Condemnation was not over, raging at the heart of the burning wasteland.

Just a split second after Sunny evaded the blow, his enemy was already raising its hands to deliver another. However, he thrust his great mace forward, striking the enemy in the chest.

A blunt weapon was not exactly meant to deliver thrusting attacks, but Sunny was not intending to deal damage with this one. Instead, he simply pushed the Asura back, using the considerable length of his mace to keep the creature at a distance.

As a result, the diamond axe whistled past his mask, never managing to reach him.

In the next moment, a black chain struck one of the Asura's hands with terrible force and wrapped itself around it.

The chain was produced by using Shadow Manifestation, but unlike usual, it was not moving on its own — the power of manifested shadows was not sufficient to immobilize the Great Nightmare Creatures.

Instead, another incarnation of Sunny was holding the chain, using all the dire strength of a Transcendent Terror to pull the Asura's arm down. Of course, the abomination was much more powerful than Sunny… but it did not have leverage,and neither did it have enough mass to overpower him.

The chain slowed the ancient golem just long enough to create an opening.

Stepping forward, Sunny grasped the shaft of his great mace closer to the middle while pushing its butt down. As a result, he effortlessly raised it over his head…

Then strained what felt like every muscle in his body, empowering them with a generous infusion of essence, while at the same time manipulating his own weight to make it as great as possible — all to perform a picture-perfect overhead blow.

The serpentine mace fell down like a black comet and crashed into the head of the Asura, shattering it entirely. Shards of stone shot in all directions like supersonic bullets, some of them embedding themselves into the onyx surface of the Mantle.

The Great Nightmare Creature collapsed to its knees. The black mace continued downward, striking the breastplate of the ancient golem, caving it in, and destroying the ancient remains entombed within the dreadful Asura.

The destruction of the human corpse within had no meaning, but the damage done to the integrity of the runic armor was severe enough to kill the Great abomination on the spot.

…The rebound made Sunny's bones groan, and they only remained intact because of Bone Weave.

His second incarnation was already retrieving the chain and spinning around, beset by another enemy. The third was locked in a fierce struggle with an Asura who had lost both its legs, but used its hands to crawl with astonishing speed. The fourth was fighting side by side with Cassie, communicating with her mentally.

The two of them made for a surprisingly deadly duo. They understood each other effortlessly and moved like two parts of a single being. It almost felt natural to Sunny... both because group combat was an integral part of his Transcendent Battle Art and because Cassie was an almost perfect battle partner to him due to her Aspect and their shared history.

The battlefield was hectic.

Far in the distance, the clash between the Sovereign and the Tyrant was entering fever pitch, as well. Sunny tried to pay it as much attention as he could — which wasn't much — even daring to allow his shadow sense to brush against Condemnation.

The cursed god was too vast and terrifying for him to try peering deeply into its soul, but he observed Anvil closely. When the opportunity allowed, he looked at him directly, trying to fathom the essence of Supremacy from how the Sovereign fought.

What Sunny saw was both astounding and incomprehensible, leaving him no time to try deciphering its deeper meaning just yet.

The King of Swords was still only using his Dormant Aspect Ability, slowly coming undone under the harrowing attacks of Condemnation. The Cursed Tyrant used nothing but his prodigious body to obliterate the flying swords and pursue the King, moving like an unholy mountain made of soil, bone, twilight, and malignant will.

As time went on, more pieces of the world seemed to assimilate into its titanic figure, which was now partially composed of lava, billowing clouds of ash, vacuum, and frozen flames as well.

Condemnation was not using anything except its hands and tyrannic will to attack Anvil… anything that Sunny could perceive, at least. However, he could sense that there was another layer to the battle between the King and the Tyrant, one happening beyond the boundaries of the material world.

The Tyrant was relentless and inevitable. The Sovereign… remained calm and aloof despite being hopelessly outmatched by his foe.

'He's planning something.'

Sunny did not know why he thought that, but he was sure of it — perhaps because he would have had some sort of hidden plan ready himself.

But what was it?

He studied the distant carnage of the profane battle closer, trying to notice something that he had missed.

The clash between the two terrifying beings was not easy to observe, let alone comprehend,and yet he was reasonably sure that he did not overlook anything important.

It was just that…

His four pairs of eyes widened slightly.

That was because Sunny finally saw it — a subtle pattern to the currents of the storm of swords.

Perhaps he had only noticed it because of how proficient he was in recognizing patterns as a weaver.

'What is he…'

The torrents of flying swords, which had been enveloping Condemnation like a colossal whirlwind of steel, were now more spread out. Countless swords had already been destroyed, and many were flung away by the dire forces of the deific battle.

Those swords were not drifting in the air aimlessly, however, and neither had they escaped the King's control.

Instead, they remained static above the battlefield, not moving even a centimeter — almost as if placed in their positions deliberately.

Forming the anchors of a vast, intricate array.