1251 Rude Awakening

With Nightmare guarding Sunny's dreams, his sleep was deep and peaceful. ...His awakening, however, was not.

'Wh... what?!'

Sunny woke from feeling the world tilt, and then quake with a violent shudder. He was thrown sideways and collided with the slope of the fissure, feeling the sharp rocks cutting into his skin. Groggy and disoriented, he tried to stand up, but got tangled in the sleeping bag instead.

'Damn it!'

The sleeping bag disintegrated as he tore through it, already summoning the Sin of Solace and the Moonlight Shard.

The world lurched once again, and the deafening roar of water reached his ear. 'What is going on?'

Assessing his surroundings through shadow sense, Sunny did not notice immediate danger. He did, however, notice Nephis — she had climbed out of the fissure and was now standing on its edge, her white tunic and silver hair fluttering in the wind.

Sunny could not see her face, but judging by the lack of weapons in her hands, the situation was not critical.

He let out a relieved sigh, then glanced at the destroyed sleeping bag with regret. Just a moment later, the dark island shuddered again, and a strange tremor ran through the black turtle's stone shell.

At that moment, an obnoxious voice resounded from his left: "Good morning. Rise and shine!"

Throwing a contemptuous glance at the spirit of the Sin of Solace, Sunny grimaced and pushed himself off the ground. Soaring high into the air, he kicked the slope of the fissure and propelled himself even higher, landing noiselessly near Nephis a moment later.

The seven suns were already rising, and the world was suffused with the golden radiance of dawn.

"What is happening?"

Instead of answering, she pointed her finger at a particular spot off the edge of the island. There, the water was turbulent and foamy, rising in violent waves. The river had washed away most of the blood during the night, but now, it was painted red once again. In fact, the red color was more vivid and intense than ever.

Sunny frowned. The next moment, something large and swift moved beneath the surface of the red water, and the carcass of the Black Turtle quaked again.

'What the...'

As more blood poured into the Great River, there was a strange sound. Soon, the azure serpent's giant head rose from the turbulent water and stared at them with its vicious, cloudy eyes. Streams of red were flowing from its impenetrable scales.

This time, however, there was something different about the great beast — clenched tightly in its harrowing jaws was a huge chunk of red, bleeding meat. Still staring at them with malice, the creature moved its jaw and started chewing it.

Needless to say, the sight was more than a little disturbing.

Standing by Sunny's side, Nephis said:

"It's eating the turtle."

He glanced at her with a strange expression.

"Yeah. I've noticed."

With that, both of them fell silent as they watched the serpent.

...Who was watching them while devouring the meat of the slain Great Monster.

Yesterday, Sunny had struggled with chewing through the tough meat of the Black Turtle, but it was almost melting in the abomination's enormous maw. The jade fangs were painted red as they effortlessly sliced through the bleeding chunk, which was diminishing at an alarming rate.

He couldn't help but shudder when imagining what these fangs would do to his own flesh... no Armor Memory he possessed and no Attribute augmenting his body stood a chance of resisting the fangs of the Great Beast even for a split second. If those jaws closed on Sunny, he would be obliterated in an instant.

Sunny stared at the feasting serpent.

Then, suddenly, a long sigh escaped from his lips. "You know what? I'm... really damn tired of this." Nephis looked at him with a silent question. "Tired of what?"

Sunny vaguely pointed with his hand.

"It's just... nothing ever goes as it is supposed to, does it? I remember surrendering myself to the cops when I became infected. They told me this and that about how the process of Awakening is supposed to happen. And, I swear to the dead gods... not a single thing they told me to expect ended up coming true."

A darkly exasperated expression appeared on his face.

"My First Nightmare? An Awakened Tyrant appears. The solstice? There's a Fallen Terror blocking the only way out. The Second Nightmare? Here is a couple of immortal Saints I need to kill... oh, and they are completely out of their minds. Really, I went through so many absolutely unreasonable things as an Aspirant, Sleeper, and Awakened."

Sunny rolled his eyes.

"I am a Master now, and instead of fighting Fallen Nightmare Creatures like Masters are supposed to do, there's this Great Beast staring me down. Let's not even mention all the Corrupted abominations I've already killed. Is this what they call suffering from success? If so, I really don't want to be such an overachiever anymore... can't something normal happen, for once?"

Listening to him, Nephis tilted her head a little. She remaine silent for a bit, and then said:

"...You're right. You really had to overcome completely unreasonable thighs as an Aspirant, Sleeper, Awakened, and Master."

Then, a hint of a smile appeared on her lips, and sparks of white light ignited in her eyes.

"But, Sunny... considering all that, have you thought about... what kind of things you'll have to face as a Saint?"

Sunny's already pale face suddenly became even whiter. A hint of horror appeared in his eyes.

"Oh, gods..."

He shivered.

"You evil... no, no, I don't want to even think about it!"

Smiling, Nephis looked away and concentrated on the azure serpent once again. After a few moments of silence, she said:

"Maybe you should consider this as training, then. In any case... what do you think we should do now?"

Sunny threw a gloomy glance her way and shrugged.

"I'm not sure. The turtle is huge, so even this old snake won't be able to hollow its shell out quickly. I don't think it can overturn the carcass or break through the carapace at this point... but I'm not sure. We should be ready for anything, I guess."

Nephis lingered for a while, and then nodded. "I agree. Let's wait and see, then."

As the enormous carcass of the Great Monster shuddered once again, they stood side by side and watched silently as the water was slowly saturated with crimson blood.