1253 Parade of Shadows

After resting for a while, Sunny and Nephis separated. She went off to study the Memories Sir Gilead had transferred to her — there had not been a lot of time to get a proper feel for them in the Nightmare Desert. Sunny, meanwhile, remained sitting on the soft moss with a contemplative expression.

'What to do...'

First, he closed his eyes and sent the five shadows to investigate the dark island. It was somewhere between one and two kilometers across, so there was not a lot of ground to cover. However, the terrain of the giant shell of black rock was weathered and uneven. There were plenty of cracks and fissures, some of them large and easy to notice,

others hidden from view. Some were entirely filled with water.

The exploration did not take too long. His shadows did not find anything really interesting, either — there was the weathered rock, the vibrant patches of green moss, and the remains of the creature's battle armor, its silver now tarnished and bleak. Other than that, the dark island was desolate and barren.

What made a deep impression on Sunny, though, were the fissures themselves. At first, he had assumed that they were just natural features of the Great Monster's stone shell... but after some time, with a shiver, he realized that they were not.

Instead, each of the deep grooves was a scar left on the titanic shell of the ancient creature by unknown enemies. None managed to penetrate it, and some were rather shallow — however, some were dark and frighteningly deep.

Considering that even the azure serpent was not able to crack the Black Turtle's carapace, Sunny dreaded to imagine what kind of creatures had left those claw marks on its back.

He looked at the gleaming expanse of the Great River with gloom. Suddenly, the enchanting beauty of this dreamlike world seemed like a facade that hid unspeakable horrors behind its alluring veil.

Of course, Sunny had known that already. But in that moment, he felt it stronger than ever before.

'Beautiful things are the most dangerous.'

Glancing in the direction where Nephis had left, he sighed and stretched his legs. The shadows returned, and then, three figures rose from them.

Onyx Saint, Nightmare, and Ravenous Fiend.

He silently studied them for a while, thinking. Saint was stoic and indifferent, as always... if he did not know that she was alive, he would have assumed that the graceful and towering figure in front of him was a beautiful statue. Nightmare was staring at the azure serpent, which was circling the island, with dark and malevolent fury burning in his crimson eyes. Imp seemed a little uncomfortable under Sunny's gaze, shifting from foot to foot nervously.

Nightmare was the weakest of the three, but also offered the most utility to Sunny. He didn't necessarily need to use the tenebrous stallion as a battle companion... that said, his steed was very close to unlocking the Terror Ability and finally realizing its full potential. The next Rank was also not far away.

Once Nightmare came into his power as a Terror and Ascended, his power would take a great leap.

Sunny had little means of speeding up that process at the moment, though. It was going to happen when it happened... probably before too long.

Saint, meanwhile, was already incredibly powerful. She was so powerful, in fact, that Sunny had no means of pushing her to greater power anymore. To make the graceful stone knight achieve the Supreme Rank, he would need three hundred Transcended Memories of the First Tier, or six hundred Ascended ones... or one thousand and two hundred Awakened ones.

Needless to say, these numbers were unattainable at the moment.

He didn't even want to count the potential number of Dormant Memories she would need to rank up. Reaching a higher Class, meanwhile, required luck and stumbling on a uniquely suitable enemy — it was outside his control. Saint had already classed up twice, but the rest of his Shadows, excluding the aberrant Soul Serpent, had yet to do it even once. That went to show how rare such opportunities were.

There was one thing Sunny could do right now, though...

Glancing at Saint, he sent Morgan's Warbow and the Stifled Scream her way.

The bow was self-explanatory — he was planning to make Saint the sentry for as long as they remained on the dark island. The Stifled Scream, however, was more tricky.

That charm of his had an enchantment called [Echoing Silence]. Its description read: "When wearing this charm, the physical power of its master is augmented... but only as long as they remain silent. The longer their silence lasts, uninterrupted, the greater the boon of power they'll receive."

This was a powerful enchantment indeed, and one perfectly suited for the taciturn Shadow. However, he had never managed to get a lot out of it, because there had never been an opportunity to keep Saint summoned for weeks on end.

Right now, however... there was an interesting idea in Sunny's head.

'The physical augmentation the Stifled Scream grows stronger the longer one stays silent. So, it functions in relation to time.'

Weren't they flowing through time, though? Sunny did not know how exactly the distance traveled on the Great River corresponded to time, but he assumed that it was not a small amount. Were they moving one day into the past each day? One month?

One year?

If so, then the augmentation of the Stifled Scream could potentially reach its theoretical limit in no time. That was an outlandish theory, but it was worth checking out, at least.

Satisfied, Sunny turned to Imp.

On paper, the scrawny goblin was on the same level of power as Saint — he was a Transcendent Devil, as well. But in reality, there was an insurmountable gap between them. Imp was just an adolescent as far as Shadows went, after all. He was still on the weaker side, inexperienced, and untrained.

His core physical Attribute, the [Lesser Steel Body], had just recently evolved to the [Greater Steel Body]. Sunny had thought that it would be extremely hard to locate large quantities of metal of higher quality than the body of Sun Prince.

But, as it turned out, he was wrong.

They were currently on top of the Black Turtle's titanic corpse, and that corpse was encased in the remains of similarly titanic battle armor. Surely, the armor deserving of a Great Monster would be made of some truly incredible stuff?

Looking at the nervous Imp, Sunny grinned and pointed to the nearest jagged chunk of tarnished silver.

"Go, buddy. Gorge yourself. Bon appetit!"

The scrawny goblin tentatively turned to look in the direction he was pointing. A few moments later, its eyes dramatically widened.

"I bet it's going to be a bit tough to chew, bu..."

Before Sunny could finish speaking, Imp was already dashing toward the band of ancient silver with a maddened expression.

He chuckled.

'I guess it smells delicious...'