1264 Gaping Wound

Guided by a golden rope that glowed faintly into the red murkiness, Sunny swam forward. The waters of the river of time, mixed with the crimson blood of a Great Monster, were cold and tumultuous. The battle of two harrowing abominations had turned them into a whirlpool of raging currents.

'Just how far is this wound...'

Suddenly, Sunny saw something enormous appear from the murky red darkness and shuddered. He was swimming past the giant eye of the titanic turtle, now hollow and devoid of light. His figure was like a speck of dust in front of it.

The Azure Serpent had long feasted on the Black Turtle's left eye, but the right still remained. Even though Sunny knew that the ancient behemoth was dead, he couldn't help but feel as if it was staring at him.

Looking away, he pushed himself through the water. 'We're not far from the creature's neck, then.'

Every second could be their last, so Sunny was tense. The battle of the dreadful abominations could shift in their direction at any moment. More than that... the Nimble Catch allowed him to swim with great speed, and Neph's silver anklets were the same. However, she did not seem to possess a Memory similar to the Essence Pearl, and had to hold her breath.

They simply couldn't linger.

Fortunately, the dark thoroughfare of the turtle's enormous neck emerged from the cloudy redness soon. It was encased in massive bands of tarnished silver, which overlapped to form a flexible, but impenetrable armor.

Sunny caught up with Nephis as they followed the road of silver to the point where the monster's neck ended. There, its armor was torn apart and bent, sharp jagged edges surrounded by bloody foam. The stench of blood was much stronger here, and the water was much darker.

Nephis changed her direction, knowing where to go.

A dozen seconds later, they reached the gaping wound in the body of the Great Monster. Sunny froze for a moment.

'That...'

The Azure Serpent had not just ripped a chunk of flesh out of the Black Turtle's flesh, it actually burrowed inside like a hungry worm, tore through the insides of the monster, and then crawled out from a similar wound under one of the creature's flippers.

As a result, the wound in front of them was like a dark tunnel, not too different from the one through which he had guided the convoy of refugees in the Antarctica Center. The scale of it...

Was humbling.

'I actually said that I can kill that damned snake, didn't I?'

Nephis tugged on the rope to get his attention, then pointed forward.

Struggling against unexplainable fear, Sunny reluctantly pushed himself in that direction. At that moment, the entire corpse of the Black Turtle tilted, impacted by the shockwave of the terrifying clash between the Azure Serpent and the invading butterfly. It swayed slowly, and the dark tunnel of the harrowing wound started to move up.

By the time they reached it, half of the gaping, bloody hole was above the surface of the water, while the other half was still submerged in it. A red current was flowing out, trying to push them away. Sunny gritted his teeth and struggled against the flow, eventually entering the dark tunnel.

Then, however, the current was reversed, and a great amount of water flowed into the body of the dead monster, pulling them deeper inside.

'Crap!'

Sunny was carried into the depths of the Black Turtle's corpse with dire speed, slamming against its flesh and holding tightly to the golden rope. After what felt like an eternity, the current grew weak, and he managed to climb onto something solid.

Sunny pulled on the rope, and a second later, Nephis appeared from the water as well. She raised her hand, igniting a wisp of white flame on it to illuminate their surroundings.

He took a deep breath, suddenly realizing how close the two of them were standing.

After taking a bath in the diluted blood of the Black Turtle, both looked like a horror show... however, Sunny couldn't help but notice how tightly Neph's wet tunic stuck to her body, and how close to transparent the light fabric became.

He shifted slightly, then forcibly tore his gaze away and studied the dark tunnel of the Great Monster's bleeding flesh.

It looked... exactly like one would imagine such a place to look. Not that people had reasons to try and imagine something so morbidly bizarre.

The walls of the tunnel, which was mostly consumed by darkness, were uneven, spongy, and red. The lower half of it was covered by tumultuous water, while the upper half was filled with an almost unbearable stench of blood. Rivers of red were flowing from the walls and the ceiling, mixing with the dark water below.

Sunny and Nephis were standing on one of the vertebrae of the Black Turtle, which protruded from the bottom of the tunnel like a pale pink mountain. While he was looking around, she was breathing heavily.

"So, now..."

Before he could finish the sentence, the carcass of the Great Monster quaked once again, and the two of them were almost thrown off the slippery bone. Sunny had to grab Nephis to prevent her from plummeting back into the seething water.

A moment later, he realized that they were embracing, their bodies pressed tightly against each other. He could feel the softness and the heat of her skin through the thin fabric of the white tunic.

Her striking grey eyes were close... too close... as well.

Forgetting what he was going to say, Sunny remained motionless for a few moments. Then, he made sure that Nephis had regained her balance and carefully let her go. "So... now... all we have to do is carve some meat. Right?"

She cleared her throat, then raised the wisp of flame higher and looked away. "Uh... uh... right. And return alive."

Sunny let out a shaky sigh.

'Sure. One thing at a time...'