1265 Dirty Job

Sunny had to spend a few moments calming down his wildly beating heart. Then, he looked around once again.

The situation... was much better than he had expected it to be.

He really had not considered that the grotesque tunnel left behind by the Azure Serpent would be only partially drowned. Slicing through the flesh of a Great Monster was no easy task, and doing so underwater would have been even harder. More than that, he was less restricted in the use of Shadow Step now.

But, most importantly, he could summon the Covetous Coffer.

Opening the alloy chest underwater would have just resulted in the spatial storage being instantly filled with water. Now that they stood on a solid surface, things were different... of course, the tunnel could be flooded at any moment, so they had to hurry.

Sunny looked at Nephis and flashed her a smile. "Let's be quick!"

The sparks of light swirled around them, manifesting into Memories. Neph's flame was replaced by a luminous paper lantern, and a sizable alloy chest appeared on the porous pink surface of the Great Monster's bone.

A moments later, their weapons manifested, t...

"Am I reduced to a mere butcher's cleaver? Ah... such humiliation..."

Sunny almost yelped when a familiar figure emerged from the darkness. The Sin of Solace looked somberly at his disheveled appearance, then shook his head. He was still clad in the Shroud of Graceless Dusk, not to mention perfectly dry.

"Damn fool."

Sunny whispered a stifled curse and commanded the shadows to wrap themselves around the jade blade of the cursed sword, which had manifested itself a split second before. Then, he hissed:

"Gods, you almost gave me a heart attack."

Nephis froze for a moment and looked at him with a slightly startled expression. "Oh... did I? Sorry..."

Sunny's eyes widened.

"No, not you! I wasn't talking... ah, never mind."

The Sin of Solace observed him with a small, disdainful smile.

"I must say. This is a peculiar location for a date. Harvesting monster meat from inside the monster... I hope you won't force the poor girl to cook the meal herself, at least?"

Struggling to ignore the bastard, Sunny threw the lid of the Covetous Coffer open and then moved closer to the wall of the flesh tunnel. Pushing down the feeling of disgust, he gritted his teeth and thrust the jian forward.

It was so strange. The taste of the Black Turtle's meat was truly sublime. But the source of it... was so... revolting...

'Damn it.'

One of the enchantments of the Sin of Solace made it incredibly sharp, and it had been augmented by the shadows on top of that. And yet, cutting into the flesh of the dead Great Monster felt like he was trying to cut stone with a rusty blade.

Sunny had known that harvesting the turtle's meat would not be easy, just from the fact that chewing it was a tough task. However, the actual difficulty of trying to slice off a sizable chunk of the abomination's flesh was even greater than he had expected. Its durability in an uncooked state was simply preposterous.

'If that's hard, then how am I going to fight one of these things in the future?'

With no other choice, Sunny concentrated on the task. Taut muscles rolled under his skin as he put all his strength into it, and the jade blade cut deeper with excruciating slowness. Nephis was just as strained, using a sharp dagger instead of her longsword. Its blade was glowing with incandescent light, and her face was pale. Despite that, her progress was not much faster than his.

The dark island continued to sway and quake around them, making the water filling the morbid tunnel roll and slosh. Carving the meat was hard, and doing it while struggling to keep balance was especially hard. Nevertheless, they continued, sometimes using each other for support.

'This is taking too long...'

Sunny had hoped to fill the Covetous Coffer to the brim, but now he realized how unrealistic his lofty desires were. At this rate, it would be good if they managed to harvest enough to feed them for a few days. Of course, as long as the battle between the Azure Serpent and the eerie butterfly did not end or shift in their direction, there was still time.

And just as he threw the first chunk of meat into the maw of the alloy chest, the carcass of the Black Turtle quaked again. This time, however, there was something different about the tremor — instead of being pushed to the side, Sunny had almost been thrown up into the air.

Nephis and he abruptly stopped, looking at each other. Sunny's mouth was suddenly very dry.

"...They are below us now."

The whole plan was hinged on the fact that the massive bulk of the Black Turtle would protect them from the two battling abominations. Now, the area of the battle was shifting, and the creatures were already below the dark island.

This meant that they were moving in the direction of the turtle's head.

Neph's eyes shone in the gloomy darkness as they reflected the glow of her scorching dagger. She lingered for a moment.

"What do you want to do?"

Sunny paused for a bit, then gritted his teeth.

"We've already taken the risk. Returning with empty hands would mean that it was all for nothing. We'll have to wait for a chance to do it all over again, and even if such a chance presents itself, we'll be much weaker by then. So... let's continue. I can pull us back through the shadows, anyway."

Nephis nodded in agreement, prompting them to return to the arduous task of carving the turtle's flesh. Both of them were much more tense now.

A few more slabs of meat fell into the Covetous Coffer, and at the same time, the shockwaves traveling through the island showed that the battling abominations were drawing closer to the creature's head.

Eventually, Sunny lowered his bloodied hands and grimaced. "That's enough. It is too dangerous now."

Closing the lid of the alloy chest, he dismissed it and froze for a moment, concentrating his perception on the haughty shadow. He had left it with Saint and Nightmare, so it had a good view of the turbulent waters surrounding the Black Turtle's head.

...The water had been turbulent before, but now, it was simply boiling. Bloody foam was undulating like a stormy sea, and two enormous shadows could be seen far below, intertwined with each other.

They were just under the entrance to the gaping wound at the base of the titanic turtle's neck.

'Time to go.'

Grabbing Neph's hand, Sunny pulled the two of them into the shadow. But...

Nothing happened.

The shadows remained ethereal and elusive, as if he had never possessed the ability to dive into their dark embrace.

Sunny froze, then slowly looked down.

He was still standing on the slippery pink bone. Shadow Step had failed to activate.