1376 Fighting the Future

The Sin of Solace flashed through the air, moving with stunning speed. Considering how insidiously sharp the cursed blade was, there was no way for the Drowned to survive the strike... Sunny was so confident that he would see the abomination's head flying away in a rain of blood that he did not even slow down to consider other possibilities.

And yet, something entirely different happened.

He missed.

At the last moment, the Nightmare Creature lowered itself deeper into the water, and the jade sword whistled safely above its head.

'What...'

It had been a very long time since Sunny made such an egregious mistake. His swordsmanship was not flawless, since nothing really was. He was a lesser swordsman than Nephis was, true... but who wasn't? Compared to almost every other living human, Sunny was an absolute master. A seasoned warrior with enough talent, skill, and experience to be considered an actual sword saint.

He could accept that an enemy was more powerful than him. He could even accept that an enemy was more skilled than him — although exceedingly rare, there were a few of those.

What Sunny could not accept, however, was the fact that he missed a simple killing blow.

Something did not add up...

Before he could even try to understand what had happened, the Drowned was already near. Saved from assured decapitation, the creature pushed with its tentacles and flew forward as if shot from a cannon. The dark spear struck Sunny's unprotected chest and tossed him backwards.

"Argh!"

The blow was powerful enough to send a blinding flash of pain through his body. However, the spear of the Drowned Demon failed to pierce the black silk of his tunic or rip his marble skin.

'How did I miss?'

Sunny fell into the water — or rather, he would have. Instead, his body disappeared into the shadows and appeared a moment later behind the triumphant abomination. The Sin of Solace flashed again... and was blocked by the shaft of the dark spear.

It was of no help, though. The jade blade seemed to have passed through the ancient weapon unobstructed, then did the same with the abomination's armor, flesh, and bone. A moment later, a thin line appeared on the shaft of the dark spear, and it split into two halves.

The same happened to the Drowned, who had been cleanly and savagely cut in two.

[You have slain a Corrupted Demon, Drowned Warrior.]

[Your shadow grows stronger.]

Sunny heard the whispers of the Spell. But he was not celebrating.

Instead, a dark expression distorted the lines of his pale face for a brief, fleeting moment.

'...How did that thing block my strike?'

Sunny felt uneasy. Yes, the spear of the Corrupted abomination had failed to stop the cursed sword, but how had the Drowned managed to predict and block his sneak attack, in the first place?

No... it had not been quite like that.

Replaying the moment of the strike in his memory, Sunny realized that the Nightmare Creature had not possessed exalted battle skill or supernatural power of premonition. Instead, it had ended up in a perfect position to react in time due to sheer luck.

Just like it had ended up lowering itself to avoid being decapitated by sheer luck.

'Was it really luck, though?' Sunny suddenly felt cold.

Was it luck, or was it that out of all possible outcomes, those that benefited the Nightmare Creatures the most had suddenly become the most probable to happen?

Was the damned sybil exerting its influence on the future to support her minions and obstruct her enemies?

If so...

He sensed the numerous shadows of the Drowned rushing to rip him apart, and shuddered.

'Curse it...'

For a moment, Sunny almost panicked. Fighting a swarm of Corrupted Demons was already deadly enough... but fighting against the future itself? How was he supposed to defeat that?

Then, however, his mind settled. There was a mutilated corpse of one of these demons floating in the water right in front of him, after all. He had defeated that one abomination... so, he was going to slaughter the rest in the same way. It was just going to be much, much harder.

If one strike failed to kill the enemy, he was going to deliver two.

If a hundred strikes failed to kill the enemy, he was going to deliver a hundred and one.

Everything that could go wrong was going to go wrong... but hadn't Sunny always lived by that principle, anyway? Considering his [Fated] Attribute, he was perhaps the one person in the two worlds who was perfectly suited to fight a battle like this.

Swiftly turning around, he brandished the Sin of Solace and jumped down from the toppled column... into the dark water.

Instead of plunging into it, however, Sunny landed on the slick surface as if it was solid. This feat wasn't too hard to accomplish by combining the [Feather of Truth] trait of his Shell with the [Royal Promise] enchantment of the Crown of Twilight. Without pausing even for a second, Sunny dashed forward, running across water as if it was land.

A part of his mind was preoccupied with controlling the treacherous surface under his feet to support his weight. The rest of his mind... was concentrated on murder.

Sunny allowed his focus to become shapeless, giving up on his preconceived notions of how combat was supposed to work. It was not easy to let go of deeply ingrained habits, but his mind was nothing if not adaptable.

Simultaneously, he made alterations to his battle approach.

Vertical and thrusting attacks were easier to avoid, so he had to favor horizontal ones. Any attack he would usually consider unavoidable could fail, so he had to always keep the possibility of failure in mind and create contingencies. The same went for defense... Sunny had to change his entire approach to keeping himself alive on the fly. There were countless other adjustments he had to make, as well.

But if anyone could do it, it was him... the master of Shadow Dance.

As another Drowned lunged at him, Sunny shifted his weight slightly and avoided the predatory spear. The Sin of Solace lashed out, somehow missing the abomination by a hair's breadth.

However, in the next moment, the Nightmare Creature still fell into the water with a severed neck. That was because Sunny calmly pulled the jian back and sliced through the enemy's flesh while continuing the fluid motion.

Behind the fearsome mask, his lips twisted in a vicious grin.

'That works...'

The darkness of the flooded hall exploded into a cacophony of violence.