1378 Graceful Blade

'Damn... that hurt...'

Sunny stumbled back, feeling his hand tremble. He was too slow and failed to avoid an attack... or rather, he was fast enough, but the attack still passed his defense, somehow. Knowing that it could deal serious damage, he had no choice but to block it with his forearm.

His fingers momentarily lost strength, and the hilt of the Sin of Solace slid from them. Luckily, he was holding the great jian with both hands, so it did not fall into the water. Still, losing the leverage prevented Sunny from delivering a truly powerful blow — the jade blade sliced through the Drowned Warrior, but the damage was not fatal.

The entire hall suddenly quaked, and pieces of debris fell from the ceiling. The water flooding the dark expanse surged, and a tall wave spread from where the depth dweller struck down, trying to crush Nephis with its entire weight.

Stepping on the wave, Sunny allowed it to move him out of the path of a jagged harpoon and lunged into another attack.

He had killed plenty of abominations already... but he had also taken a beating. Right now, the flooded hall was engulfed by violence. Sunny, Saint, Fiend, Nightmare, and the two Echoes were resisting the dreadful advance of the Drowned guardians while Nephis was fighting the gargantuan monstrosity.

Cassie... Cassie was still at the entrance to the hall, motionless. Her eyes were obscured by the silver mask, but it seemed as though she was looking directly at the Defiled sybil, ignoring the furious havoc of the battle separating them.

He gritted his teeth, worried.

Had Nephis made the right choice?

Sunny knew that she had. Out of the three of them, he was best suited to face a large group of enemies due his Aspect and his Shadows. Cassie had no combat Ability to help her fight the horror of the depths, which meant that Neph had to.

What the blind girl did have, though, was an Ability that could potentially counter the insidious power of the Defiled sybil. Unlike the depth dweller who possessed overwhelming physical might, the true ruler of the flooded temple mostly relied on mystical authority over the future. Cassie had a good chance of being able to face her.

So, while Neph's decision was not exactly right, it was the best one in this dire situation. She assigned each of them a role suiting their capabilities.

Still... the Defiled priestess was a Corrupted Tyrant. She was a creature of the same caliber as the Remnant of the Jade Queen — a dreadful beetle Saint Tyris had fought a bloody battle with in Antarctica. More than that, the sybil could potentially counter Cassie's Aspect instead of the Aspect countering her unholy powers.

Would Cassie really be able to survive facing an abomination like that? Sunny was worried, worried...

'Why is she not doing anything? What...'

And just at that moment, Cassie finally moved.

Although the blind girl did not possess a combat Ability, she was still an Ascended with a fully saturated soul core. She was by no means weak or lacking physical prowess. When she dashed forward, her body was as fast as an arrow.

With her blond hair dancing in the wind, Cassie leaped across the dark water and landed on the remains of a crumbled column. A Drowned Warrior immediately lunged at her, delivering a devastating thrust with a long spear.

The blind girl calmly pushed the spearhead aside with her dagger. It only deviated from its path by a few centimeters, but that was enough to miss Cassie's head by a hair's breadth.

At the same time, she took a step forward and lashed out with the Quiet Dancer, the tip of the slender rapier piercing the creature's eye with surgical precision. The kill was instant, and gave the impression of being effortless.

Before the body of the Drowned even had time to topple, the blind girl was already moving forward. She danced between the attacking abominations, elusive like a ghost. Her movements were swift, but not hurried... they even seem a little slow. It was just that she was never where the enemy weapon's struck, while her dagger and rapier never seem to miss.

Every step she took was precise and calculated. Every blow she dealt was fatal. Every motion she made was perfectly efficient.

It was flawless.

Cassie gracefully moved across the battlefield, leaving several corpses in her wake. She did not seek out the Drowned to kill — instead, she avoided as many as she could, only crossing blades with those who barred her path. Even then, each clash ended in only one exchange.

Of course, she was able to do so because most of the abominations were distracted by Sunny, his Shadows, and the Echoes. The horror of the depths, meanwhile, was tied down by Nephis.

Nevertheless, her swift and seemingly effortless advance looked eerily... inevitable.

Before the Drowned could react and stop her, she was already past the mass of them. Pushing herself off a pile of rubble, Cassie soared high into the air and landed noiselessly on the raised dais where the Defiled sybil stood, observing the battle.

It was only then that Sunny got a good look at the Corrupted Tyrant, as if a veil obscuring her had been lifted.

The sybil... was vaguely humanoid, if just barely. Her towering body was gaunt and appalling, covered by the remains of a rotten crimson dress. Her moist skin was like tar, pitch-black and glossy. Her limbs had been transformed into sprawling tentacles, while her head had become bestial and terrifying, split apart by a wide maw.

Sunny couldn't quite believe that this creature had been human once.

The Defiled sybil and Cassie froze, separated by no more than a dozen meters. The Tyrant towered above the delicate young woman, who was like a red flower blooming in front of a mass of abyssal darkness.

His heart skipped a beat when he saw that the blind girl failed to capitalize on the momentum of her advance and attack before the Tyrant could react.

'Why is she?!...'

In that moment, however, the sybil's terrifying maw opened.

Sunny had expected to hear a deafening roar, but what came out of the creature's maw was a deep, rumbling, inhuman groan instead.

"Daaahsssssk..."

Hearing that voice, Cassie sighed quietly... and lowered her weapons.