1394 The Luxury of Being Bored

The Chain Breaker had set sail once again. This time, they had to travel back to the middle area of the Great River, where the sky was azure. They also had to travel some distance into the past — not enough to bring them anywhere near Verge, but deeper than any of the three had ever ventured.

Sunny spent the first morning lazing in bed and staring at the ceiling. He was thinking about Wind Flower. The strong winds, the twisted currents, the colossal whirlpool that pulled ships to their doom, and the island flying above the dark abyss... all of it sounded rather nasty.

There was the fact that the tower standing on the island had once belonged to a powerful Seeker, as well.

The Seekers of Truth were people who had entered the Tomb of Ariel at the same time as the sybils, or even earlier than them, but for an entirely different reason.

The Seekers had not been searching for salvation from the devastation of the doomsday war. Instead, they had braved the Nightmare Desert and found their way into the tomb built by the Demon of Dread due to their thirst for knowledge.

...Out of curiosity, basically.

They had not been a unified group of people, either, but rather disparate individuals united only by the similarity of their obsession with knowledge.

'Bunch of weirdos...'

Who would climb into a dreadful tomb simply to satiate their curiosity? Sunny would never!

Well... he had entered plenty of dangerous ruins to satiate his desire to explore the Dream Realm. But that was an entirely different matter! Firstly, he received contribution points for his exploits, from time to time. Secondly, none of those ruins had been left behind by terrifying deities.

'Come to think of it, a couple of them were...'

Like the Ebony Tower. But he had not ended up there out of curiosity. He had ended up there out of greed! That was a much better reason, so... he was not like those weird Seekers at all....

In any case, Sunny was not excited to visit the stronghold of a powerful Seeker. Not even considering the fact their desire to learn Ariel's truth had caused the birth of the Defilement, these people did not seem trustworthy at all.

A hidden island where a mysterious Seeker had lived before disappearing without a trace, surrounded by a nearly impassable barrier of water, wind, and twisted time... yes, that did not sound ominous at all.

'Damnation...'

Of course, they did not really have a choice. Effie and Jet were there, so Sunny, Nephis, and Cassie couldn't turn back.

'People fear the unknown the most.'

If the slate had told them that there was a Great Nightmare Creature living at Wind Flower, he would have been reluctantly, but calmly coming up with plans to defeat it. But it was the not knowing what waited for them at the center of the whirlpool that made Sunny feel nervous.

In the end, tired of being anxious, he decided to distract himself by doing something useful. Climbing out of his bed with a sigh, Sunny finally left his cabin and went to the upper deck.

Saint, Fiend, and Nightmare were standing guard at the bow, middle section, and the stern of the ship. Nephis was holding the steering oar, while Cassie was making preparations to repair the sorcerous circle of the ship.

Sunny hesitated for a few moments, then approached the blind girl.

"Hey. Can I take another look at the Guiding Light?"

Looking up, Cassie smiled at him and pointed to the sacred tree. The beautiful staff stood there, propped against its trunk.

"Thanks."

Grabbing the sacred relic of the sybils, Sunny went to his usual spot in the shade of the ketch and sat down on the deck.

'Let's start, then...'

He spent some time weaving the basic enchantments around a Transcendent soul shard. His goal was simple — to turn the Guiding Light into a Memory, so that it was easier to use and could be taken back into the waking world.

After hours of focused work, however, Sunny was left staring at the wooden staff with a deadpan expression. His eye was twitching slightly.

'Damn it!'

It was all a waste. The moment he tried to place the rudimentary weave inside the relic, the lightless strings of shadow essence dissolved in the blinding radiance hidden within the white wood. It was as if they were incinerated from simply touching divine sorcery.

'All that work, for nothing.'

Uttering a quiet curse, he stood up and put the Guiding Light back under the sacred tree.

Somewhat disheartened, Sunny went to switch with Nephis at the steering wheel. He guided the ship as she practiced with her sword, dancing with it as the seven suns slowly traveled across the crimson sky.

He enjoyed the view a great deal.

Later, Sunny spent some time staring at the Estuary Key, not at all closer to solving its many Memories.

He had a meal with Nephis and Cassie.

He created more essence strings to replace the ones that had been destroyed.

And practiced his own swordsmanship, mentally going over the battle with the Drowned and thinking of what he could have done better.

After all that...

Sunny had to admit to himself that he was bored.

'Huh.'

It was a rather strange and luxurious feeling. Sunny had very rarely received an opportunity to feel bored... usually, there had always been something pressing for him to do, learn, or escape.

It had been like that in the outskirts, and did not change at all after the Awakening.

But here in the Third Nightmare, brief moments of intense and unreasonable danger were separated by long stretches of calm.

Of course, he knew that the calm would not last long... it would take them some time to reach Wind Flower, but they would certainly have to fight for their lives many times on the way.

The Chain Breaker would be attacked by Nightmare Creatures — maybe today, maybe tomorrow, or the day after that. There would be dangerous anomalies waiting for them under the waves, as well — perhaps some of those described on the stone slates.

The Mad Prince could visit him in his dreams at any moment. The appearance of the other Plagues weren't out of the question, either.

But for now, at least, there seemed to be peace.

So, Sunny decided to give himself a day off, for once, and enjoy that peace while it lasted.

Walking back to the stern of the ship, he summoned a certain piece of furniture and placed it a few meters away from Nephis. Sitting down on his luxurious chair, he summoned the emerald flute and brought it to his lips.

Nephis looked at him in confusion.

"What are you doing? Ah. Trying to raise the dead? But... there are no corpses on the ship..."

Sunny blinked a couple of times. 'Who does she take me for?'

"Is it so hard to imagine that I'm just in the mood for music? Kai gave me a few lessons, you know. So I can carry a tune. He might have begged me to perform as a guest during one of Night&Gale concerts, even!"

She smiled faintly.

"I noticed you said "might have begged" instead of "begged". Hmm."

Then, her eyes widened slightly.

"...Wait. Night&Gale concerts? Are they planning a reunion? When? Is it going to be old material, or has Gale written a new album? What about new choreography? Who is..."

Sunny lowered the flute and stared at her sullenly.

'Ah. Here she goes again, barraging me with questions...'

"Yes. I don't know, probably not. No clue. No idea. I'm not sure..."

As the sky slowly grew brighter, the Chain Breaker sailed toward dawn. The three Masters aboard the graceful vessel anxiously awaited the reunion with two lost members of their cohort...