1395 Hello, Blue Sky

'I wonder...'

Sunny stared at a delicious-looking golden fruit, torn between the desire to pluck it off the branch and the fear of tasting fruits from mysterious, mystical trees. The last time he had eaten one... was not a memory he liked to remember.

'It probably tastes divine, though...'

In the end, he sighed and reluctantly looked away from the alluring fruit. It was better not to test fate.

Sunny was currently high in the crown of the sacred tree, using it as a crow's nest. The sky above him was of a beautiful azure color, with not a hint of the deep scarlet splendor they had grown accustomed to in Fallen Grace.

It had already been several weeks since they visited the lost library and slayed the Defiled Sybil. The fourth month of their Nightmare had ended a few days ago... of course, it had been much longer than that for Cassie and the other members of the cohort.

Effie and Jet had spent more than a year stranded in the place called Wind Flower, by now. Sunny couldn't help but worry about them.

He was also worried about Rain and the waking world, but there was nothing to be done about that.

Climbing to a higher branch, he sighed and looked down. There was usually a black crow following him around, but today, the talkative bird was gone. It was somewhere ahead, scouting for prowling abominations and turbulent currents.

The crow's presence meant that at least one of the two missing women was still alive. That made Sunny less anxious.

In these past few weeks, The Chain Breaker had traveled far enough into the past to almost reach Wind Flower. With the help of the Guiding Light, they did not even have to waste time searching for its precise location —the sacred staff pointed directly to where they needed to go. So, the dreadful whirlpool could appear from beyond the horizon any minute now.

Of course, coming this far had not been easy. Sunny, Nephis, and Cassie had to fight for their lives on many occasions. The graceful vessel had been attacked by swarms of Nightmare Creatures, grotesque giants from the deep, aerial horrors, and even heralds of the Defilement. That last battle had been especially dire, since the Defiled were both sentient and vile.

And yet, the three of them had slain and slaughtered every enemy that dared to attack the Chain Breaker... for now. The ancient vessel withstood all the attacks without receiving serious damage, as well. But the three Masters weren't as lucky — each of them had suffered many grave wounds, some of them almost fatal.

If not for Neph's healing powers, they would have never made it so far.

They wouldn't have made it without Cassie, either. Sunny had been reminded once more that traveling with an oracle was an invaluable boon. It was because of the blind girl that they had managed to avoid the true perils of the Great River — the twisted currents and lethal aberrations where time itself would have killed them in the blink of an eye.

...They would have perished without Sunny and his Shadows, as well. The Third Nightmare was not a place where one could survive without extreme battle power, and currently, he possessed the most of it out of them three.

'Am I not great?'

Sunny smiled wryly, then shuddered and furtively looked around, checking to see if the Sin of Solace was near. The sword wraith would not have missed a chance to cut him with a snide remark in response to such thoughts, but thankfully, the apparition had not deemed it necessary to climb the sacred tree with him.

In fact, the Sin of Solace did not seem to like being too close to the tree from the Heart God's grove, for some reason. Sunny used that fact often to get some reprieve.

He sighed.

The journey to Wind Flower had not been easy, but at least they had all gotten something out of it. Nephis was one step closer to becoming a Titan, and wore a chainmail shirt over her white tunic — just like Ananke's Mantle, the new Memory could be worn in conjunction with another armor, albeit due to its unique enchantment rather than its type.

In a fashion strange for an Awakened, she also carried her sword in a scabbard hung from her belt. The scabbard was another Memory, this one capable of enhancing the weapon stored inside of it for a sufficient amount of time.

Cassie, meanwhile, was back in her beautiful red peplos dress. Now, however, there were two bracelets on her hands instead of the golden shackles — one was a protective charm Memory, the other was supposed to enhance the force of her attacks. She still carried the Quiet Dance in a scabbard — this one mundane, not enchanted — but mostly used the Guiding Light in battle.

Although the white staff was not a Memory, it did a good job of debilitating her enemies and crushing them into pulp. Sunny was not sure that using a sacred relic to split skulls was appropriate, but he wasn't going to complain. The gods were dead, anyway.

As for himself...

Sunny had earned another five hundred shadow fragments on the way to Wind Flower, bringing him close to two thousand and five hundred — half of the amount he needed to become a Terror.

His luck with Memories, sadly, had been really bad. He had received a few, but none of them were good enough to add to his soul arsenal. They ended up being fed to his Shadows.

He had not woven a lot of new Memories, either. In fact, Sunny had not done a lot of weaving in these past few weeks — not because there had been no time, but rather because he was currently interested in something else.

That something was giving him a lot of trouble, to the point where he often found himself dejected and stupefied. And yet, Sunny persisted with this new interest.