1407 Moving in a Circle

Giving him a nod, Nephis went about asking Cassie to use the Guiding Light to locate Effie. Sunny, meanwhile, remained motionless. He was somewhat lost in thought.

'First of all... stay calm.'

His behavior up until now had been nothing short of embarrassing. Of course, there were extenuating circumstances. During his first... round?... Sunny had been barely conscious of the fact that time was repeating itself. During the second try, he was still reeling and in shock from dying gruesomely at the hands of Undying Slaughter.

But this was his third attempt — this time, he had to maintain his composure and not lose control.

'...No, not quite right.'

Who was to say that this attempt was his third? It was only the third attempt since he had become aware of the fact that everything was repeating itself. There was no telling how many times he had died before that.

Still deep in thought, Sunny glanced at Nephis and Cassie. He remained motionless for a few moments, then silently walked over to Nightmare and adjusted the stirrups of the Overpriced Saddle to make it easier for the blind girl to mount.

Soon, they abandoned the ship and stepped on the white sand of the misty beach. Sunny walked in the back, looking down with a somber expression on his face. He did not react in any way when the Sin of Solace suddenly appeared from the fog.

The sword wraith stared at him mockingly.

"Calling the Shadows? Shame the only thing you achieved was getting them killed... like you get everyone else who follows you killed. Hey, here's an idea! How about you ask Nephis and Cassia for help next?"

Sunny spared him a grim look, causing the Sin of Solace to cover his mouth with a hand theatrically.

"Ah. I've said a bit too much, haven't I?"

Sunny looked away.

'It is as I thought.'

It seemed that the sword wraith had become aware of the fact that time was repeating itself long before Sunny. What was it that the Sin of Solace had said the last time?

'I am actually starting to enjoy this. Let's go for another round, shall we?'

Back then, Sunny had only paid attention to the fact that the wraith was behaving differently from the past, unlike everyone else. But now, it was clear that the apparition had already known about the twisted nature of time on Wind Flower.

Come to think of it...

Had it not been the inconsistency of how the Sin of Solace behaved that first alerted Sunny to the anomaly? The wraith had stared at Sunny silently, and he turned to ask if the bastard was not going to say anything. The odd feeling that eventually allowed him to realize the truth started gnawing at him after that.

'The time... is repeating itself...'

Sunny looked into the fog.

A few moments later, he sighed deeply.

'...I'm such a fool.'

The Great River was a river of time. Wind Flower was surrounded by a mystical whirlpool... and what did whirlpools do? They spun. The water caught in them revolved in a circle.

So, the time here must have revolved in a circle, too. Forming a loop. It was an outlandish theory, but not an entirely baseless one.

In fact, it could explain a few things. Why the ancient stone steps did not look weathered at all, for example. How Effie and Jet could have survived an entire year on this island despite their Flaws...

'...Wait.'

If Effie and Jet were caught in a loop of repeating time here on Wind Flower... then was Undying Slaughter caught in it, too? She had not shown any signs of knowing what Sunny would do in advance. Which meant that she did not know about the loop — and therefore, had no means of escaping it.

How had one of the dreaded Six Plagues ended up being trapped here?

More importantly, why was Sunny the only one who seemed to be aware of the loop?

His frowned. After a few moments, his eyes widened slightly.

'It's not me. It's... it's the Sin of Solace.'

The sword wraith seemed to have been aware of the loop from the very beginning. He was somehow immune to forgetting the events of every previous revolution... was it because the cursed sword was innately tied to truth and revelations, which it was supposed to grant its mad wielder?

Sunny was not particularly mad, but the Sin of Solace was a part of his mind... a splintered and twisted one, but a part nevertheless. Was it possible that he had slowly become contaminated by the knowledge the sword wraith possessed, somehow? Or that the awareness of the loop was one of the revelations of madness granted to him by the cursed sword?

Sunny did not know the exact reason, but he was certain that it was because of the Sin of Solace that he had become aware of the circular nature of time on Wind Flower.

His thoughts turned somber.

'The "how" and "why" are clear. Now what?'

Undying Slaughter was far more fearsome than Sunny had expected. He had lost to her bitterly...

Which was not to say that he could not win.

If Sunny entered the battle with Nephis, Nightmare, Cassie, and her Echoes... if he prepared better...

He would still probably lose and watch everyone die. For the first few times, at least... few dozen times? Few hundred times?

If the loop was infinite, it did not matter. Sooner or later, he would learn enough and find a way to kill Undying Slaughter.

But was the loop really infinite?

And even if it was, what would killing Undying Slaughter even achieve?

She would come back to life as soon as the next revolution started, just like Sunny had been coming back to life.

His face suddenly paled.

'Is it all... meaningless?'

Fighting Undying Slaughter, saving Jet, searching for Effie... it was indeed meaningless if he did not know a way to escape the loop.

But was it even possible to escape it?

'It has to be.'

The Serpent King had come to Wind Flower and returned, after all. There was a way, so Sunny just had to find it.

First and foremost, he needed information. How did the loop function? What were its boundaries? When did time terminate and turn back? And much, much more.

'I need to learn all kinds of stuff.'

The future... promised to be rather interesting.

And incredibly tiring.

Sunny shuddered, imagining how many more times he was going to die.